

Bridge At Crockham Hill- The History

When Tony Gifford retired from teaching in 1996, he moved into teaching bridge at adult education classes, and some private tuition at home.

Having taught several people to play bridge, and being an active member of Lingfield & Dormans bridge club, he realised what an enormous gap there is between learning the basics of the game and being able to play in a formal bridge club. In discussion with his hairdresser, he discovered a new village hall was to be opened at Crockham Hill and he was actively encouraged to start a bridge club there.

The idea of this bridge club was that it should be a "bridge" for recent learners to gain confidence and be able to move on to join a "proper" bridge club. The emphasis was to be on **friendliness** and **tolerance** as many people had been put off by their attempts to join local bridge clubs - bridge players take their game very seriously and can unwittingly intimidate novices, who tend to be both nervous and slow. So Tony came up with the acronym for his new Bridge Club at Crockham Hill - **Be Amicable, Courteous, Harmonious** and this was launched in November 1997. At first we offered supervised play, with Tony on hand to proffer advice, and Wynne to play with anyone who needed a partner; rubber bridge moved on to duplicate, and people soon got hooked on looking at the previous week's scores and comparing their performances.

People come, people go, people move on to play in their homes over tea (?) and chat and some people have moved on to play in local clubs; others, and there are many, have just stayed happy in their comfort zone at Crockham Hill and have been playing there for nearly 15 years. I can name many of the "founder members", but won't in case I miss someone out - perhaps they'd like to identify themselves!!

BACH was very much Tony's baby, and he cherished it and nurtured it, devoting many hours in the week to its organisation, always trying to think up new ideas, always trying to make it fun, always trying to encourage people to improve, negotiating partnerships, sorting out misunderstandings, initiating a "red" section where his pupils could come from his classes and move onwards and upwards. During his 9-year illness, keeping Crockham Hill and his classes going was his prime motivation and gave him an interest and determination to continue. He very much wanted it to be carried on, so I hope that, in his memory, we will be able to do it for some time to come.

Wynne Gifford.
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