
Bridgel News July 2024 - Online and In Person

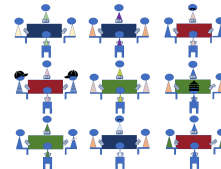
1 message

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16 July 2024 at 07:34

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Bridge
Enhances
Lives !



JULY
2024



www.bridgeforpleasure.co.uk

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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

What we do

NEWS

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.

DISCUSSION

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>.

CLUB DATA

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.

TEACHING SCHEME

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

Four years since the Pandemic

At this time four years ago bridge clubs began to return to face to face bridge. Many of us were concerned that the simple pleasure of holding cards and facing our partner and eyeing our opponents might not make it.

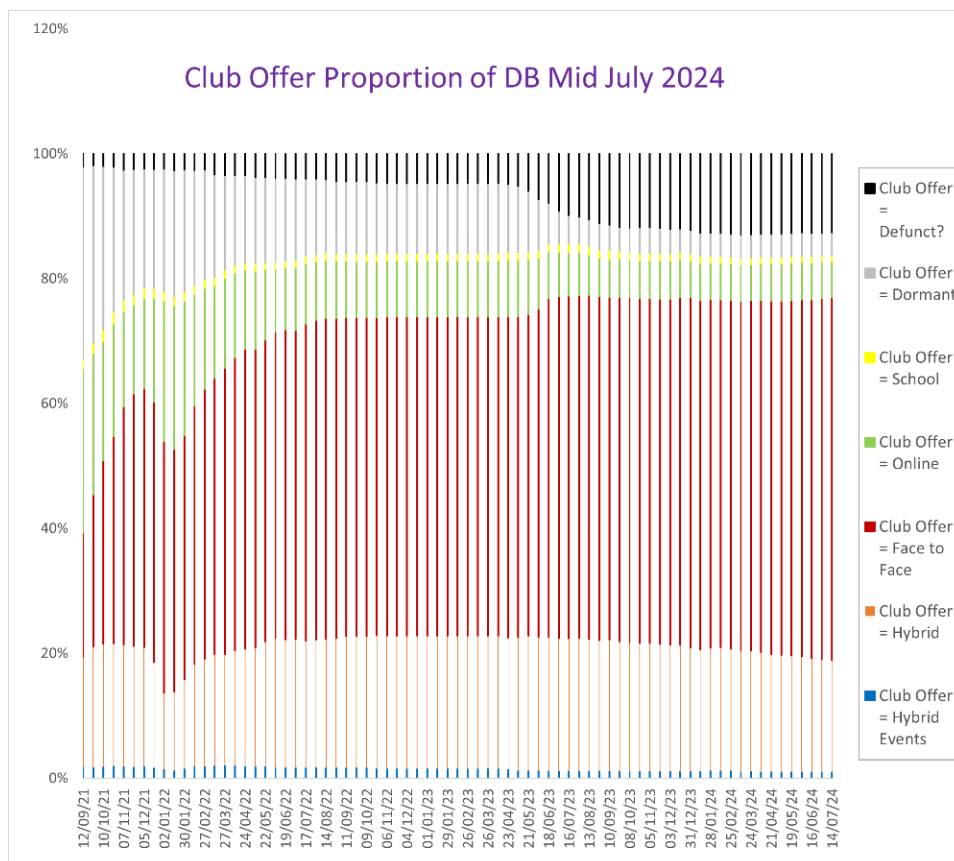
Some pundits thought that only online bridge would make sense for the future. It's much easier to organise. There's less financial risk. Directing is easier, although more cheating had to be confronted. There are many people who cannot join face to face sessions.

BUT, hundreds of largely unpaid volunteers have put their time, skill, physical effort and general determination into bringing back hundreds of local, face to face, clubs.

THANK YOU to all of you. The long-term future of the game is uncertain, but most of us who enjoy the company and the discussion can play because of you.

Online play AND face to face?

During the County Chairmans Meeting on June 12th, Tim Anderson's presentation on player numbers took a question about online sessions. The EBU database is unable to distinguish reliably between online and face to face sessions. My data however, is based on painstaking visits to club web sites.



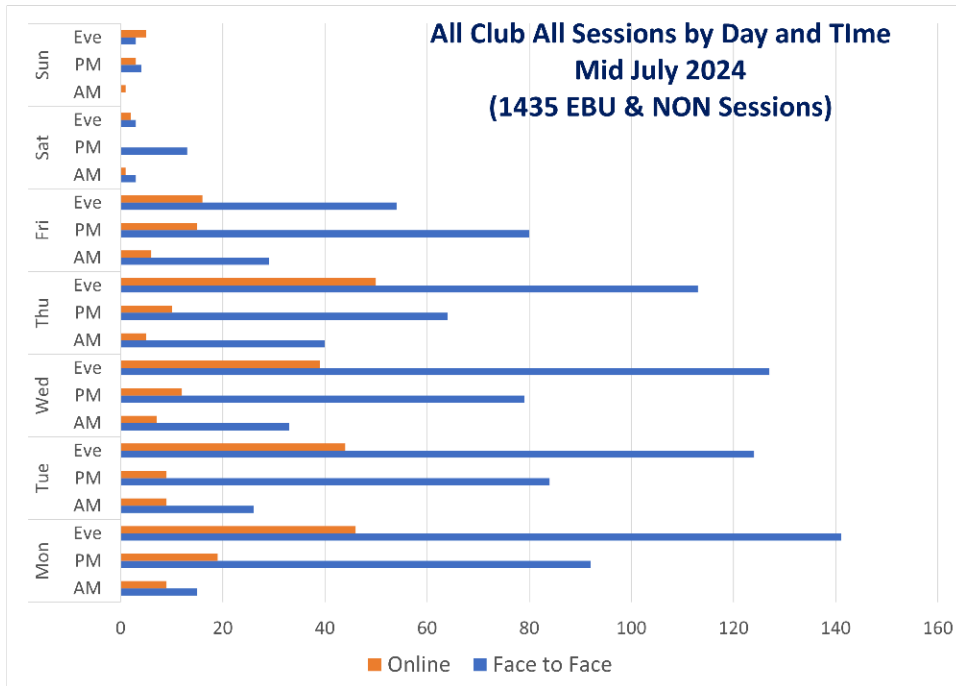
The thin blue band at the bottom represents clubs that offer both face to face and online and combine at least one session into a

hybrid result.

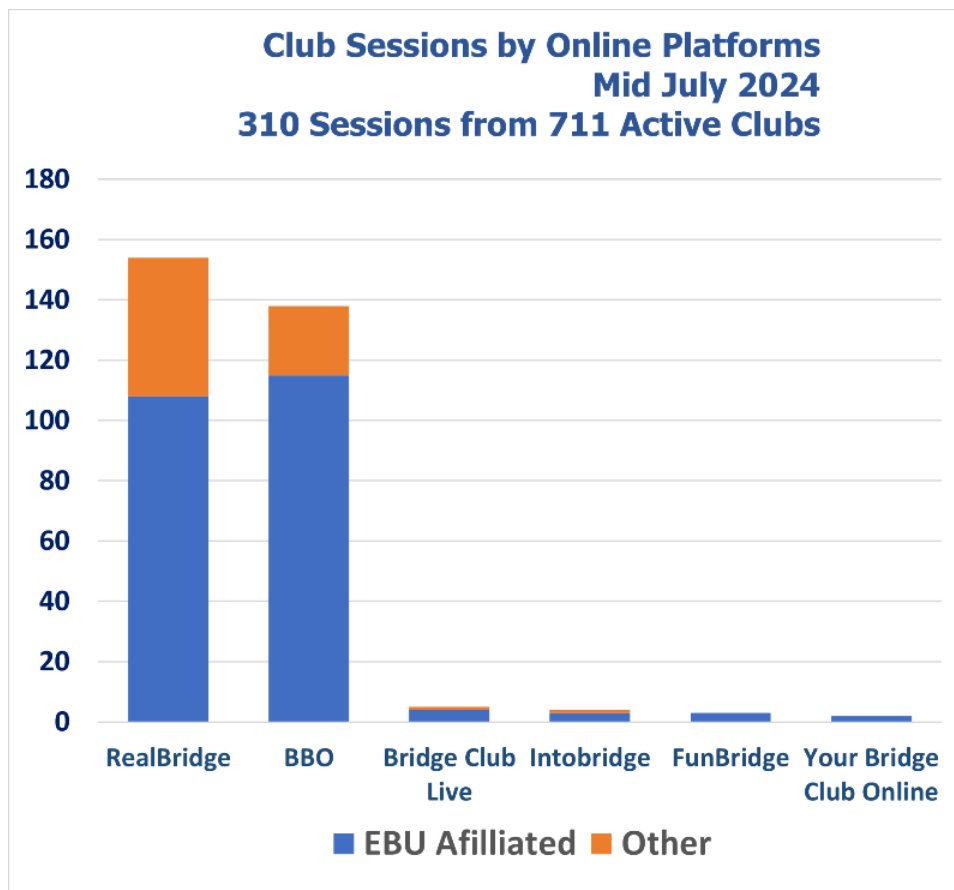
Above it, the orange section represents clubs that offer both face to face and online sessions.

Of over 700 (roughly half EBU Affiliated) active clubs the majority are offering only face to face. That's the steadily growing red section.

The green belt above that shows clubs that are only offering online sessions. Most of these are quite small and are unable to persuade their members back into the bridge room.



Here's how face to face and online sessions are distributed across the week.



Here's some information on choice of online platform.

Who is playing online?

The EBU is providing multiple sessions online everyday on BBO. They have told us that the numbers are declining, but this must be a huge chunk of online bridge activity. The level of skill of players is high, though there are sessions for intermediate skill.

Oliver Cowan runs an online only club that has shot into 12th place in the fifty busiest EBU affiliated clubs.

Most other EBU affiliated online only clubs are catering for small memberships.

Then there are all the social games, on all platforms, that go unrecorded.

No Fear Bridge offers events for learners, run on RealBridge. I am told by several of my learners that these are enjoyable with scores of tables. Bernard Magee offers chances for his community to play on IntoBridge. Bridge Club Live, established decades ago, has always been a club as much as it is an online platform. IntoBridge

also aims at a membership.

Player Numbers

The recording of the chairman's meeting on June 12th is available on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdBWXhwz5gQ>

It includes a useful update on member numbers from Tim Anderson. It was so good to hear him recognising the efforts of clubs and teachers in getting players online during lockdown and back to clubs since.

Overall player membership of the EBU is down from 55,000 to 50,000 in four years.

However, fewer players are playing more often, This means UM income to the EBU has stabilised, possibly leading to less focus on player numbers within the EBU organisation.

BUT

The average age player members is estimated at 74, If they have an average of ten years playing life left, and they are not replaced there will be none in ten years. No UMS. No EBU.

WHO PLAYS?

There are about 2,000 elite players, These are the players who play in International, National and County events. These players want to play "Strong and five, Two over one." This includes an active Elite Youth sector. However, the vast majority of school and university students have never heard of bridge.

The "UM0 Sector" probably consists of a mixture of two groups. Firstly players who have become inactive and will never return. Secondly the members of clubs who only attend lessons or supervised play. In my club this has always been about 25% of my membership. These players are important to clubs, and may be developing skills they will take into formal duplicate sessions.

The remaining 23,000 active player members play in clubs. These are more social than competitive. They are very likely to play ACOL in a wide variety of dialects, or perhaps a five-card major system.

FOR SURVIVAL

We need to be bringing new players to bridge, to gentle and social bridge and to formal duplicate if clubs are to continue.

DOES IT MATTER?

Why do I care? Club bridge fights loneliness and associated decline in health. It is perhaps unique as a leisure activity.

Why should the EBU care?

The majority of EBU "spending money" comes from UMS. The "cost of sale" is very low. UMS comes from affiliated clubs.

You would hope they feel some responsibility for the wider game, and for the funds of the future EBU.

Clubs Together Survive and Thrive

The community of volunteers that keep clubs open and active is a store of knowledge and skill. We need to make non bridge players aware of this unique, low-cost source of mental stimulation and social contact. We need to help them find teachers; practice in pleasant environments, build their bridge knowledge and participate in club duplicates.

None of this is easy. It's harder in a world where people are more and more isolated. We need to share what we know and work as a team.

Let's develop common resources and build our teaching, directing and organising skills.

Let's build a network to allow budding teachers, directors and organisers to observe, practice and be mentored.

Directing

Here are find two excellent readable documents from the Welsh Bridge Union.

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/bridgeforpleasure/WBU%20BASIC-TOURNAMENT-DIRECTING-2017-LAWS-3.pdf>

and

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/bridgeforpleasure/WBU%20JUDGEMENT-RULINGS-2017-Excl.-Simulations.pdf>

Let's provide chances all over the country to observe club directors in action; practice directing and discuss directing with experienced, qualified directors. Please contact me to add your club to this list if you can provide the same opportunity.

Heart of England Bridge Club (Rugby): heartofenglandbridge@gmail.com

Teaching

There is a completely free teaching scheme, hundreds of Plans, Notes, Quizzes, Deals, Commentaries etc at this address:

<http://www.bridgewebs.com/bridgeforpleasure>

Let's provide chances all over the country to observe teachers in action; practice teaching and discuss teaching with experienced, qualified teachers. Please contact me to add you to this list if you can provide the same opportunity.

Heart of England Bridge Club (Rugby):

heartofenglandbridge@gmail.com

Club Organisation

Ross Stacey did some research on the interest rates available on bank accounts for clubs. His article is full of insights and useful links. It was written last autumn. It's provided in good faith, but you must check all information for yourselves. It's a very good indication of questions to ask and where to look for answers.

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/bridgeforpleasure/2024%2007%2015%20BFP%20Edit%20Ross%20on%20Interest%20Rates.pdf>

Your Feedback

You can provide likes, dislikes and comments on the content of the Bridge For Pleasure website by registering on it.

Click on this link to send an email to register:

bridgeforpleasure@gmail.com

To quote the wonderful "Sorry Partner", BE NICE, or we'll call the director.

New contributors

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.

Five goals for the EBU in 2024 - JULY Update

1 EBU Member Numbers

Let's see this deficit get smaller in 2024

It is now **EIGHT** 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.

See above.

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.

NO PROGRESS

In fact documented decision not to change.

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 . You will then be emailed a link to join the meeting.

"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."



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.

July - We are going to have to do this ourselves. See above.



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 2nd 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.

JULY UPDATE We are told this directory is going to be merged with EBEDTA. Hopefully no restrictions on who can be listed will be introduced. More hopefully some effort will be made to further grow the number of entries. THEN some effort at national PR to attract potential learners to it would be lovely.



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.

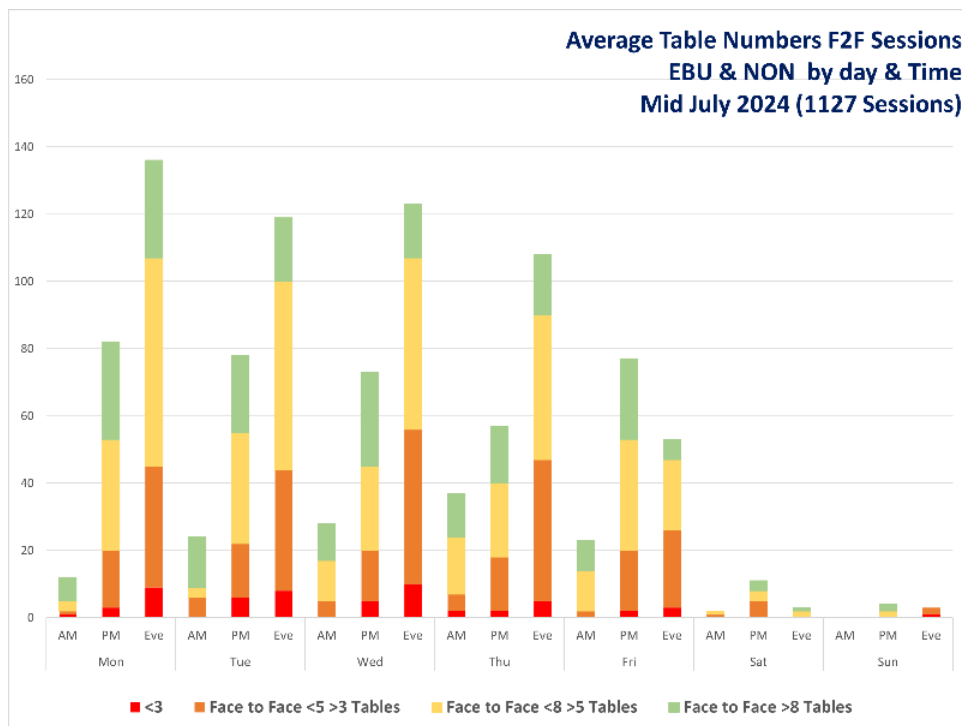
JULY UPDATE Hopefully the EBU is intending to reduce the financial burden on clubs by freezing rather than the usual rather automatic increase.

How are clubs doing?

The 711 active clubs in the database offer about 1278 weekly duplicate sessions. Roughly half are EBU Affiliated.

1437 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	
Mid July	
All Clubs F2F	6.74
EBU Clubs F2F	6.96
Non Affiliated Clubs F2F	6.38
Dedicated Premises	7.45
Shared Community	6.63
Multi Sport Club Section	6.28



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

[BFP Club Statistics Page](#)

[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?

[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.

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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