

Reading Bridge Club - Report for 2019/20 and 2020/21

This report is an expanded version of the usual report from the Secretary that is made to members at the AGM each year. It is expanded in 2 ways: over time (as we did not hold an AGM in 2020 this report is covering two years rather than one) and in coverage (we have tried to give members a fuller account of club activities).

We have had some significant Committee changes. At the end of 2020 Mike Ribbins (Committee Chairman, 23 years on the committee) and John Greenhalgh (Committee Secretary, 15 years on the committee) stood down. In recognition of all the hard work they have done for the club both Mike and John have been made Life Members. To take their places we have welcomed new committee members: Chris Hall (Committee Secretary), Roger Burkeman and Giorgio Jeronimidis, and Chris Cook has taken on the Committee Chairman role. Everyone on the committee does a lot of work behind the scenes and other members also provide essential support. In particular, we have been doing a lot of work on the website – this has been led by Gill Smith who has been co-opted onto the committee. A summary of all those who support the running of the club is given in the volunteer document at the end of this report.

Number of tables at club events

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Tuesday		4.6	4.5	5.6	6.0
Thursday	7.2	8.4	9.0	9.0	9.2

The low number of tables on Tuesdays has been concerning for several years now. The average number of tables in 2019 was 4.6, a figure that excludes 8 Tuesdays which had to be cancelled because insufficient players turned up. After national lockdown in March 2020 all events have been online using the BBO platform. There has been an encouraging increase in the number of tables as members got used to this new way of playing; recently we have been having 8-9 tables each Thursday. A trial event on RealBridge attracted 7.5 tables with favourable feedback from those who played.

96 members have paid subs this year, but we expect some (mostly Thursday afternoon players) to pay once live play resumes. This year we have suspended the requirement to pay by 30th June or membership will lapse. Owing to a lack of live play, and the relative health of the club's financial position, we have offered a free year of membership for 2021-22 for anyone who is already a member.

County Events

Members' successes in county events during April 2019 to March 2021 are reported below (ignoring 2019 items that were covered in the previous report; many traditional events were not held in 2020 because of the pandemic; regular county online sessions are not covered here):

Event	Members	Position
Green Pointed Swiss Pairs 2019	James Bond & partner	3rd
Green Pointed Swiss Teams 2019	Tony Parkinson & Mick Green, James Bond & partner	1st
Blue Pointed Swiss Pairs 2019	Mike Wenble & partner	3rd
Mixed Swiss Teams 2019	David & Janet Barnes, Mike Ribbins & Jonny Richards	1st
County Pairs Qualifier 2020	Tony Parkinson & Mick Green	3rd
County Pairs Plate 2020	David & Janet Barnes	1st
Finchampstead Plate 2020	Gill Smith & Chris Cook; Molly Anderson & Monique Illingworth	1st 2nd
Jarrett Cup 2020	David Barnes & James Bond	3rd
County Pairs Plate 2021	David & Janet Barnes	3rd

Tollemache

Ian Reissmann, Mike Perkins and Tim Rees represented the county in 2019. In the qualifying event Berks and Bucks won their section, thus qualifying for the final of 8 teams where they came 5th.

In 2020, Ian Reissmann and Mike Perkins played in the qualifying event but the team failed to qualify for the final.

Leagues of 8 (teams)

Reading fielded 3 teams in the county league in 2019/20. In Division 1 (10 teams), Reading A (captained by Mike Perkins) finished 2nd equal and Reading B (captained by Peter Hawkes) finished 5th. In Division 2 (10 teams), Reading C (captained by Sam Botfield) finished 8th. Some match results had to be estimated because of the pandemic.

Reading fielded 2 teams in the Chiltern League (8 Teams) in 2019/20. By the time that matches ceased because of the pandemic, the A team (captained by Chris Hall) was lying 2nd equal and the B team (captained by Mel Thomas) 8th.

When the leagues went online for 2020/21, Reading fielded 2 teams in the county league: Reading A (captained by James Bond) came 2nd out of 8 teams in Division 1 and Reading B (captained by Sam Botfield) finished mid-table in Division 2 (5th out of 8 teams). In the Chiltern league, Reading entered one team captained by Chris Hall which came 4th out of 6 teams.

League of 4 (teams)

In the 2019/20 league, after estimation for unplayed matches, Mike Perkins' team finished 3rd in Division 1 (7 teams); in Division 2 (7 teams), David Barnes' team

came 1st and Bob Dowdeswell's team 2nd. In Division 3 (6 teams) Gordon Maxwell's team finished a close 2nd.

The results for the online league for 2020/21 are not yet available for Division 1. In Division 2 Tony Parkinson's team finished 1st.

National events

Tim Rees played for Wales in the 2019 Teltscher Trophy and in both weekends of the 2020 Camrose.

In 2019 Durham A won the blue riband English universities competition, the Portland Bowl, beating Cambridge B in the final at the home of bridge, the Portland Club. Former Reading BC young members Charles Bucknell (captain), Edmund Lea and Euan Sarson made up the majority of the Durham team.

Event	Members	Position
Easter Congress, Jack High Swiss Pairs, 2019	Stephen Delooze & Rita Evans	4th
Spring Bank Holiday Congress, Swiss Teams, 2019	James Bond & partner, Peter Jackson & partner	3rd
Scarborough Summer Congress, Swiss Pairs, 2019	Chris Cooper & partner	1st
Seniors Congress, Swiss Teams, 2019	Bob Dowdeswell & Ian Mackinder, Pat Dowdeswell & Mike Ribbins	3rd
Silver Plate 2019	Ian Mackinder & Roger Donato, Bob & Pat Dowdeswell	Lost in semi-final to eventual winners
National & Regional Masters, 2020	Mike Nunn & Gary Stevens	2nd
Autumn Congress, Swiss Pairs, 2020	Mike Ribbins & Pat Dowdeswell	2nd

Competitions

Annual 2018/19

Presidents Cup – Peter Jackson
 Francis Cup – Peter Jackson and Mike Perkins
 Founders Cup – Mel Thomas Martina Zwiefelhofer
 Cocktail Pairs – Mike Perkins Peter Jackson

Six Monthly – Summer 2019 and Winter 2019/20

Brown Cup- Mike Perkins Mike Ribbins
 Laycock Cup – Joyce Baldock Mike Ribbins
 Bilbey Cup – Oliver Dillon Mike Jordan
 Boucher Cup – Oliver Dillon Oliver Dillon

Thursday rubber bridge

We have enjoyable Thursday afternoons playing Chicago bridge at 1p per 100 which we hope will improve our game. Before COVID there were typically 2 to 3 tables with play starting at 12.30 and finishing at 4pm. Partners are not needed as we swap around.

Consultation on a possible move to Caversham Heath Golf Club

Reading Bridge Club has been based at 35 Jesse Terrace since 1959. After initially leasing the building from the two members who owned it, the building was purchased by the club in 1971. We are one of a minority of clubs to own its own premises and this brings many challenges as well as benefits. Our main issues are; the cost in terms of time and money required to maintain an ageing building, access to parking, the setup with multiple small playing rooms and disabled access to the building itself and the facilities internally.

For many years the RBC committee has pro-actively explored options for alternative premises that would enable us to retain all the positive aspects of the club while addressing the issues mentioned. In 2019, as part of the merger of Caversham Heath and Reading Golf clubs and the associated club house development, Reading Bridge Club was offered the opportunity of leasing a large space on the top floor of the club house that would be designed and fitted out specifically for our use. A number of committee members visited Caversham Heath Golf Club (CHGC) and felt that in terms of parking and facilities this option met RBC's needs sufficiently to undertake a formal consultation with our full membership.

This process began with an email to members in September 2019 that asked for your views on this and whether you would continue to play if RBC relocated to CHGC. Most members recognised the improvement in parking and playing facilities on offer and the opportunity to develop the club e.g. by introducing daytime bridge sessions. The main concerns raised were;

1. Travel to CHGC
 - Possible congestion on the IDR and Caversham bridge increasing travel times
 - A longer distance to travel for many members
 - Poor public transport access
2. Financial
 - Several members thought the monthly lease cost was too high, particularly in relation to the amount of time that the space would be used by RBC initially
3. Other
 - Reading Bridge Club would no longer be in Reading or Berkshire

However, as 47 from 81 members that responded stated that they would continue to play at CHGC and/or were in favour of the move, a summary of the consultation and more detail information was sent to members ahead of an EGM and formal vote on 6 November 2019. It was agreed by the committee that, given the significance of this change, a potential move to CHGC would only be pursued if 60% of the members voting were in favour. There was an excellent response with 107 (94%) of 120 our members voting. 61 members (57.0%) voted in favour of the move and 46 (43.0%)

voting against. This was extremely close vote but as a result CHGC were informed that we did not wish to take up their offer.

There was a lot of work involved in this consultation process but we did learn a lot from it about what is important to members which will help if we want to consider other premises in the future. For now, RBC's home will remain at Jesse Terrace. At the time of the vote, we could not have predicted that just 4 months later bridge at the club be halted by the COVID-19 pandemic and I think many of us have reflected on the possible impact of this, had we voted to go forward with the move. Although face to face bridge has stopped, as you will see from Simon's summary in this report, repair and maintenance work in both the club area and the flat has most definitely not stopped during the past 12 months and there is more in the pipeline.

Club premises and flat

There have been a number of major problems with the flat over recent months; a water leak which brought a ceiling down and damp penetration elsewhere have been rectified. Work to renovate the bathroom is underway and, once completed, the carpets will be replaced. On the ground floor rats have entered the building by gnawing a hole in a window frame. The hole has been blocked and the frame will be repaired.

Although there has been no need for it, we have maintained the parking arrangement with Berkshire Records Office. We received two months free in recognition of not using the parking spaces, but regular payment has now resumed at a higher rate.

Reading Bridge Club committee and volunteer duties 2021

2020/21 COMMITTEE

Pat Dowdeswell	President	Christine Cook	Chairman
Chris Hall	Secretary	Mel Thomas	Treasurer
Sam Botfield	Roger Burkeman	Simon Fixter	Giorgio Jeronimidis
Martina Zwiefelhofer			

2021 CLUB DUTIES

Premises and building maintenance	
Trustees for the club	David Barnes James Bond Steve Johnston
Flat rental/liaison with letting agent	Mel Thomas
Internal and external property maintenance and repairs	Simon Fixter and Sam Botfield
Cleaning contract	Simon Fixter
Cleaning & bathroom and computer supplies	Giorgio Jeronimidis
Garden maintenance	Simon Fixter plus volunteer team
Parking; liaison with Berkshire Records Office	Mel Thomas

Club sessions	
Online bridge	Gill Smith (website) Sam Botfield/Gill Smith (SIMS) Mick Green (Director Rota Director & Director) Pete Bamford, Tony Parkinson, Iain MacKenzie (director) Pat Dowdeswell (standby pairs)
Dealing rota and dealers;	Gill Smith (coordinator) Ken Jones Bob Dowdeswell Christine Cook Simon Fixter
Directors; Tuesday	Pat Dowdeswell (coordinator) David Barnes Jim Chapman Mick Green Peter Hawkes Mike O'Neill Mike Perkins Mike Ribbins Jonny Richards
Directors; Thursday	Gill Smith (coordinator) Nick Higham Ken Jones Simon Fixter (Scoring)
Thursday afternoon session coordinator	Jenny Supper
SIM Pairs	Sam Botfield
Tuesday comes to Thursday club nights	Janet Barnes
Scoring Program, Internal Competitions	Gill Smith
Food, drink & dishwasher supplies	Janet Barnes
Kitchen set up and clearing, table and kitchen laundry, additional housekeeping	Various willing volunteers
Other club organisation	
Club accounts	Mel Thomas
Review of accounts	John Chamberlain
Website/Pianola	Gill Smith
Club calendar	Chris Hall
Internal communications	Chris Hall
External Communications/PR/Marketing/Promotion	Mel Thomas
Honours Board	Roger Burkeman
Trophies	David Barnes
Social Events	Christine Cook
Competitions	
Selection committee Berks and Bucks teams	John Greenhalgh (Chair) Chris Hall Peter Jackson
Captains of Berks and Bucks League of 8 teams	Reading A; James Bond Reading B; Sam Botfield
Selection committee Chiltern League teams	Chris Hall (Chair) Roger Burkeman Martina Zwiefelhofer
Captains of Chiltern League teams	Reading A; Chris Hall
Club and County Events Secretary	Martina Zwiefelhofer