

**Bridgel News June 2024 - A safe space to talk about bridge**

1 message

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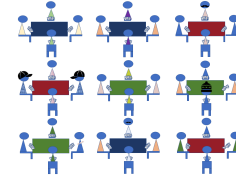
10 June 2024 at 10:38

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# Hold a Hand in a Club!



## JUNE 2024



[www.bridgeforpleasure.co.uk](http://www.bridgeforpleasure.co.uk)

In this edition...

Welcome to even more new subscribers

Keep Talking about Bridge

Please listen to Sorry, Partner: Stefan Skorchev.

Bridge It's a Big Deal

A Report from a club

Five goals for the EBU in 2024

How are clubs doing?

Festivals and Futures - An open discussion

Thanks to everyone who gives feedback about the newsletter!

The audience for this newsletter is growing. If you would like to receive it, you can subscribe at:

Click here to subscribe to this newsletter

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## Welcome to even more new subscribers

This newsletter was created during the pandemic to provide information and support for duplicate bridge clubs.

It has appeared roughly monthly for four years. All back editions are available at <http://www.bridgeforpleasure.co.uk>. This is a BridgeWebs hosted site.

Roughly monthly for almost four years we held a meeting on Zoom to discuss anything clubs were interested in. Recordings are available at <http://www.bridgeforpleasure.co.uk>.

Information about duplicate bridge clubs is collected and collated to provide a picture of life, and some idea of trends, in club life. Analysis, updated once a fortnight, is available at <http://www.bridgeforpleasure.co.uk>. A taster is included in each newsletter.

Also on the website are materials for a teaching scheme, available entirely free of charge to anyone.

## Keep Talking about Bridge

We are in touch with around two hundred people who are interested in the future of the game of bridge. A handful have chosen to drop out of the conversation. Many more have opted in by signing up for this newsletter and/or replying to us with messages of support.

We know that many at "Aylesbury" are also sympathetic. However, those in charge of the messages from "Aylesbury" have sent disparaging, closing messages invoking the phantom of GDPR.

Those messages present the EBU as anti change, anti transparency and anti debate.

This matters. After the pandemic an extraordinary number of volunteers brought most face to face clubs back to life. However, because the demographic is older, new recruits are urgently needed to keep the game alive. The communities of teachers and club organisers need the support of Aylesbury to find and retain those recruits.

Since the EBU AGM in November 2023, where promises were made to look at the issues, there hasn't been one word of support for either community.

## **Meanwhile in Wales...**

### **"WBU FOCUS GROUPS"**

You are ALL invited to come along to the first focus groups of the WBU, which will be held on Zoom. This is an opportunity to air your views and share your ideas on how the WBU can change and improve. It is also a chance for you to volunteer your time / skills to help us achieve that improvement. We welcome ex-members as well as current members – we want to hear from you all."

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Please listen to Stefan Skorchev  
on the Sorry, Partner podcast.

What he has to say about Bridge in England, with an outsider's eye is fascinating, especially about the ACOL Bridge Club, the social nature of bridge, collaboration and the future.



## Bridge – It's a Big Deal

I was asked if my club was doing anything for the Festival. The answer is not directly but...

David and I are really supportive of the Festival. It's a completely new thing for the EBU to attempt so we can understand they are nervous about it.

As a first attempt, there will be lessons learned. An open discussion about it is really important for the future.

There are two main reasons why Heart of England is not running an event as a club.

The first is that our calendar of regular and special events is planned over a year in advance. We could not add things for September given notice in February. I have spoken to other clubs who felt the same.

The second is that our plans for charitable actions are also planned well ahead. We support two local charities in alternate years: our air ambulance and a local hospice. In addition, I personally support charities directly aimed at the disadvantaged: food banks and the Salvation Army. I am not particularly comfortable with the choice of Cancer Research, and I do not want to ask my members to support it.

I also feel that the addition of the target of £60,000 for Cancer Research has diverted attention from the most important current need.

Bridge desperately needs to raise awareness of bridge outside the bridge community. This would make it more likely that current non players will come forward for lessons. Devising a series of events that mostly only reasonably experienced bridge players can participate in may not contribute a great deal to this goal.

However, the Festival is still a good idea. After the misery of the pandemic it's lovely to celebrate our game.

I suggested to our county, Northamptonshire, that we revised our club sim pairs competition. All clubs were positive about the idea and we are in talks with ECATS to run it for us. Our neighbouring county, Lincolnshire, like the idea and have enquired about joining in. We have

set a date for the Monday of the Festival Week.

Heart of England BC will certainly participate. There will be a levy on clubs to take part. The club will pay this levy rather than add it to the table money. We will not be collecting for Cancer Research.

I hope the EBU will do this again next year. I hope it will set a date now, hopefully liaising with the clubs in selecting the date. Several clubs have mentioned to me that this particular week in Sept was not a good choice.

I would like to see the charity element dropped.

I would like to suggest a major emphasis on reaching non players: media coverage; open days; taster sessions; bring a friend.

### A County Chairman comments...

I think a festival, as imagined by the EBU, has to be a one off so I don't agree with your suggestion of a re run next year. The reaction in Northants and from some other counties makes me think that BIABD will be a damp squib and a return would be even less welcome.

However, you are right to say that lessons should be learned and a different emphasis adopted but under a different guise, I would advise, than a second festival.

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### *A Report From a Club* Jim Steele writes

Things are slowly improving at Warrington Bridge Club, but it's a lot of effort.

A number of things seem to be working:

1. Teaching, in collaboration with the local Warrington u3a bridge group.

They take the beginners, and a second year Improvers class, then pass them on to Warrington Bridge Club for an Intermediate class, aimed at taking people up to the standard where they can feel

comfortable playing Club duplicate bridge. The important thing is we work closely together, organize joint teaching and gentle duplicate sessions, and have a continuum of teaching material so we are always consistent. We have a u3a Bridge Group person on our Club Committee, and someone from our Intermediate class, to try to keep in touch with what people like/don't like, and to get suggestions on what we can do to make things better.

2. Running Improvers/ charity sessions. Our main "serious" bridge session is on Monday evenings. Every two months we make it a joint session with learners, play fewer boards at a more relaxed pace, and give all the table money to a nominated local charity. People seem to respond well to this, and turn out in good numbers. It gets our more experienced players meeting and getting to know our learners, and breaks down barriers. We happen to have one of those sessions this evening- we'll see how it goes.

3. Running a weekly afternoon relaxed duplicate session, usually only 14 or 16 boards. This is less intense than a full duplicate session, and offers a stepping stone from learning to playing serious competitive bridge.

4. Running a weekly evening on-line session on RealBridge.

Our membership is slowly building, but it's never going to be a dramatic increase.

If we hadn't been proactive and taken the above steps, I think we would be near to folding by now. We had just under 60 members when Covid hit, having seen a steady decline year on year for many years. Now we have just under 130.

There is no doubt that the overall standard of bridge has declined somewhat from its heyday, but there are more people playing and enjoying the game.

Postscript to item 2- we did have a very successful evening on 11 March, with 12 1/2 tables. (our usual Monday evening "serious" duplicate pairs session is more like 7 or 8 tables)

I would love it if the Bridge is a Big Deal initiative of the EBU brings new people into the game, but it seems to be left largely up the individual Bridge Clubs to make the running.

From our County Association point of view, the most fruitful cohort to target is seen not as schools, or universities (I gather that none of our universities in our county have a Bridge Club!! Wow!) but is the newly empty-nesters- the people whose children have just left home to go to college or whatever, and who now might have some time to do things other than run at 100mph every day managing jobs, family issues, etc.

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## New contributors

This newsletter edition includes, again, an items provided by other observers. If you would like to contribute an item, please send it. Please make it no more than 200 words. Please make it positive, and supporting the goal of keeping grass roots bridge alive. That will keep elite bridge going.

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## From Jill Armstrong in North East

(Apologies this was held over from May - It's great that I have lots of material.)

What is happening?

1. I am disheartened by the narrow mindedness & protectiveness of the Board which means that only like minded people will be co-opted rather than elected at the AGM.
2. I am concerned by
  - a. Changes relating to minutes,
  - b. Some proposed changes to the Articles of Association,
  - c. Kay & Gayle wanting to stand down but being persuaded to stand - then within 12 weeks resigning, Ensuring some candidates not being elected.
  - d. There was a discussion about other potential volunteers for the Board. "As per previous years, it was agreed that if someone stood for election and failed to be elected to the Board, that they would not be co-opted." Isn't this a matter for the Articles of Association?
  - e. The EBU v EBED saga.
  - f. The EBU discussing charity status but now effectively having taken over EBED a charity, from which they should

separate but are now integral.

Enough is enough.

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## **Five goals for the EBU in 2024 - JUNE Update**

Really sorry to say that there is no known progress on any of this.

### **1 EBU Member Numbers**

Let's see this deficit get smaller in 2024

It is now **SIX** months since it emerged, that in the year to Nov 2023 there was a 3.000 net loss in membership. That's a half of a year. The EBU will have access to the latest position and so will know whether there is any sign of improvement.

The Chairman's meeting would be a great opportunity to publish the latest membership numbers, together with a comparison to the numbers presented to the AGM in November 2023. The last meeting was on 7th Feb 2024, recording available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2un9OPAxcl>. Apart from a general reference to the EBU YouTube channel, there seems to be no reference to these meetings. They don't seem to be in the EBU website calendar.

The EBU Board Membership/Marketing Sub-group has not reported anything visible to members except support of the "Festival of Bridge/BIABD". This festival has a clear goal of raising money for Cancer Research, and an implicit goal of celebrating bridge and attracting lapsed players back, however it is difficult to see how it will have a major impact on recruiting new players.



### **2 The Annual General Meeting**

Let's have a more practical, more open, more democratic format in 2024.



The AGM reverted to Face to face in a London hotel. Representatives from counties some distance from London faced more expense and travelling time. Many resorted to proxies. The meeting was only open to shareholders and their proxies, no public, no press, no playing members, no representatives of clubs, teachers or other bridge organisers. It was not recorded, so the record of the proceedings is limited to formal minutes and informal notes and discussions.

The chair undertook to look at a hybrid online and face to face form with electronic real time voting. This would allow a far greater audience, more participation, and a recording easily made widely available.

A London hotel has been booked for the 2024 AGM. It has been noted that there is no need for a Hybrid online/F2F meeting. No change to the "rule" that only shareholders or their proxies may attend. In the meantime.....



The WBU AGM will be held online on Zoom on Sunday 2nd June 11am.

The long awaited AGM, which was delayed by the Covid-19 situation, will be held on Zoom on Sunday October 11th at 11.45am for a midday start. To register for the AGM, please click on this link: or send your name and WBU number to [ceri@wbu.org](mailto:ceri@wbu.org) . You will then be emailed a link to join the meeting.



### **3 Updates from Aylesbury**

Any member able to request this newsletter by opting for it in their member account.

That way more people can be informed about bridge organisation.

The monthly update from Aylesbury is largely used as a vehicle for

marketing EBU run events. However, it can contain information important to club and county organisers, and of interest to teachers and players.

At present, the EBU sends to its own distribution list of club and county officials. It is difficult to keep this list up to date.

It would be so good if the EBU could adopt a policy of actively informing and educating about bridge, especially organising bridge. You have to persist in searching the web site for so many things, or directly request access from individuals. It would be so much more powerful if any member can subscribe or unsubscribe from a complete and dynamic list of interests e.g. events, teaching, directing etc.

There's no progress here. This would be an issue that I would want to tackle urgently. I know from years of running this newsletter just how poorly members, players, club organisers etc are informed. I am sure this constricts the flow of volunteers to help.



#### **4 EBU Teachers Directory**

There were about 200 entries in February. With wide publicity, let's double this number in 2024.

This directory is used by the EBU to pass on enquiries for lessons. Any teacher can be on the directory. It's not limited to EBEDTA members, or to those who use particular materials, systems or methods. It has real potential to boost numbers learning the game. Teachers put themselves into the directory.

Regrettably the count on 2<sup>nd</sup> March is still 200 entries. This is an area the EBU should be using all channels to promote. This directory has the potential to be the "landing page" for all people looking to learn bridge. This is key to recruiting new bridge players.

The EBU could promote it in:

All EBU members email

All Club/County organisers email (Updates from Aylesbury)

By agreement with EBED to EBTA members

None of the above has happened. However there are an additional six

entries in the directory as of 10th May. At that rate it will be doubled in a mere 8 years. This is important because teachers recruit new players. Connecting potential learners to existing teachers helps this happen. The independence of this directory from EBED is crucial to its success. Please can the board understand this. Don't use the irrelevant upsets to delay this real progress.



## 5 Freeze UM

Freeze UM in 2025/26 to reduce financial pressure on clubs.

UM is a cost of doing business for affiliated clubs. The level of EBU plus County UM has reached about 50p per player per qualifying session.

Table money is generally £2, £2.50 or £3. The median is £2.50. That means the EBU UM is 20%. Clubs have venues, and various other expenses to meet.

There is no official response to this idea. Informally, the comment is that the EBU don't see how they can afford it.

During enquiries we made before the 2023 AGM, it emerged that the Aylesbury building has been valued at £1.1M. There is over a million pounds of shareholders money invested in a building that is clearly too big.

The EBU Board lost it's treasurer and has supported a director with no financial experience to stand in until November. (The board has appointed another of its directors with no financial experience as EBED treasurer). There is no sign of active management of the finances to make possible a UMS freeze.

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How are clubs doing?

The 841 clubs in the database offer about 1253 weekly

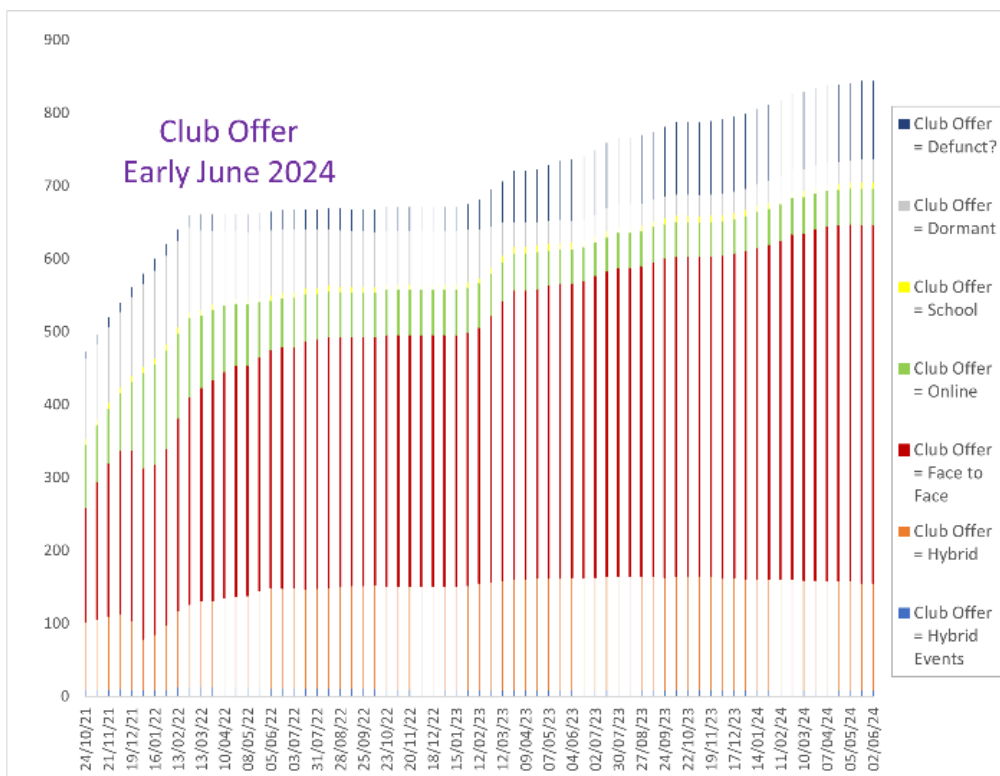
duplicate sessions.

1182 weekly sessions have been analysed in some detail. The session details include tables numbers (average of latest three weeks at review data) by day of week and time of day. The type of venue or online platform is also recorded.

F2F Average Tables

Early June

All Clubs F2F	6.71
EBU Clubs F2F	6.93
Non Affiliated Clubs F2F	6.36
Dedicated Premises	7.54
Shared Community	6.51
Multi Sport Club Section	5.34



There's more information here, typically updated once a fortnight.

# BFP Club Statistics Page

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[Click here to view previous newsletters](#)

## Festivals and Futures - An open discussion

Let's have a discussion on Friday 27th September

Topics:

How did BIABD go?

Do we want to do it again?

How would we like it to be different?

Anything you suggest?

Anyone like to do a short (five minutes) on how they see the future of bridge?

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## Previous New Normal Zoom Discussions

The meetings are informal gatherings. They are intended to bring together a wide range of perspectives. They should allow constructive debate.

The proceedings are informal and are recorded and published on YouTube. Links to the recordings are available on the Bridge For Pleasure web site.

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### New Normal Newsletter

This is issued roughly once a month. It is written and distributed on an entirely non profit basis, takes no advertising or commission.

Previous New Normal newsletters and a subscription form are available on the Bridge for Pleasure web site.

A freely available bridge teaching scheme with lesson plans, notes, deals, homework quizzes and answers is there for all.

# Bridge for Pleasure - Information Web Site

Please forward the letter to anyone in the bridge world who might be interested. Anyone can subscribe using the link below,

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