



Clare Bridge Club

Chairman's Report - AGM Monday 9 May 2022

So, two years after Covid hit, our government believes that Covid is endemic in Britain, meaning that we now need to learn to live with it! Many of us had hoped that arriving at this stage, with most people vaccinated and the impact of Covid reducing, would mean a return to "normality".

What does this mean for us as a Bridge Club? Until recently I suspect that many people would have hoped for a return to face-to-face bridge at the Club on Monday nights. However, much has changed in the bridge world during the last two years, and these changes have significant ramifications for a club such as Clare. In particular, it seems that online bridge is here to stay.

There is a group of people who would like us to return to face-to-face bridge and who are happy to attend these sessions. We have been offering face-to-face sessions once a month recently. These sessions have attracted only 4 or 5 tables, which is not great for competitive duplicate. There is another group of people who now not only enjoy playing bridge online, but actively prefer it, being able to play at home without having to drive anywhere on cold, wet nights. Several people have emailed me to let me know that they will not be attending the club in future, although they will continue to support it online.

I have heard the argument that we should not offer online bridge when we are offering face-to-face bridge. However, we need to learn from the experience of other clubs. We have built, and continue to hold a strong online presence, attracting anywhere between 9-14 tables a week. This is bringing income into the club and attracting members not only from Suffolk but from further abroad also. However, if we have weeks where the online play is not available, we will very quickly lose those members. Several clubs, and at least 2 in Suffolk are known to have thought that they could get their online following back if they had a pause to return to face-to-face, but this was not the case and in fact both clubs in Suffolk then closed.

The Committee has spent long hours agonising over what the Club should do going forward. May I say that we have often felt we were in a "no-win" position. The Committee has recently made the following decisions:

- That the club will not run regular Monday face-to-face sessions for the time being but will focus on the online game. However, this decision will be regularly reviewed, with a hope of reversing this at some point. We do not feel that those who enjoy face-to-face bridge will be particularly penalised, as Stansfield is currently offering a very successful face-to-face session, which many of our members already attend.
- The club will run as many social events through the year as is practical, with face-to-face bridge, in an attempt to keep all of us in touch with each other.
- We will work to establish Friday afternoon bridge at Lavenham, with a view to ultimately running this not only as a play and learn session, but also with a separate section for normal duplicate play, playing 20 boards during the afternoon.

I would like to take the opportunity, at this point to thank all the members of the Committee for their unfailing support during the last two years. A lot of hidden work is involved in keeping the Club playing, and all the members of the Committee have given their time unstintingly. Will Pavry, our Treasurer, is standing down at this AGM, and particular thanks are due to him for all his work keeping the accounts on track.



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The club's finances continue to be in a very healthy state, and I hope that this will mean that the Club can continue to subsidise all members in competitions such as Simultaneous Pairs, and probably to continue with the "subs holiday" for the foreseeable future. Once again, Clare has been able to continue to contribute to charity, supporting the local foodbank at Christmas, and sending money to the Ukraine appeal amongst other things.

As always, there are so many thanks to offer at this time of year. I have already thanked the Committee, but their contribution has been immense and must not be overlooked. It is also imperative to thank the Directors and Scorers for both online and face-to-face bridge, because without them there would be no game! A huge thank you to Paddy Lockwood, Jenny Price, Nick Farr, Conor Bignell, Dave Allen, Fred Harris, Will Pavry, John Hooper for all the work you put into this. I also want to thank Paul Rickard who supplies the boards for all face-to-face events, and who also supports the club occasionally with directing and scoring.

I would like to mention David Price, who sadly died during April. David was a member of the Club from the time he moved to Suffolk, and contributed in so many ways, directing, scoring, teaching, playing for the club in competitions and generally supporting wherever he could. His loss not only affects us, but the bridge world more generally where he was internationally respected. We have also, sadly lost Marion Dorey and Rowland Grindell in this last week. Marion was a long-standing member of the club and will be much missed.

Last year, we also heard of the death of Basil Ambrose our long-standing President. Basil was one of a group who first established the Club and was a great supporter of the Club until he became too ill to attend regularly. Earlier this year, we learned that he had left a bequest to the Club of two thousand pounds, with a particular request that one thousand be spent on a humdinger of a party! We are hoping that this can happen this summer – something to look forward to!

Finally, I am standing down this year having been 6 years in the role of Chair. I would like to say that being Chairman of Clare Bridge Club has been an absolute privilege. I would never have anticipated rising to such dizzy heights, (neither I suspect, would some of you who may remember the first night that Nick and I came to the Club!), and it has been an honour to lead the Club through some challenging times. I wish the Club every success going forward and will be happy to continue to support it in every way possible.

Sarah Farr
May 2022