**Saturday, 21st December 2019**

**Follow up report on Student Bridge in Cardiff**

I am pleased to report that the students now regularly attend the fast track lessons I have devised on a Thursday evening, which precede our normal club night. They all have the bug and are thoroughly enjoying all aspects of the game, though we need twenty to form a University Society club.

I leave them (to join our duplicate) in the capable hands of Soozy and Mel, who do a great job assisting them in the play of pre-selected hands, which Sarah Amos has prepared. The gyzmos the club has bought (price matched by the WBU) are fantastically useful for teaching, as we can upload Sarah’s hands onto them and they are dealt out to both tables.

We have a core group of two tables who come every week and a few others. Added to this three new students began recently and Maggie Pierce has started them off again. We are still working out how they can best catch up!

We have covered much of the basic bidding – last week for example, we did SLAMS so they learned 2C openers, cue bids and RKCB! They loved it ☺ but whether they remember it all is another question. I send a resume of what they have learned each week and they also do the quizzes from the WBU teaching notes. They get on well with one another and Mel & Soozy and are in a whatsapp group. It is all very jolly, though they have a very long way to go.

Things are looking great for the Junior Camrose and Peggy Bayer, which we are hosting this year. Whereas we have been hard pressed to field one team previously, we will now field a Junior Camrose team (Mel is 13 days too old so they won’t be able to win the trophy) and not one but two Peggy Bayer teams with our students, despite a few of them being a little too old. We have just heard that the other countries have given permission for them all to play, which is great news.

Several of them attended the Porthcawl Congress, playing in the open pairs on Friday and then the Pairs event on Saturday. We warned them beforehand that they would be last, but they really enjoyed it and one pair was delighted to win the two table pairs!

Undaunted, they have entered two teams for the Portland Bowl, which is the Inter-University competition – students have no fear. They played their first two matches, losing both of them of course, but played with good spirits. Against the Warwick team the least experienced player had played for seven years and several play for England, so it’s tough.

There is a Junior event in Antwerp in April, with free entry and food and we are sending two teams to that, as we only had to find accommodation – so they are sharing a 10 bed dorm and travelling there in a van! This event illustrates the worldwide support for Juniors, as everyone realises that this great game is in danger of becoming extinct unless we work at it, particularly with the young. Financially, Sarah, Maggie, Soozy, Mel, Mieke and I have charged nothing and we are extremely grateful to Cardiff Bridge Club for free use of the room and highly reduced fees, though that cannot really go on forever. The WBU is extremely supportive and we have been given a healthy budget (when I can find time to work out the Invoices!).

If we carry on doing this for the next few years and build a larger pool of youngsters, we could finally get some new life into Welsh bridge. Yay! Just need to work on everyone else now….

Gilly