

Chair's Report for the Kent Committee, December 2022

We have continued to move, albeit slowly, to more F2F bridge. The Kent Congress (held jointly with Sussex) had 16 tables for the Swiss Pairs and 15 tables for the Swiss Teams. This was slightly disappointing but we have to accept that it will take a long time, if ever, to get back to pre-Covid levels. More disappointing was the relatively poor representation from Sussex players, something that we need to discuss with Sussex for any future joint events. Very disappointing was the lack of entries for the Really Easy Pairs, such that it had to be cancelled

We are aware that Tunbridge Wells is quite difficult to get to for some of our members, so we decided to try out holding the Dyer-Smith at Maidstone, which is roughly the geographical centre of the County. However the turnout for this was very low, and we need to review whether the location was the major factor in this.

We continue to push hard on initiatives to recruit new players into the game. Unfortunately 3 of the sites who volunteered to hold lessons as part of the 'SmartBridge' trial were unable to find students to take part, only Deal were able to attract some students, some 10 in all. EBED are contacting other Counties with a view to running the trial across several Counties, but we wait to hear if they have been successful. Once again I would like to record my thanks for the enormous amount of effort that Pat Welsh has put into the project. Nobody could have done more and it raises the question as to whether any other County can be successful in attracting potential students. It seems to me that the online nature of the project is not attractive to our target demographic, something that I have been concerned about since the beginning.

On the bright side there was a teachers' course held at the end of September and I am delighted to report that we trained 8 new Kent teachers, with the possibility of another course in early 2023. If we are to attract significant numbers of new players, it is essential that we have teachers in place to run the classes. I plan to run a teacher's seminar in

the New Year for all Kent teachers, with the aim of setting out a plan for the future and exploring ways that we can help each other.

Last week I attended the EBU AGM as one of the Kent shareholders (we have 3 shares). They reported that a third of their members are inactive, but that is roughly the same as it was pre-Covid. The problem of course is that membership is gradually declining, year on year, as our members age. This trend was accelerated by Covid. That is why we have to recruit new players if we are to survive. We need to make our clubs more welcoming to visitors and new players, and provide 'gentle duplicate' as a transition for pupils to move towards club bridge. The average take up of pupils into clubs is quite poor and that is something that we can work on with our teachers.

Another issue for us to continue to address is the number of bridge clubs who are not affiliated to the EBU. The somewhat alarming statistic is that only 40% of clubs using the Bridgewebs site are affiliated. We will consider holding a Kent wide Conference for all our clubs, both Affiliated and Non-Affiliated, to explore ways that we can help each other and hopefully to persuade at least some of them to become affiliated.

The main point of contention at the AGM was the decision of the EBU that they would not allow Counties to hold online Green Point events in the future. This was opposed by Hertfordshire and others, who put forward an alternative suggestion that clusters of about 4 Counties be allowed to combine and offer online GP events instead. After some fairly vigorous discussion, the Hertfordshire suggestion was soundly defeated.

It has been a successful Autumn for Kent teams. We are through to the Tollemache final and our 'A' and 'C' teams were both successful in the Metropolitan Cup. Congratulations to all concerned.

John and Molly Cooke won the Dyer-Smith.

In the Kent Congress pairs Jeremy Willans and Kay Preddy came second and Paul Gibbons and Sharon Bayne came third. In the teams Jeremy, Kay, Norman Selway and Nick Irens came second.

Espen Erichsen won the EBU Autumn Congress 2 Star final, playing with Richard Plackett.

There are 2 Kent Competitions coming up in January. On the 15th January are the Fleming Femina and Hunter Homines (Ladies' and Men's Pairs). On 28th & 29th January are the Corbett Cup/Plate and Mitchell Salver. These are being held F2F for the first time since 2020 and we hope to get as many club teams as possible playing this year.

I hope that you all have wonderful Christmas and New Year celebrations, with no threat of lock downs this year!, and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Kent Competitions next year.

Norman Inniss

Chair KCBA 7th December 2022