

Chairperson's report to CBC AGM April 2026

It has been another busy year, with much work done on improving the membership opportunities and experience. Membership numbers (including student learners) are up slightly from 569 in Dec 2024 to 592 in Dec 2025. However there has been a slight drop in total participation numbers, approx. 19,450 in 2024 down to 19,090 in 2025. There is a national trend for more online play outside of the club setup, but we continue to work against this trend with some success compared to other clubs around the country. We asked members to respond to a questionnaire last summer and we were delighted with the high percentage of responses. Those replies have helped inform a lot of our work since then.

Management committee

I am most grateful to the management committee who have worked hard all year to ensure the smooth running of the club.

I have been hugely grateful to Caroline Bristol who has done such a grand job as secretary to MC. She has been a big support to me and MC and a most thoughtful friend at times. She is stepping down after three years in the role.

My thanks goes to Robert Huguenin for his contributions in the café. He is now stepping down.

Deborah Kahn has been co-opted onto MC to improve our communications and marketing, including social media marketing where appropriate. She has already hit the ground running and will be doing a monthly newsletter which will contain lots of important information about events, competitions etc.

Mary Woolley kindly stepped in as my deputy six months ago and has taken on several roles but in particular recruiting and supporting volunteers.

volunteers

This club would not function without all the amazing volunteers who are not on MC but who have given their time so generously.

I would like to mention in particular Pauline Sanderson who ran the website (amongst many other things!) for many years and also Linda Barrett who has been in charge of IT and spent so many hours making sure all things run smoothly. They have both retired from their duties and will be very much missed.

Other people have stepped up to help, including Adrian Crossley (IT) , Steve Potter (team leader for duplimating), Ian Jones (IT hardware) and Pauline Mussi (teaching).

There are so many other volunteers , I cannot mention them all, but I extend a huge thank you to you all.

To recognise and thank our volunteers, we put on an afternoon of free bridge and homemade cakes for all

volunteers. It proved to be a big success and we hope this will become an annual event.

Bridge Programme

MC and I would like to thank all our wonderful directors for their commitment and loyalty to the club. It can be a difficult job but everyone really appreciates what you do!

Nationally there is a tendency to play bridge in the daytime, and certainly the daytime sessions we offer are very popular. However we are mindful that we must offer evening and weekend sessions for working people and we are trying to develop in this area. The Friday evening session has just been rebooted with an offer of wine or beer before and during the play, and also the pro/am mentorship has had a huge take up. It is early days , but we hope this continues successfully. We are also planning to offer real bridge one evening and open this up to other local clubs– this is at the planning stage as I write. If successful, it will provide members with many different people to play with and also bring in some extra income for the club.

The mentoring sessions for year 1 and 2 remain very popular. The new afternoon sessions on Wednesday and Friday afternoons are also proving to be very successful.

The annual congress at Dean Close went very well, with special thanks to Steve and his team of helpers for all their planning and work. Numbers were significantly up on the previous year and we hope the tradition will continue.

The Christmas party was enjoyed by all. My thanks to Steve and Peter for their work in making it such an enjoyable evening. MC have discussed options for next year and might consider instead a “winter party” in early January 2027 when members diaries are less busy.

As always, the Bournemouth trip was very popular and enjoyed by all. Our thanks to Nicola and her team for laying on this event so efficiently every year.

Teaching

A good teaching program is essential for a successful club as new members hopefully take up membership. Jan and her team work hard to do this both for learners and improvers. We are most grateful for all their hard work so willingly given. Year 1 student numbers are down this year. We are hoping with the help of Deborah that improved marketing will reverse this trend.

Premises

External repairs and paintwork on the front and side of the building were completed last September.

The honours boards which hadn't been updated for up to ten years have been taken down and replaced after a proper review by subcommittee and approved by MC. All records are also online on the website.

Water is now supplied from the water cooler in the hall.

Cups are recyclable.

There has been much discussion regarding the high temperatures in the ground floor rooms during the three heat waves we had last year. As I write we are still looking into options and costs to ameliorate this to see if this is something we can reasonably do.

Catering

The kitchen/café was awarded 5/5 on its food hygiene standards assessment.

Most members have been delighted with the new arrangements of the café run by Phoenix. Cakes and hot drinks seem to go down well. Recently Phoenix has also been serving beer and wine on a Friday evening.

RIP

Several members have passed away over the last year. Our sincere condolences go to the family and friends of Cynthia Moore, David Simmons, Peter Walker, Ben Britton, Kanwar Rahim, David Rust, Gerry O'Driscoll.

Thank you to Alan and the Trustees and MC for their hard work and support over the last two years. And thank you to Steve for taking on the new operations and development managers role with energy and enthusiasm. CBC is a successful and friendly club which I have really enjoyed getting involved in. I do hope others will find the time and energy to contribute - our wonderful volunteers are what makes us the club that we are.

