

## Clare Bridge Club



### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – AGM Monday 17 May 2021

We have all been through an extraordinary 14 months! In February of 2020, none of us could have foreseen the impact a global pandemic would have on all our lives, let alone on our bridge! As a result, this report is somewhat different from previous reports I have made to the AGM.

We have missed a lot of our usual activities this year. Primarily, I think it is fair to say that we have missed each other and the weekly social contact that bridge brings to us. It is just not the same in a virtual environment! We have also missed out on our Christmas Party, our event with our friends in Huy, Belgium, last year's AGM, and Clare Swiss Pairs.

Bridge of course is a good reflection of what is happening in society in general, and we have seen many changes within the bridge community in response to the pandemic. Many of us have taken to playing online, with varying degrees of excitement or reluctance! Some have decided to take some time away from the game. Sadly, some members of the Club have informed me that they will not be returning.

You may be looking forward to hearing if and when the Club can get back to face to face bridge in Clare. I wish I had a clear answer for you, but all I can say at present is that it is difficult to make decisions about this until we know what precautions will still be required after 21<sup>st</sup> June. I am hoping that we will vote some new members onto the Committee tonight, and we will then quickly hold a full Committee meeting to start the planning to enable the Club to return.

One of the decisions that will need to be made is whether online bridge will remain at least part of Clare's format going forward. Many members have said to me that it has been lovely during the winter to be able to play, but not have to drive on wet or icy roads late at night. Another advantage is that we have drawn members from across the country during this time, and you will see from our Treasurer's report that the Club finances have remained extremely healthy, allowing us to continue to subsidise all members in competitions, such as the sim pairs, and to give all members a subs holiday. It is also gratifying that Clare has been able to continue to contribute to charity this year – the Committee was particularly happy to be able to support the local foodbank at Christmas among other things.

It may be that we should consider continuing with Monday night bridge online, but open a face-to-face club session one afternoon. It may be possible to hold an online session and a face-to-face session at the same time with the same boards and amalgamate the results. These and other ideas must be considered, but all members of the Club will be consulted when proposals are ready, and everyone will have the opportunity to put their views to the Committee prior to any decisions being made.



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It is important to recognise the achievements of the Club this year. In spite of everything, Clare has once again been very well represented at County events during the year and it has been nice to see so many of our members supporting these events both on BBO and on RealBridge. We have had several teams playing in the League, and the Suffolk Championship Teams of Four final was between two Clare teams. Also, to my delight, Clare won both the Abbeygate Shield and the Plate which was a fantastic achievement. Many thanks to all those who have represented the Club so well.

While our thoughts may be focused on forward planning, it is particularly important for me to acknowledge and thank all those who have worked extremely hard to keep the Club going virtually this year. The members of the Committee have been amazing through this very difficult time and have worked hard to stay in touch with members of the Club and to navigate the Club through the difficulties and unknowns of a pandemic environment.

I particularly want to mention Cleopatra, Jenny and David. Without their input, the online bridge on a Monday night would have been much slower to get going and I am extremely grateful to them for their commitment to getting it up and running. Sadly, Cleopatra decided to leave the Club but we wish her well.

The other people who must be warmly thanked are the Directors: Jenny and David Price, Nick Farr, Conor Bignell and Paddy Lockwood, and the Scorers: David Price, Paddy Lockwood and Dave Allen. I don't think that any of us who do not fulfil these roles understand the time and commitment these jobs require. They are often thankless, but the Club could absolutely not function without them. Online directing is not the same as directing in the Club, and Directors lose their evening of bridge as a result. The Committee voted recently to pay Directors a nominal sum to compensate for this, which the Directors can choose to apply for, but I must emphasise that this is a goodwill gesture, and in no-way compensates for the resulting loss of time and often additional stress!

I want to return to the members of the Committee. I have already mentioned how supportive they have all been this year, and I would like to thank them all for not only supporting the Club, but supporting me personally. Their warmth, kindness and enthusiasm has kept me going! What you may not know is that several members had indicated their wish to resign early in 2020, but at my request all stayed on to support us to make the right decisions in a new and challenging environment. I want to now thank Joyce who resigned as Minuting Secretary only a couple of months ago, and David Goodliffe and Jenny Price who are standing down tonight. David has been a steady presence on the Committee for many years, and Jenny has contributed in a number of roles which have included Secretary, Webmaster and Captain. All these contributions have strengthened the Club, but I have now reluctantly accepted these resignations.

On a personal note, I had notified the Committee in January 2020 of my intention to step down as Chair at the AGM. The pandemic hit us and I did not feel that it was



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the right time to try to recruit a new Chair, and so I have continued. However, I hereby give notice that I will resign with immediate effect at the next AGM. I hope during this year that it is possible to recruit my successor, and of course I will be happy to offer as much support as is required on handover, but come what may, I am stepping down at the next AGM. By then I will have completed 8 years as Chair and nearly 20 years on the Committee! I feel that I have achieved everything that I can contribute, and it is time for new blood, with new ideas and enthusiasms. It is worth mentioning that Nick was Chair before me, and we both feel it is time that the Club had a break from the FARRS! If anyone feels that they would like to take on this role, or if anyone would like to propose someone, then please contact me.

Finally, as we come to this AGM, my hope is that all members of the Club, past and present, are staying well, getting vaccinated, and looking forward to a return to a more "normal" way of life as the year progresses. I hope to be sitting across a bridge table with you very soon.

Sarah Farr  
Chair, Clare Bridge Club  
May 2021