



2009 was the last year before the implementation by the EBU of subscription via Pay-to-Play. Fewer than half of London's affiliated clubs have signed up for continuing affiliation from April 2010, and the county's income from subscriptions is likely to be significantly lower in future, even though there will be more "direct" members. As a consequence, a number of steps have been taken to reduce the Association's costs. These include discontinuing the publication of a competition brochure (and including competition data in the newsletter instead) and seeking individual members' approval to receiving the newsletter electronically. However, we shall need to continue to monitor the situation very closely over the course of the next year or so.

For the second year running, our performance in the Tollemache and Metropolitan Cup gave us nothing to celebrate. Sadly, the Committee Match against the Surrey Committee did not take place in 2009 – it has been suspended indefinitely as both counties look to reduce costs in anticipation of lower subscription income.

People

Christine Duckworth has, as always, continued to shoulder the bulk of work for the Association as county secretary, editor of the newsletter and youth officer. Roger Morton has had his work cut out keeping fully in touch with the issues of Universal Membership and has kept us well informed, whilst also maintaining the Association's website. Sati McKenzie continues to do sterling work running the leagues, the Champions Cup and the London Championship Teams of Four for the Ian Gardiner trophy, whilst also acting as the committee's minutes secretary.

Simon Cocheme continued to deal with a number of issues including the reinvigoration of the London Trophy but, sadly, has now expressed a wish to stand down from the committee. Our thanks go to him for all his work over a number of years. Also standing down from the committee is Cecil Leighton, after more than fifty years service. Latterly, his contribution has been solely to organise and administer the London Trophy but the changes being made to that event include handling most of it electronically, and the principal contact in future will be Kit Jackson.

Finance

The underlying financial position seemingly remains stable. However, as reported last year, we remain somewhat exposed as a result of the several handovers of the role of treasurer over the last four years. Ian Payn has started to get to grips with things but we still do not have audited accounts for any of the last four years. This is not satisfactory and, although the individual competition reports and the LMBA's bank balances indicate that we remain financially sound, we do need further action from the treasurer to rectify matters.

As already mentioned, a number of actions have been taken to reduce costs in order to maintain financial stability in the era of Universal Membership. Our 2010 subscription income from Pay-to-Play is expected to be barely half of our 2009 subscription income. However, on the positive side, many members whose clubs chose not to affiliate in 2010 have become direct members and the number is still growing.

Sponsorship remains a critical part of the Association's finances. The Lederer could not take place without generous sponsorship from our President, Bernard Teltscher, and the Young Chelsea Bridge Club. Similarly, the Fox Shammon Trophy, the finals of the London Trophy and the Della-Porta Plate and the London Trophy Pairs continue to benefit from venues being provided by Queen's Club and the Royal Automobile Club. Our thanks are due to them all.

The Future

The EBU has successfully implemented Universal Membership via Pay-to-Play but it will still take some time for everything to settle down. Meanwhile, their work on developing bridge education and investigating the possible benefits of adopting charitable status continues. The Association remains committed to helping them in the process of developing the game but will need the full support of its members, both individuals and clubs to do so.

Earlier this year, the Association staged the first ever Café Bridge event in England. It was very successful, not least because it was also in support of the charity, Age Concern, and the intention is to hold another, similar event next year. It demonstrated that there is still scope for developing the calendar of events and bringing in new participants. The planned expansion of the London Trophy to allow bridge clubs as well as sports and social clubs to participate (whilst still restricting the bidding to "simple system" and maintaining the limit on the number of highly ranked players allowed in a team) is a further development. In such ways, the Association intends to continue to attempt to develop the game and broaden participation in tandem with its support for the EBU's development activities.

M. R. D. Hill

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