

Grantham Bridge Club Chair's Report June 2021

Yet again this has been a very unusual year for Grantham Bridge Club through the continuing pandemic. I want to reflect on what we have achieved as a Club rather than what we haven't been able to do.

Our success has been based on an excellent and very supportive Committee of regulars, namely Bill Barclay, Carol Hulse, Jane Forbes, Steve Potts, Jennie Rea and Becky Ronan. Since January 2021, Patsy Scriven and Neil Henfrey have been welcomed to the Committee.

All our Committee work hard to keep Grantham Bridge Club going. Especially, I want to mention Steve Potts who has been our Treasurer for the last eight years and is now resigning as Treasurer. Steve has been meticulous in his book keeping and production of accounts during this time. This last year has been very demanding. The way in which we have had to operate has caused a significant increase in transactions for Steve. But as always, Steve has taken on this responsibility diligently. He has also advised the Committee of the financial position of the Club so that we can make decisions on how we can make best use of the funds. We are not losing Steve's expertise. He has generously offered to assist the new Treasurer in their role. Thank you, Steve, for all your hard work and leaving your role with the Club in a very healthy financial position.

As a Club we have had to continue throughout the last year as a Virtual Club. Incredibly our membership has increased to 111 members. This is mainly due to a partnership with NG34 Bridge Club, run by Terry Gregory. Just under 30 of their members have joined us. We have also attracted players from Rutland and Oakham, Bradgate and Graffoe Clubs to name but a few. Playing virtually there are no geographical boundaries! Those of you who have not played on-line are still very important members to us, and although we haven't collected any membership fees from you over the last 18 months, you are not forgotten. We are waiting to meet up again as soon as the situation allows.

We have run BridgeBase Online (BBO) on a Tuesday evening since the end of July 2020 and a Wednesday morning since August 2020. Throughout that time we have averaged over 6 tables across the two sessions, with Wednesdays proving very popular latterly.

To achieve this Bill Barclay and myself were trained as on-line BBO directors. We then cascade trained John Ronan, Neil Henfrey, Terry Gregory and Sarah Stainforth. The Club is very grateful to the Team of Directors – without these members giving up their time, online bridge would not happen.

As well as the weekly sessions we have used BBO for a variety of different events. All give members an opportunity to try some different formats and different types of competitions. This has included Swiss Pairs Leagues, Sim Pairs, Individual events and Team events against Rutland and Oakham.

We have also used RealBridge on a Thursday afternoon since January 2021. Tables average about 4 per session. This has given players a different experience and has allowed players not only to play but see and chat to their partner and the opposition - very much the way forward in the online world. Again thanks to the Directors who look after the Thursday afternoon group, namely Bill, Jennie, Carol Hulse and Patsy.

Carol Hulse and Jennie, with support from Bill and Steve successfully used RealBridge to run a Charity event to raise £839 for Blood Cancer. 24 pairs played, of which over half came from outside the Club. Well done all.

Using RealBridge, Bill also trialled four different short training sessions prepared by Andrew Robson. Again an interesting use of Realbridge and again well supported by Members.

Online Bridge has involved a lot of IT issues in the background. We could not have done this without Bill's knowledge and never ending patience with us non-IT users. At times he appears to be a 24 hour support line! Thank you, Bill.

Again increased Membership has had a big impact on the administration for the Club. Becky has continued to keep the Membership list up to date and welcome new members. Alongside this Becky regularly updates the website and creates Directors rotas. Again all this work behind the scenes is much appreciated.

The Club continues to be affiliated to Leicestershire County Bridge Association (LCBA). We have been one of the more active clubs in promoting online bridge and supporting LCBA events.

We have had a regular presence in all the LCBA events including the Online Stanley, Online Gentle Duplicate Pairs, Mixed, Men's and Ladies' Pairs, Club Pairs, Lockdown Swiss Teams and Non-expert Teams of 4.

Notable success have been:

Non-expert Teams of 4	Runners up	Irene, Debs, Neil and Jacob
Ladies Pairs	Winners	Judy and Becky
Club Pairs	Runners up	Judy and Becky

Becky and I have played regularly in the Midlands County League in the second division with mixed success.

Bill continues as a member of the LCBA Executive committee and is heavily involved in the organisation of many of these competitions.

In summary, Grantham Bridge Club has not let Lockdown, get us down. We continue to have a good reputation within Leicestershire and more importantly, have aimed to provide our members, old and new, the opportunity to keep playing bridge and keep in contact with fellow members and friends during these unprecedented times. Thank you all for the kind words of support and appreciation that you have sent to the Committee – it does mean a lot to us.

So the future.....

As Steve mentions in his Treasurers report, we are in a sound financial position so this gives the Club some options moving forward. It is most probable that we will continue with a mixture of online bridge and Face to Face (F2F). It is probable that money from online bridge may have to be used to subsidise F2F. Our aim is start on a Monday evening with F2F from September. We are following advice from the government and the EBU and consulting neighbouring clubs on how to return to F2F safely. We would also like to look at how we can incorporate Beginners and Improvers sessions into our programme. There are so many variables and unknowns at the moment, but rest assured your Committee will continue to listen to the views of the members and provide all members with the best bridge that circumstances will allow.

Judy Hulland
Chair
Grantham Bridge Club

