

**Minutes of the 50th Berwick-upon-Tweed Bridge Club
Annual General Meeting
held at 7pm on Tuesday, 24 May 2022 at the Parish Centre**

Document status: Approved

Reviewer	Date	Notes
Paul Gipson	25 May 2022	Released for committee review
Paul Gipson	27 May 2022	Published on website
Paul Gipson	30 May 2023	Approved by AGM

Present: Reverend Canon Christopher Smith President
 Peter Calder Vice President
 Paul Gipson Honorary Secretary
 Tony Reed-Jones Honorary Treasurer
 Louis Moore Honorary Competitions Secretary
 Penny Davidson Committee member
 Jean Mole Committee member
 Chris Orchard Committee member
 Kitty Home Robertson Committee member

(Club members)

Kate Mole, Margaret Patterson, David King, Ros French, Helen Gipson, Linda Warcup, Peter Bistram, Nicola Corbyn, Jane Davey, John Smithson, Jane Smithson, Tony Oates, Marilyn Hodgson, Tony Houghton, Janet Beattie, Julian Bales, Anne Horne, Catherine McConnachie, Trish Frew, Ian and Christine McCreath, Angela Hutchinson

Apologies: Christine and Michael Rowell, Eric and Sue Price, Nigel Marlow, Jim Boyd, Ian Aitken, Margaret McMurchie, Colin Edney, Ann Ross, Kelvin Butler, Jill Connor, Ian Guthrie, Diana and Reg Drysdale, Marion Mead, Jude Gardner, Jim Lindsay, Guy Richardson, Perry Vassie, Sarah Davidson, Helen Hardwick, Elaine Kilgour, Stuart Breckons, Marguerite Robson

President's welcome

Christopher welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for coming to the AGM and said that he appreciated seeing so many people in the flesh.

He started the meeting with a minute's reflection for the club members who passed away over the past year: Sheila Pearson; Joan Tait; George Martin; and Pam Thomas.

Minutes of the 49th AGM held on 25 May 2021

The minutes of the 49th AGM were held to be a true record of the meeting.

President's Report

Christopher presented his [report](#). He emphasised his desire to see people have a 'sense of belonging' to the club, whether they participate in face-to-face or online bridge or both.

He stressed the need for flexibility as we move forward in the 'new normal'.

Christopher finished by recognising Sandy Duncan's achievement in representing Scotland in the Senior Camrose and winning the trophy by gaining a game swing on the penultimate board. Christopher also noted the number of club members who had an [impact outwith the club](#).

Honorary Secretary's Report

The Honorary Secretary presented his [report](#).

Honorary Treasurer's Report

The Honorary Treasurer presented his [report](#). Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Jane Smithson and seconded by Ian McCreath. This was passed unanimously.

Tony confirmed his plan for staggered payment of table money over the season. Janet Beattie asked about card collections: Tony said that he and the committee had examined this last year and timely collection was an issue with a reasonable number of tables.

Helen Gipson asked about collecting table money for those who play infrequently: Tony confirmed that the second payment would only be requested for those who are clearly going to overrun their initial payment.

The annual subscription was confirmed at £1, table money at £2 and BB\$2 for face-to-face and online events respectively. Acceptance of these was proposed by Helen Gipson and seconded by Chris Orchard. This was passed unanimously.

Honorary Competition Secretary's Report

The Honorary Competition Secretary presented his [report](#).

Appointment of Account Examiner

The motion "Greaves, West and Ayre are reappointed Account Examiner" was proposed by Tony Reed-Jones and seconded by Jane Smithson. It was passed unopposed.

Election of Office bearers and Committee members

Position	Name	Proposer	Seconder
President	Peter Calder	<i>Christopher Smith</i>	<i>Paul Gipson</i>
Past President	Christopher Smith		
Honorary Secretary	Paul Gipson	<i>Christopher Smith</i>	<i>Peter Calder</i>
Honorary Treasurer	Tony Reed-Jones	<i>Paul Gipson</i>	<i>Christopher Smith</i>
Honorary Competitions Secretary	Louis Moore	<i>Paul Gipson</i>	<i>Christopher Smith</i>
Committee ¹	Linda Warcup	<i>Louis Moore</i>	<i>Peter Calder</i>
Committee ¹	Angela Hutchinson	<i>Louis Moore</i>	<i>Peter Calder</i>
Committee ²	Jean Mole	<i>Peter Calder</i>	<i>Paul Gipson</i>

As there were no objections, these nominations were agreed by the meeting and elected unopposed.

President's acceptance

Peter Calder stated how proud he is to take over the role of President and the honour that it is. He welcomed the new committee members, Linda, Angela and Jean. His parents would be very pleased that he is continuing the family interest in the club: his mother, Mary, was President from 1982-85 and he recalled making bridge boards for the club with his parents.

Peter thanked Christopher for his leadership over a difficult time for the club. He thanked the Officers and how much they do for the club.

Peter finished by saying that the club depends on a raft of volunteers and he knows he can depend on the friendliness of the members moving forward.

Discussion: restarting bridge at the Parish Hall (Christopher Smith)

Christopher started by reminding people of the risk assessment that the committee had produced.

Table numbers will be restricted and the face-to-face evenings over the summer will be limited to 36 players. Tony Houghton asked what will happen if more players turn up?

Christopher said that this was not expected given the experience of other clubs returning to face-to-face bridge, but the committee would deal with it if it became an issue. Paul said that, technically, it would not be difficult to run a booking system but there was a general feeling that this would be unwelcome.

A good majority of those at the meeting indicated they intended to play summer bridge.

¹ Three-year term

² One-year term

Summer bridge will guide the committee in updating the risk assessment for September's bridge. Marilyn Hodgson asked that refreshments not be reintroduced: Christopher said he thought the summer bridge decision was likely to remain even though refreshments were now thought to be a negligible transmission risk,

Janet Beattie will be providing a host service for the summer bridge and Christopher asked for volunteers to help. Jane Smithson said previously people had rotated and we hoped that this would happen again. *[After the meeting Julian Bales suggested that the shared assignments document used by the online directors might be useful and the Secretary said this would be investigated]*

Christopher said that this was a new world and it would require an organic process moving forward: we don't have all the answers because we don't know all the questions.

Parish Centre ventilation - Christopher went through the Parochial Church Council (PCC) options (or lack of them). He has consulted two club members who are engineers who said that it is a difficult problem, but he will respond to the PCC as his last job as President. Anne Horne will take ideas like window fans back to the PCC for consideration.

Christine McCreath asked if we can investigate alternative venues, like the new Swan Centre. Peter Bistram mentioned Northern View in Highcliffe.

Discussion: balancing face-to-face and online bridge (Paul Gipson)

Paul went through the options detailed in his [discussion paper](#).

He reported that he had received around ten responses from members: these were both from those who were more interested in face-to-face bridge and those who only wanted online bridge. He was heartened that all the respondents focused on supporting both options moving forward.

Paul did not expect to make any decisions at the AGM but to develop a membership survey that would be more inclusive. There was a broad consensus that any survey should focus on two main options: running one online tournament and one face-to-face tournament per week; and running two face-to-face tournaments with an online tournament on a different night.

Tony Houghton said that making a decision would be difficult without knowing what was happening with the East District League teams. Paul was not hopeful of the East District making any timely decisions, not least as it has still not resolved the 2019-20 season.

Chris Orchard expressed a concern about releasing a night at the Parish Centre. If we later wish to expand to a second face-to-face evening, the venue may no longer be available.

Margaret Patterson and Jean Mole asked about starting earlier to enable an earlier finish, suggesting a 6pm start. Paul said he would add this question to the survey.

There was almost unanimous support for face-to-face bridge to move to 20-board tournaments rather than 24-board tournaments. Jean Mole preferred to play everyone but it was felt that it was more important to have an expectation on the number of boards to be played.

Discussion of whether to play in the afternoon was deferred to later in the agenda.

Discussion: celebrating the club's 50th anniversary (Paul Gipson)

Paul said that the club celebrated its 50th anniversary this year and thought we ought to do something.

Kate Mole said we could ask for suggestions at the end of the survey.

Christopher Smith asked what kind of event should we do? A special tournament, a meal, or other celebration. Generally it was felt that it should be a social event of some kind.

Christopher suggested that we expand the Christmas Party to include a celebration and there was general support for this idea.

Peter Calder asked everyone to consider what might be done and let the committee know.

Members proposed resolutions

- Move one session of face-to-face play to the afternoon (Kate Mole)

Kate said that she wished to withdraw her motion as written and ask that the committee ask the membership. This amended motion was deferred to AOCB.

- Berwick Bridge Club form a subsidiary the Berwick Online Bridge Club (David King)

David King spoke to his motion and extolled the advantages of playing online bridge. He noted that, under some options, online players will only have one session a week, whereas f2f players will have two. Paul said that online players can play 24x7 and that there are plenty of other online tournaments.

David withdrew his motion as Paul's survey was only considering a combination of online and face-to-face bridge. His main concern was that the online bridge would be continued by the club.

AOCB

Kate Mole proposed that the "Committee run a survey about moving one session of face-to-face play to the afternoon". This was seconded by Christopher Smith and passed unanimously.

There was no other business.

Prize winners recognition and presentation

Peter Calder presented the trophies to those present.



The meeting closed at 9pm.

2021-22 Trophy winners

The 2021-22 season started in September 2021 and was run entirely on Bridge Base Online due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Seventy-five club members participated in at least one evening of a club competition and prize money was won by 43 of them.

Trophy	Winners
Royal Bank of Scotland Cup	Helen & Paul Gipson
Anthony Scott Cup	Helen & Paul Gipson, Ros French & Diana Drysdale
McDonald Cup	Helen & Paul Gipson
Tom Woodman Trophy	Jane Smithson, Morven Stone, Louis Moore & Ian Guthrie
Wilf White Trophy	Christine McCreath & Colin Edney
Robin Pearson Pot	Colin Edney & Nigel Marlow
Martin Trophy	Jill Connor & Tony Reed-Jones
Calder Trophy	Linda Warcup & Ian Guthrie
Grindon Trophy	Louis Moore
Lindsay Trophy	Nigel Marlow
Nessie Dickinson Trophy	Diana Drysdale & Ros French
George Martin Trophy	Colin Edney
Betty Kelly Trophy	Nigel Marlow
Congress Pairs	Laura Middleton & Ying Piper
Congress Swiss Teams	Tom Robertson, Trina Rogerson, Ritchie Thompson & Rodger Urquhart

Bridge achievements by members outwith the club

International events

Sandy Duncan, with Bob McPaul, represented Scotland and won the Teltscher Trophy (Senior Camrose) in Northern Ireland.



(l-to-r) Sandy Duncan, Bob McPaul, Harry Smith, Heather Hill (NIBU President), Anne Perkins (NPC), Roy Bennett, David Shenkin, Cameron McClatchie.

Sandy and Bob will also represent Scotland in the Seniors team at the European Team Championships at Madeira in June.

Sandy Duncan (with Bob McPaul, Jim Hay and Derrick Peden) lost in the final of the EBU Silver Plate. The same team also lost in the semifinal of the Scottish Cup.

National events

Sandy Duncan, with Bob McPaul, won the combined Seniors Camrose/Lady Milne trial. They then won the Senior European trial.

Paul (with Alex, Brian Short and Alan Goodman) lost narrowly in the final of the SBU Winter Foursomes. Sandy Duncan was fourth in the consolation final and Reg and Diana Drysdale finished fourth in the Winter Swiss teams.

Colin Edney and Alan French won the SBU Simultaneous Pairs for the Lord Thomson Trophy, repeating their victory of 1993-94!

Paul (with Alex, Sam Punch and Stephen Peterkin) won the fourth Scottish Online League and was third in the fifth series.

Sandy Duncan, with Bob McPaul, qualified for the National Pairs Final and finished in the top half.

Perry Vassie and Jill Connor came second in the SBU Johnston Ranked Pairs.

Sandy Duncan, playing with Ying Piper, came second in the SBU Mixed Swiss Pairs.

Jill Connor, playing with David Nisbet, Fiona Davies and Joe Duxbury, won the Silver prize in the SBU Mixed Swiss Teams.

Sandy Duncan, playing with Bob McPaul, came third in the Scottish Swiss Pairs.

Berwickers (Nigel Marlow, David King, Tony Houghton, Nicola Corbyn, Kitty Home Robertson, Christopher Smith) narrowly won Division 8 of SBU Bronze League 7 and finished third in Division 5 in Bronze League 8.

Quaranteam (Jane Smithson, Trish Frew, Kate Mole, Margaret Patterson, Christine McCreath) finished second in Division 8 of SBU Bronze League 7 and second in Division 5 in Bronze League 8.

District/Area events

Diana Drysdale and Ros French won the BABC Border Pairs with Jean Mole and Reg Drysdale third.

Sue and Eric Price, Alan French and Colin Edney won the BABC Border Swiss Teams with Diana, Ros, Jean and Reg third.

Jill Connor, playing with Helen Kirkwood, came second in the South District Congress Swiss Pairs.

Diana and Reg Drysdale, playing with Joan Forsyth & Beryl Campbell, came second in the South District Congress Swiss Teams.

Other events

Diana Drysdale and Ros French were third in the Kelso Congress Pairs, with Jill Connor and Tony Reed-Jones fourth.

Diana and Ros were equal first in the Dunbar Congress Pairs, with Jean Mole and Reg Drysdale finishing sixth. They teamed up to finish fourth in the Congress Teams.

Sandy Duncan, playing with Bob McPaul, Liz McGowan and Tim McKay, was second in the Aviemore Congress Swiss Teams.

David King and Louis Moore came equal first in the July 2021 SBU Improvers' Bidding Contest in the Master category.

Christopher Smith and Nicola Corbyn won the bronze prize in the Berwick Congress Pairs.

Richie Thompson and Rodger Urquhart won the Berwick Congress Swiss Teams. Sue and Eric Price, Stuart Breckons and Elaine Kilgour won the bronze prize.

Promotions

The following club members have been promoted since the 2021 AGM:

Julian Bales - 1 Star Master (EBU)

David King - 1 Star Master

Jill Connor - Master

Eric Price - Master

Perry Vassie - Master

Christine Anthony - District Master

Jane Frier - District Master

Stuart Breckons - Club Master

Elaine Kilgour - Club Master

Angela Hutchinson - Club Master

President's report 2021-22

This is the last time that I will write to you as President of Berwick Bridge Club. In one way, I have been the first 'virtual' President of the club; elected at a Zoom meeting and conducting all our committee business on Zoom or Skype. The club games and the matches for the Berwickers which I have played during this period have been all online. I must say that I have missed the pleasure of meeting face to face with most of you at the bridge table, and so am delighted that we will be recommencing Face to Face (F2F) Bridge this summer, on Thursday, 23 June. It will be good to be interacting with club members again in a different way, and a delight to see folk in the flesh.

This pandemic has changed a great deal in our lives. For some it has been a tragic change. For all of us it has been one which has disrupted our previous way of life. All institutions have had to adapt and change in order to meet the demands of a potentially life-threatening situation. Still, today, even though with widespread vaccination Covid is less of a threat than it was to us, it is still very much around, as I discovered when I contracted it after receiving my 'Spring Booster'. So, when we talk of 'getting back to normal' that 'normal' will be a new 'normal'. It can never be a straight return to our old ways. This is true of many institutions (as I know first-hand as a Churchman). Berwick Bridge Club is no exception.

We are, I believe, now in a position to begin to work out what our Club's 'new normal' will look like. This is a process which will take a good deal of time and much thought by everyone. I see this development as 'organic', a gradual change and redefinition of how our club works. Part of this must, in my opinion, involve F2F bridge. Being a club member implies a degree of social interaction, much of it in each other's presence. However, I also realise and value those for whom returning to F2F is not an option, and yet who would still wish to be Club members and play online. The committee which you will elect at the AGM will therefore need to grapple with exactly how we move forward together as a card playing community.

To that end, this letter comes to you alongside an excellent paper which Paul Gipson has written. This gives the options which are open to us in framing our future life together. Please read them carefully, and, having done so, communicate your ideas to Paul or to one of your committee members. Please, also if you can, attend the Annual General Meeting which as you know will be held F2F at The Parish Centre on Tuesday, 24 May 24 at 7pm. Paul's paper, your responses, and the Annual Meeting will all be parts of the gradual development of our club's 'new normal'. I am asking all of you to actively take part in that process.

It has been a great privilege to be your President during these 'interesting times'. I look forward with confidence to the ongoing life and success of Berwick Bridge Club, a club which I am very happy and proud to belong to.

Christopher Smith

Honorary Secretary's report 2021-22

I can tell it has been a quieter year with everyone settling into the new environment as I've created far fewer YouTube videos.

I know that I'm seen as the face of online bridge and the BBO guru, but I am supported, and controlled, by many others. In particular Louis and our team of directors.

The records show that 75 club members played in our BBO tournaments this season, 73 shared 19,000 master points and 39 won cash (BB\$) prizes, but the real heroes are the directing team who ran the 102 sessions: all have given up their own chances of playing in various competitions to allow the rest of us to play and we should thank them for that: Eric and Sue, Stuart and Elaine, Jane, Julian, Trish and Colin.

It is fair to say that I have not progressed two of my goals as well as I would have liked. I hope that the new Committee will help me attain these goals moving forward:

1. More teaching for bronze and intermediate players.

Establishing the requirement and desire for this is the first task.

2. Preparing for the club's 50th anniversary.

The inaugural meeting of the club was in March 1972 and the first AGM was in September 1972, so this year will be the club's golden anniversary.

Hopefully we can look forward now and I can wrestle with the problem of dealing with the printers for the first time. We also have to consider how to address the balance of face-to-face and online bridge for the first time.

Finally, I'd like to give my thanks to Christopher, the Committee, and all the club members for their support over the season.

Paul Gipson

24 May 2022

Honorary Treasurer's report 2021-22

Members total: 94

Financial review

The accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis and report the actual cash receipts and cash payments made in the reporting period.

The club closed in March 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, with the inevitable consequences for income and expenditure in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years. The club was set up to run virtually from November 2020, and we have run as such through the financial year 2021/22 allowing those members who wished to participate in on-line club competitions.

The financial statement highlights a deficit of £11 for the year to 4th May 2022, resulting in a year end cash balance of £11,655.

Receipts

The SBU reduced the subscription rate from £10 to £8 for the 2021/22 season which explains the fall in receipts year on year from £943 to £704. As of 4th May 2022, the club had a total of 94 members of whom a number joined to play in our online tournaments.

Most of the income continues to be received through BBO/SBU; this is received in arrears. All the events that the club have held over the period require table money, usually \$2 per person and the remittances received via the SBU at c 60% of the totals paid by members to play, are a welcome addition to the club's finances.

Expenditure

With no face-to-face bridge for over two years there is no expenditure on room hire; the £72 shown in the accounts under "room hire and insurance" represents the annual payment for Club Protection Insurance to Fidentia. However, because the church has held Tuesday and Thursday evenings for the club and decided not to take bookings, the committee decided to make two ex gratia payments of £250 each to acknowledge our appreciation.

The £621 under "prizes and engraving" is for both Congress and the clubs' competitions.

Master points and affiliation fees include the £8 paid to the SBU on behalf of full members of the club at the start of the 2021/22 season.

In the "equipment purchases & IT & teams", the following payments were made in the financial year, Pianola fee - £150, Scorebridge fee - £48 and payments on behalf of our teams in various leagues - £778 – there were no team payments made in 2020/21.

The following charitable donations were made in 2021/22: -

- £100 - Samaritans of Berwick (June 2021)
- £100 - ECATS – Children in Need (Nov 2021)
- £84 – ECATS – Cancer Research & Marie Curie (March 2022)

Sundries includes presents to a couple of members turning 90 years of age as well as a thank you to Paul Gipson.

The payment under congress expenses is for the licence.

BABC

In August 2021, the club took over responsibility for BABC including all the finances. A capital transfer of £620.77 was received from Peebles Bridge club and in the 2021/22 two events were held online - pairs and teams – resulting in the following financial position for BABC on 4th May 2022.

	£	£
Capital funds transfer from Peebles		620.77
Income		
Income from two events (BBO/SBU)	152.71	
Subscriptions	25.00	
Total receipts	177.71	
Expenditure		
Engraving costs & prizes	146.05	
Total expenditure	146.05	
Surplus		31.66
Capital balance at 4/5/22		652.43

On 4th May 2022 the bank balance with RBS was £**12307.18** (£652.43 – BABC plus £11654.75 Berwick Bridge club).

2022/23 Table Money & Subs

Good news on all fronts.

The SBU subscription will remain at £8 and the annual membership for Berwick will remain at £1. Both are to be collected as usual on or around 1st September 2022.

And as already notified summer bridge will be free to all members.

Table money for F2F bridge to remain at £2 per person, while table money for BBO events will remain at BB\$2.

At the 2021 AGM it was agreed that payments to play F2F bridge would be collected in three tranches during the season. However, the amount to be paid had not been determined. I therefore propose payments be made as follows based on table money of £2 per session:

1 September 2022 - £30.00

1 January 2023 - £30.00

1 June 2023 - the balance of any sums due.

And any member that has not played sufficient times during the season to use all sums paid to have any overpayment refunded to them.

Tony Reed-Jones (Honorary Treasurer)

20th May 2022

Honorary Competitions Secretary's report 2021-22

It may be a surprise to some of you that my role in the virtual club of the past two years has been very minimal.

I have endeavoured to keep the club computer up to date & I have awarded the Masterpoints end of story.

Our Hon Sec has been the creator & custodian of the virtual club, more because of his technical ability than his secretarial duties. I am eternally grateful for that, as I'm sure are most of us. The online directors deserve our gratitude also especially as they have foregone their game for our enjoyment. Thank you all.

The virtual club has introduced many of us to the joys of online bridge & I say this without any hint of irony. Online bridge for me is the preferable form of the game, so much do I enjoy it. Some people may cheat but if they cheat me then I'm flattered that they think they need to cheat to beat me.

But now we must look to the future.

I have to say that as far as Covid restrictions are concerned, the novelty has well & truly worn off. I am, as I'm sure are most of you, Vaxed to the Max & life, such as I have left, is not going to be cocooned between four walls. I'm prepared now to resume normal life in the belief that Covid isn't going to kill me although the future, as they say, is another country.

So with F2F bridge on the horizon I have made some preparations.

We have lost three directors but if we are still maintaining some online competitions, we still have sufficient numbers. For full F2F we will require more & now is the time for anyone interested to come forward so that I can arrange some training through the SBU.

For the directors who remain there is the added responsibility that, now that the hall is on WiFi, they will be uploading the results to Pianola at the end of the session. It's not difficult but, as it's set up, I'll need to show them how. This may daunt some.

I know our membership for F2F will have reduced quite a bit. Some have health issues, others have issues with the premises, some feel that the 24 board format is too long, some have fallen out of love with the game and sadly, the grim reaper has taken others.

Online bridge has given us more virtual members but I like to know who I'm playing & these members will probably never appear in F2F sessions.

Berwick Bridge Club is a local duplicate bridge club for our community & without the physical game I fear it is doomed. The online community? Well does it really exist?

It could be that, like so many other pastimes, bridge will dwindle away. Modern people seem to be less & less inclined to join clubs that involve going out on wintry evenings to cold & draughty halls to take part in activities.

Crowded whist drives are history today. Country dance groups have difficulty making up a set.

I sincerely hope that our Bridge Club does NOT go the same way. I fear without F2F it will.

Finally let me say that I've missed you over the last two years, all of you. The dour, the surly, the pedantic & the pleasant. All of you & I want to see you all again. To play with you or against you & most of all to beat you.

Discussion briefing note: balancing face-to-face and online bridge

In the past, if a player could not make it to the bridge club then we had no interest in helping them play bridge. And very few players were interested in playing online bridge so they thought their bridge careers were over.

The coronavirus pandemic has changed that. The club has put a lot of effort into making online bridge accessible to all and has been far more successful than most clubs in getting our members playing in this new environment.

The challenge, moving forward, is how the club balances both face-to-face and online bridge.

- We have members who will not, or cannot, return to the club for a variety of reasons.
- We have members who will only return to the club if they are able to play at the Parish Centre as previously.
- We have members who do not mind returning to the club but also like the flexibility of playing online, especially when it means that they do not have to make a long journey in the middle of winter.

Options

This is a **non-exhaustive list** of options and is designed to encourage debate. I expect the popularity of summer bridge at the Parish Centre and summer online bridge will also guide the committee when it comes to making decisions.

1. The club runs bridge at the Parish Centre on Tuesday and Thursday evenings with no online bridge.

There are many clubs running regular online bridge events and the SBU currently runs the Scottish Online League (Mondays), SBU Bronze League (Wednesdays) and Tuesday evening pairs, etc. BBO, RealBridge and other online bridge providers are open 24 hours a day where you can play.

Why does the club have to provide its own online offering? Will it survive without one?

2. The club continues running online bridge on Tuesday and Thursday evenings with no bridge at the Parish Centre.

Essentially we become an online club with no physical presence. The antithesis of option one. Is there any value in just being an online club?

3. The club runs bridge at the Parish Centre on Tuesday and Thursday evenings with another evening, probably Wednesday, for online bridge.

The primary challenge of running three nights a week is finding directors, especially for the online bridge.

4. The club runs one evening of online bridge and one evening at the Parish Centre, for example online Tuesdays and face-to-face Thursdays.

This is a fairly simple solution to provide although it has an impact on how some competitions will be run. Is this a compromise solution or one that frustrates everyone?

5. Hybrid solutions

- a. The first hybrid solution that people consider is players at the Parish Centre playing the same hands as online players on BBO. This is simple to arrange but there are some real challenges:
 - i. You need a director at the Parish Centre and you need an online director.
 - ii. This solution has two independent sections: the online people never play against the people at the Parish Centre, but all the scores are combined for a final result. For this to be fair, you would ideally want similar strength pairs in both sections and similar sized sections.
- b. Everyone at the Parish Centre plays on tablets rather than with physical cards: that is, we have a complete digital tournament where both online and face-to-face people compete together. It does raise some questions:
 - i. Why come to the club at all when you can play just as easily at home?
 1. It retains a social element.
 2. It removes the concern of whether your home IT equipment is appropriate.
 - ii. Will those at the Parish Centre be willing to play with tablets rather than cards?
 - iii. Is this just the first step to becoming only an online club?

6. Traditionally we have always played in the evening. Is there a demand for other times for both face-to-face and online bridge?

Kate Mole has proposed a motion at the AGM supporting afternoon bridge.

Summary

Most clubs are reporting a slow return to face-to-face bridge with numbers typically 50% or less of pre-pandemic levels. Berwick is fortunate that we do not have a facility to maintain, but the availability of the Parish Centre may become an issue if we use it less often.

Are we moving inexorably to becoming an online club?

Will face-to-face bridge be held back by the ventilation concerns at the Parish Centre and would a new venue provide a new lease of life? If we only get back to six tables at the Parish Centre, is ventilation still a reasonable concern?

The future of the bridge club has a lot of questions and no easy answers. Please let me have your views.

Paul Gipson
17 May 2022