

## Chairman's Report

2023-24

Good morning ladies and gentlemen

The first year of my tenure as Chairman has been and gone. It seems to have passed rather quickly. I started with a vision of building on the existing aims and strengths of the club to make it a friendly, welcoming place where high-quality bridge could be enjoyed in this lovely venue.

Looking back, and around the room this morning, I am pleased with what we have achieved so far.

Luckily for me, the key members involved in the smooth operational running of the club, Kate, Marilyn and Sue, stayed in post which meant that the Club continued to be run efficiently and without incident! New members are welcomed; rotas are prepared; table vouchers are collected and the tea and biscuits magically appear – all thanks to the efforts of the Committee. I am also delighted to tell you that Sue MacDonald has agreed to stay on as Treasurer for another year – which is good news for us all. It will be her seventh year as Treasurer which is a long stint – she surely deserves a medal for her staying power!

Fortunately the Committee was bolstered by three new members, Yvonne, John and Richard, who brought additional talents to the table. I felt that we could exploit the skills of the whole group, to set an ambitious plan for the Club. As the year progressed the following priorities emerged:

1. Continue the previous Committee's plan to improve efficiency and increase the membership back to pre-Covid levels.
2. Increase the Club's 'technical human resources' i.e. Directors, Scorers, Dealing Coordinators.
3. Spread the knowledge of these key people more widely.
4. Generally to continue to make this a high quality bridge club – at every level. This involves improving little things and is ongoing. For example the Bridgemates which used to stick or which had marks on the screen, have been repaired or replaced. The cards we use are renewed constantly

## Chairman's Report

and I know from what you tell me, how everyone appreciates playing with new cards.

Progress was slow at first because it took time for everyone to get used to the new Chairman after five years of Neil, and change is hard! However, I am very pleased that the Committee trusted the plans and allowed the technical wizards the space to develop the new dealing and scoring systems which were at the heart of the efficiency drive. This is not to say that there weren't some lively discussions but it is good for change of this magnitude get a full and frank airing. In achieving the changes I would like to thank Richard Arnatt, Neil and Marilyn for working so hard and closely together and getting us to where we are now. Marilyn has produced the new notes for the Duplimators to follow and big thanks must also go to all the Duplimating teams for adopting these so well. It is much appreciated – thank you all.

Neil has shared his detailed knowledge with Richard Skeet and Robert Newhouse – further strengthening our technical base!

The sharing of this knowledge will stand us in good stead in the future because we will have several people who will be expert in the key roles. We won't be dependent on just one or two individuals and we will have cover when they go on holiday.

In conversations with people from other Clubs, it is clear that Bookham Afternoon Bridge Club is at the cutting edge of these new dealing and scoring processes. They will help to improve your enjoyment of the game and this is evidenced by our growing membership and the constant stream of visitors who come to play.

Turning now to the Directors, I would like to thank our existing pool of hard-working Directors who have supported the Club so well over many, many years. Unfortunately, that team has been dwindling but I am pleased to say that the Club is increasing the pool significantly. We currently have six members attending the four day Directors Course being run in the Harrison Room. It really won't be long before Marilyn will be spoiled for choice in deciding who should direct!

## Chairman's Report

I have mentioned several members of the committee by name but I would also like to thank every member for their contributions this year. We need our listeners and our thinkers as much as we need our technical wizards. Ron, and Miranda who has now taken over from Ron, also deserve a big vote of thanks in running the website so well. Our website is excellent - precise and clear.

Finally, a club is only as good as its members and that is where every one of you plays a key role each week, by coming and playing. Please continue to tell your Bridge friends about the Club and how they will be assured of a warm welcome and an enjoyable day's play if they were to come along. We will even give them a good cup of tea and a choice of biscuit. You can also help by embracing the contents of the 'Tips of the Week' we put out to improve your own understanding of the EBU laws and regulations. Being open to increasing your own knowledge of the game is surely a good thing for your own bridge.

The other thing I have come to value this year is how critical the social and supportive side of the Club is. The buzz at tea time, the hoots of laughter (mostly not at Adrian's appalling jokes) and the gentle ribbing between members is part and parcel of a happy place. The over-subscribed Christmas event; the sell-out AR Master Class; the raffles and the generous charity fundraising tell me this is not just a Bridge Club - it is a place of genuine warmth and kindness.

The big plan is by no means complete – no plan ever is, but I think it has been an exciting and successful start. I am grateful for all your support and look forward to sharing the next year ahead with you all.

Thank you for listening.