

W C CLARK BILLIARDS & SNOOKER LEAGUE

Established 1909

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Secretary

Chris Downer, Flat E, 3 Gillam Road, Bournemouth, BH10 6BW
01202 258368 — chrisdowner@live.co.uk — 07999 825634

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 20 July 2017

7:30pm at St. James' Institute

MINUTES

Present:

Chris Downer (Secretary/Treasurer)
Lawrence Millington (Chairman)
Kevin Bassil (St James')

Adrian Berry (St. James')
Chas Best (Broadstone Conservative)
Dave Gerrish (St. James')

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

Denis Carr (President)
Warren Blamey (St. James')
Paul Chaffey (Branksome Conservative)
Mick Kunzi (Branksome Conservative)
Luke Spilller (St. James')

2 Minutes of the last AGM

These were agreed as an accurate record and there were no matters arising.

3 Secretary's Report

The Secretary's Report is replicated here in italics, discussion at the Meeting in normal type:

It is sad to see the lowest membership of the League since the Second World War, with what I will count as 10½ teams this season – the midway withdrawal of one team is a headache that I will touch on later. Hopefully the downturn is just a sign of the times; if there is something we're doing wrong I would like to know what it is.

The Secretary, when asked, indicated that he did not know of any teams that were expected not to renew their membership, other than his own team which will likely be replaced.

But enough of the pessimistic talk for now: it has not been a season without positives, starting at the opening of the season when I received very positive feedback on the new President's Cup – a lighthearted season opener which was enjoyed by all. I hope it becomes established as a regular on the calendar.

The Meeting agreed wholeheartedly about the success of this event.

On the table, there has been once again a close-run finish between the St James' and Greenbaize teams at the top of Division 1, again coming down to the last fixture and the title this year seesawing back to St James'. The comparative runaway victory of Spectrum in Division 2 perhaps suggests that they ought to have received their rightful promotion to Division 1, although I don't doubt that on paper the Secretary's new entry was the better team to be put up. With this latter team unlikely to re-enter next season, maybe it will happen this time around.

It was noted that the Spectrum team had somewhat run away with Division 2 and perhaps should have been promoted. However, the Secretary's team might well have then won Division 2 equally

emphatically and the conversation would have been similar. It was noted that Steve Roberts, the Spectrum captain, had attended the pre-season meeting and had indicated satisfaction in whichever division they had been placed.

I was optimistic to have found what I thought was an enthusiastic team to fill the free weeks in Division 2 but their keenness was clearly shortlived as they fizzled out at Christmas without word or warning. They seem to have vanished without trace as I have not seen any of them at Greenbaize even on non-League nights. In contrast, the GB Statesmen team was able to complete its fixtures despite the very sudden unavailability of their captain in November; I would at this point record my thanks to Alan Lees for that but the team was dealt another blow with Alan's sudden death in February, after which they managed nevertheless still to field three players for all remaining games.

The one-nighters for the Vets (Dudley Cattanaich trophy) and for Division 2 (Hugh Theobald trophy) were disappointingly supported, though hardly a surprise with fewer players from whom to draw. There was talk on one of the nights as to whether these events are sustainable but they do break even and, as long as they do, there is perhaps no reason why they should not be held.

Likewise the billiards – because of the low entry, a workaround was arranged this year so that the three-ball game didn't disappear from the League programme altogether. I think it worked well. The League started out as a billiards league and this nod to history is, I feel, worth preserving.

The Meeting fully concurred with these last two paragraphs. League members gain enjoyment from the one-nighters and they currently pay their way while the venue is provided at no cost and with very cheap trophies available. The billiards evening was enjoyed by the five players involved.

The Singles ran without too much difficulty but the Pairs always throws up some walkovers and this year was no exception. With lower membership, any walkovers do stand out more – it was unfortunate to have a bye in the semi-finals but I must be honest in saying I half expected it.

It was nice to see, for the first time in several years, two non-Division 1 teams contesting the Knockout Cup final. Recent years' League minutes are peppered with references that this event was introduced with the 'other' teams in mind. So it does sometimes work out thus.

I hope the presentation evening was seen as a success. It was consciously very low-key, from a financial point of view and also the fact that there is less interest these days from the non-winning majority in having a big celebration as such. It was good to see the Ambassador team turn up to collect their prizes despite not wishing to play in the comp. I must thank Malcolm Gray, as I do seemingly at this point every year, for producing such value for money on the trophies and medals.

April saw the closure of the Poole Ambassador club, which had been on the cards for some time. This was the biggest venue in the conurbation and has always been willing to help out when we've needed a large number of tables. Their demise leaves very few reasonably sized venues in the area – Greenbaize and St James' are now the clubs with the most tables and I record my thanks to both for providing venues for our events during the season, St James' particularly.

In closing, I should like to ask everyone to be on the lookout for any potential recruits to the League, at a time when any additional uptake would be very welcome.

The meeting was pleased to accept the Secretary's report and there were no other matters arising.

4 Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report is replicated here in italics:

After two seasons running at a modest surplus, this year has seen expenditure exceed income – unsurprisingly with a steep downturn in entry fees (which, at last season's level, would have given us a surplus once more) – by about £60. Nevertheless the bottom line is that we are afloat. The League has by no means been frivolous and continues to fund itself satisfactorily.

We are in no small part indebted to Dave Gerrish for his sponsorship by way of the website subscription – I have said before that we are lucky to have such generosity among our people and mustn't be complacent about it, so once again I record thanks to him; and to Malcolm Gray for his part in producing the prizes as mentioned in my Secretary's Report. Malcolm also put on the refreshments and provided the venue for the presentation at no cost.

There is no real cause for alarm just yet, and I would certainly not recommend an increase in entry fees at this time, when we need to encourage membership all we can. The only truly discretionary expense is the Secretary's honorarium and I can see no other place where the League would make any real savings if it felt it needed to.

Discussions on the Treasurer's report led to team fees and therefore Item 11 was settled here. Chas Best (Broadstone) gave some comparisons with the East Dorset league, where £65 per team was paid upfront (though that League has four-, not three-player teams). The Meeting came up with three options: (a) leave fees at £25, (b) increase them, or (c) leave them at £25 but introduce a per-player registration fee of, say, £2 to bolster funds.

This third option had some support but it was acknowledged that it can be difficult to collect: does the club pay the whole figure upfront and recoup the players' fees from its members, or does the League collect the players' fees direct? (The latter can be difficult to organise, with small amounts incoming from many sources. It is also slightly complicated by players who register during the season rather than at the start.) It was suggested that when a player has put money in from his/her own pocket, it may encourage him/her to play regularly.

The Meeting voted on whether to keep fees the same or to make some change which, if voted through, would invoke a second vote on exactly what change to make. In the end, the Meeting voted by four votes to two to keep with the current fees of £25, but acknowledged that a vote might go another way in future years if funds are of more pressing concern.

Meanwhile, Dave Gerrish confirmed that he would once again be happy to cover the cost of the League's website registration, and the League expressed its continuing thanks to him for this.

5 Review of rearranged fixtures

The Secretary had been asked at a mid-season meeting to report to the AGM on the extent of rearranged fixtures. He said that to his knowledge there had been three such matches, all by the same team, and that he did not think there was any suggestion that the Rule was being misused. Lawrence Millington corrected the Secretary that, while that same team had been involved in all three games, they were in fact the opponents on one occasion.

The Meeting was satisfied that the Rule works well.

The Secretary added that he always amends the fixture date of such matches on the website, so it can easily be seen which matches have been played on a rearranged date.

6 Scoring system, or point at which this is decided

Luke Spiller (St. James') had put in a suggestion that the League return to the best-of-3 format which it had operated for a while a few seasons ago. Meanwhile, at a few mid-season meetings it had been suggested that the decision on format should be made at the start of each season, rather than be prescribed in the League Rules.

Looking at Luke's suggestion, there was some support for it particularly in the top division, but it was seen as unworkable in lower divisions because of the likelihood of undesirably late finishes.

Because the number of teams, and therefore the number of divisions, is not known until the entries are received, it was unanimously agreed that the second part of this item be carried.

Rule 3(f) will therefore be re-worded to cover this; see Item 7 below for further amendment.

7 Suggestion for individual handicapping during the season

This was brought up by Luke Spiller, who thought that individual handicapping might be worth considering during the normal league calendar – a rolling system whereby a player's handicap goes up or down upon winning or losing a match, and the revised figure becomes immediately valid for the next match.

The meeting was aware that a handicap system (per team, rather than per player) was put in place in the mid-1980s but was abandoned after one season as it was difficult to organise. However, now

that information is instantly available online and automatically updated on the website, rather than paper/postal communication back in the '80s, this was perhaps far less of a problem now.

Lawrence Millington thought that it might be indirectly abused, by perhaps one player in a team tending to play the opponents' strongest/weakest player, thus affecting the likely up/down movement of his/her own handicap. However, against this, it was acknowledged that choice of pairings is the away team's prerogative, so half of the time the choice of opponent is not the player's own.

The Meeting concluded that there was certainly some mileage in the idea. It would be particularly useful, for example, if the League had to contract into a single division, as there would be great disparity of playing standard across the spectrum, producing enjoyment for neither the poorer player getting beaten every week nor the better player having little competition. It might also be of similar use, in a multi-division set-up, if one of the divisions needed extra teams, of a different standard, in order to keep divisions of similar size.

Therefore, it was unanimously agreed that this option be left open, but should (as for Item 6 above) be decided upon at the pre-season meeting when the number and standard of teams was known.

Rule 3(f) will therefore be re-worded to cover the changes both at Item 6 and here, from:

The scoring system will be one point per frame won. Therefore, a 6-0 result gives 6 points to the winner and 0 to the loser, 5-1, five points and one point, etc.

to:

The playing format for the season, including (i) duration of matches, (ii) scoring system, and (iii) any handicapping system put in place, will be decided at the pre-season meeting each season.

8 Rules of the game and etiquette

After an incident late in the season, Lawrence Millington wished to place on record a reminder that the **only** difference, between the published Rules of Snooker and those used in the League, is the interpretation of the *Foul and a Miss* Rule, for which the League has produced its own version.

All other aspects of the game should be played as per the universal Rules of Snooker.

He did not want decisions made which were incorrect and seen by bystanders, to then be presumed by those bystanders to be some special version of the rules adopted by the League, causing possible future arguments elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the Secretary wished to mention the etiquette of League members while supposed to be refereeing games, and sometimes while playing, particularly with regard to paying more attention to their mobile phones than to the game. Lawrence Millington and Dave Gerrish both agreed and could each recall moments when a referee had missed some important occurrence, not through simple inattention but because they were busy on their phones. While there is not a lot the League can do about this in any practical way, the reminder can perhaps be given that players and referees should be paying attention to the game in progress. Dave Gerrish added that a player waylaid by a phone will only affect his/her own concentration, whereas when refereeing it could affect both sides.

9 Playing on more than one table

This item was brought up by Warren Blamey, who felt that it diminished the sociable side of the evening when two strong sides playing on two tables meant that the match was over by 8:30. It also ran the risk of spoiling the idea of continuous play, if for example a team is putting a player on last, where (s)he is working late, and the two previous pairings have finished together well before his/her arrival.

As background, it was confirmed by the AGM in 2014 that the League is happy for matches to be conducted on two tables, as long as it is 'mutually agreed'. However, the actual League Rules are silent on the matter, it having traditionally been accepted as a one-table match. While 'mutual agreement' was put into the minutes of that AGM, in reality teams will tend to do whatever suits and would not make a fuss if minded to disagree with the opposing team.

It must, of course, be the home team's ultimate prerogative, since the venue may have insufficient tables available to accommodate two tables anyway.

After a little discussion, there was clearly no appetite to alter the League's official stance.

10 'Foul and a Miss' rule

Warren Blamey wished to suggest some tweak to the League's interpretation of the Rule, since he thought it was insufficient in top division matches. Perhaps being able to see *any* part of the ball on, rather than *all* of it, should be the Rule.

The Secretary recalled that the League's version of the Rule was written so that it was black and white, leaving no room for subjectivity and hopefully therefore usable across all divisions, minimising the opportunity for controversy. However, it was noted that 'any part' of a ball is just as matter-of-fact as 'full ball'.

Dave Gerrish pointed to several instances in the second division of reluctance to enforce the Rule, to the extent that one team openly states that they "don't use it". He therefore went the opposite way to Warren in suggesting that the League should perhaps simply not use the Rule at all.

The Secretary asked Dave what reaction they got when his team called a *Miss*, and he said that it was met with great dissatisfaction, even ridicule. It was clear, therefore, that there was significant disparity between divisions in the Rule's use and its perception.

This being the case, it was realised that, along with the matters under Items 6 and 7, this too might be affected by the number of divisions that the League would end up with. Since the League Rules do not specifically refer to this Snooker rule, it was agreed that this too would be discussed at the pre-season meeting and be added to the scope of Rule 3(f) as amended at Item 7.

11 Entry fees for the upcoming season

This had already been settled at Item 4.

12 Election of Officers

The Secretary/Treasurer and Chairman had indicated their willingness to continue in the roles, while Malcolm Gray (Vice-Chairman) had decided to stand down. There were no other nominations received for any positions prior to the meeting.

The meeting looked for someone present who might be willing to avail himself for the Vice Chairmanship and Dave Gerrish volunteered.

It was therefore unanimously agreed that Chris Downer (Secretary/Treasurer) and Lawrence Millington (Chairman) be duly re-elected and that Dave Gerrish be elected Vice Chairman.

13 Closing date for entries for 2017-18 season

This was agreed as Monday 28 August 2017, with pre-season meeting to be held on Wednesday 30 August, at 7:30pm at St. James' Institute.

14 Secretary's Honorarium

Mindful of the Treasurer's Report, the Meeting considered keeping the honorarium at the same level as last year, viz. £250. However, it was reluctant to leave the League with just £20 in the bank in case entry levels suffered further, causing potential difficulties at the end of the season. Lawrence Millington therefore proposed, and it was unanimously agreed, that the honorarium should be £200.

The meeting closed at 9:20pm.

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BALANCE SHEET 2016-17

Balance brought forward: **£323.77**

INCOME

Team registration fees (11 @ £25)	£275.00
Entry fees: Veterans	£14.00
Hugh Theobald	£14.00
Ian Cryer	£24.00
Singles night	£30.00
Dave Gerrish - sponsorship of website	£42.90
Total:	<u>£399.90</u>

£723.67

EXPENSES

Secretary's honorarium (2015-16)	£250.00
Trophies: Veterans'	£14.00
Hugh Theobald	£14.00
League proper / Ian Cryer	£87.00
Secretary's expenses	£15.00
Website subscription	£42.90
Singles night - venues	£30.00
Total:	<u>£452.90</u>

Balance carried forward: **£270.77**