

2026 President's report

First up, I would like to mark the loss of a revered past member, John Miller after a long illness. Many of you will remember John as an expert player who won many of our trophies over a period of many years, mainly along with his wife Marian, equally expert!! to whom we offer our condolence and heartfelt wishes for her loss. We are now so pleased to be able to welcome Marian back to Kelso.

Of course there have been and are other losses and challenges which many of us have had and continue to face. To this, I just want to say that we try to offer support, friendship and encouragement beyond the walls of the Abbey Row Centre, where this is possible.

Membership

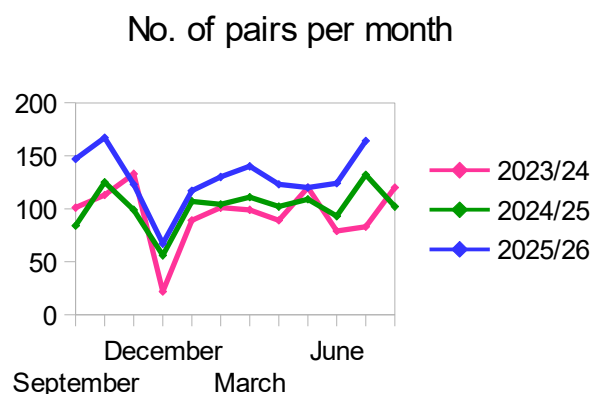
We strive to be a welcoming and inclusive club. It is therefore a pleasure to report that a number of new members or near new members have joined or consolidated their membership this year. Equally gratifying, we have seen some previous valued members who have returned on a regular basis.

The current membership stands at 81, 21 of whom are associate members from other clubs, Ormiston or Jedburgh. This is an increase from last year's total of 67

We don't really know whether this is bucking the trend of falling membership elsewhere in Scotland, but that might be the backdrop. It really is a testament to the efforts of committee members as well as the general membership that we have been able to attract and retain people. Ultimately that will be down to the vibe – the enjoyment that we take in playing bridge, the pleasure that we take in welcoming new or returning members and the energy that we bring to moving the club forward. In the face of additional challenges that we will face next year, we must not lose sight of this key point

Attendance

I have been keeping track of the attendance at the club over the past 3 years, occasionally displaying the trends on the website. These graphs show the number of pairs attending the club in a given month.



Last year's results in GREEN showed a modest increase of about 6% over the previous year's attendance (shown in MAGENTA). The latest results for this year (BLUE) show another increase in average attendance of at least 20% over the previous year and, of course, we still have 2 weeks to run.

Friday afternoon bridge

Undoubtedly, the increase in overall attendance is largely due to Friday Afternoon Bridge which began this year as a trial and has continued throughout the year until a short break this month. Friday's regularly attract 8 or more pairs each week and it is clear now that Friday afternoon bridge satisfies the requirements of a significant number of members for whom this time is more suitable. I would like to thank committee members who have tirelessly promoted this initiative and the members who have been regular and enthusiastic participants. We hope that this session will continue to grow and attract new people to attend. All members are free to play on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, whichever suits them.

Other initiatives to attract new members

Other initiatives aimed at introducing people to bridge or toward nurturing their confidence and skill have continued this year and will continue next year. Anne Coles and Sheena McPherson have taken over the Novices Class which Vanessa used to run, on a Friday morning under the U3A banner. We very much hope that the Gentle Bridge sessions run in the past by Sheena, will continue. Sheena has worked tirelessly to encourage Beginners and Improvers, to teach them how Bridge is played in the club and has been an important coach to channel new members to the club. This is an important continuing initiative and Gill Robinson will welcome those of you who would like to volunteer in helping nurture those members of the future.

Schools Initiative

Mary Stone recently updated members on a Wednesday and a Thursday session regarding the success that sJane Nimmo, Helen Ross, Gill Robinson and herself have been doing at Ednam and Edenside Primary schools in encouraging cardplay and minibridge. There is a full report that can be accessed on the website. This project will continue this coming year and we hope that we can extend it into establishing a group at Kelso High School. Thanks go to Gill, Helen, Jane and Mary.

Card dealing

Sheena had carried the role of dealing and ferrying cards for many years. We thank her for this longstanding contribution which plays havoc with the knees. We now have a functioning rota of dealers to share the burden. This is an exacting task and I thank Brian Young, Helen Ross, Jon Bridger, Lindy, and Shirley for their contributions.

Kelso Congress

Last year's president Quentin inspired the re-instatement of the Kelso Congress. We hosted this event again, partially funded by our generous sponsor Lloyds Landrovers of Kelso and held at the Ednam House Hotel. The attendance (18 tables) was slightly down on last year, but the feedback from participants was generally very favourable indeed. We would like to encourage more of our own membership to take part. Thanks to all the committee and to other members for helping with the staging of this event. It takes significant time and energy to plan, organise and execute all of the functions that need attending to.

Rebranding Exercise

Another important initiative this year has been the Rebranding Exercise. Quentin engaged students from Heriot-Watt at Gala to design the various elements that go into a rebranding exercise. They presented their work and ideas to us at Abbey Row. The thought and creativity that they brought to their work was inspiring. Since then, Richard G and Quentin have spearheaded the consultation with KBC members and this work is still in progress, although there seems to be general agreement on the basic logo – namely 'The Bridge'. Still work to do, here.

KBC Development Plan

I had hoped to have circulated the Club Development Plan for consultation prior to this AGM.

Helen Todd, Shirley Brian Young, Sheena, Gill Robinson, Helen Ross, Jane Nimmo have worked intensively for well over a year now to bring the Plan to this point. I would like to pay tribute to the work that they have done. It is entirely down to my personal circumstances that we have stalled in the final months.

The Development Plan has formulated a club mission and an aligned set of overall aims, organised into a few 'Strands' – taking care of the club environment and enjoyment of members, trying to maintain and grow the membership by providing more opportunities to attract more people, catering for people who wish to further their bridge skills and so on. The plan plots the way forward to realise those aims. If you like, it should be a map to chart our efforts and actions over the next 5 years or so. It is very ambitious and will need the support and involvement of the committee and other members. Hopefully, we can get this in place in the New Year.

Committee

I hope that all these comments remind us of the huge amount of work that members of the committee get through, supported of course by other members. Indeed, part of the development plan will focus on ways to protect the committee members from burn-out and overload. Every single one of our committee deserves special mention for the roles, the multiple roles, that they have played with generosity, patience and spirit. It is truly remarkable. I am not going to embarrass them individually so please mark your appreciation to them all before I draw this report to a close.

Finally, I thank our outgoing committee members - Diana for her contributions this year and Quentin and Sheena who have been stalwarts over many years. Please show your appreciation of them

The Committee 2025-26

President	Paul Hunt
Vice President	Anne Coles
Secretary	Shirley Redgrave
Treasurer	Helen Todd
Director	Jean McLaren
Members	Lindy Mastenbroek-Andrew
	Sheena McPherson
	Quentin McLaren (past president)
	Richard Goodwin
	Diana Veitch