

Mid Leinster Region

Blanaid Morris, Secretary

There are 43 clubs in the Mid Leinster Region which covers North Kildare, West Dublin and part of Meath. Like other regions, with the support of head office, TD's and individual club members we gradually began to play online. This wasn't possible for some of our clubs but their members were welcomed into other clubs and our CDO's have kept in touch.

The bridge year 2019 – 2020 ended abruptly with 2 rounds of the Cunningham League still to play. These were completed in October and November of this year, followed by the 2020/2021 League with a larger than usual number of entries. Running the league on BBO proved more challenging than we had anticipated and we thank all the players for their support.

Without the difficulty of finding a venue, we introduced a new event, the MLR Pairs with sections for B/Novices, Intermediate A's and Masters. There were 4 separate competitions over the year, points were awarded and prizes given at the end.

We hosted 2 regional meetings on Zoom, one in November where we exchanged information on how we were managing online bridge and keeping in touch with members and the AGM in May. The Zoom facility is available to all clubs, and was used extensively to host committee meetings and AGM's.

John Crimmins was appointed to the honorary position of Official Chief TD for the Region, his role will be to advise the regional committee on issues relating to the laws and regulations of bridge, to advise the committee on running competitions that are fair for all, to advise on training and upgrading TDs and to advise clubs on running competitions and what Club TDs need to do.

Congratulations to the Winners of our Major Competitions:

Cunningham League 2019 2020 42 teams

Master	1 st	Westmanstown JCM
A1	1 st	Cnucha NMcM
A2	1 st	Confey BMcH
B1	1 st	Maudlins CD
B2/Novice	1 st	Confey Castle BL

Naas Pairs

1 st	David Melody & Tony Smyth
2 nd	Roisin & Willie O'Gorman
3 rd	Myles Fitzgerald & David Redmond

MLR Pairs

Master	1 st	David Redmond & Liam Gaynor
	2 nd	Anne Butler & Mary Guinan

- 3rd Margaret Doyle & Jim Muldoon
- A1** 1st Gary Windebank & Catherine Mahon
2nd Ann Dunleavy & Olive Kenny
3rd Debbie Leahy & Barry Leahy
- A2** 1st Joan McAndrew
2nd Brigid Royce, Jo Mahon, Marie O'Brien
- B & Novice** 1st Mags Kelly & Paddy Cooney
2nd David King
3rd Martin McCallion
4th Billy King

Novice

1st Shokri Raouf & John Donnelly

President's Cup

- 1st Joe Coyne & Mary Greene
2nd David Melody & Tony Smyth
3rd Donek Szenejko & Mary Timoney
1st A Marian McKay & Martha Kearns

Cunninghams League 2020 2021 49 teams

- Master** 1st Castleknock TS
2nd Westmanstown JCM
3rd Westmanstown BB
- A1** 1st Leixlip PH
2nd Dunboyne CM
3rd Leixlip AD
- A2** 1st Cnucha MTB
2nd Confey BMCh
3rd Dunboyne AH
4th Confey Castle AON
- B1** 1st Roselawn MK
2nd CLTC JB
3rd CLTC DK
- B2** 1st Confey Castle BL
2nd 7 No Trumps LC
- Novice** 1st Naas Maudlins AF
2ⁿ Louisa ROT
3rd Roselawn VP

Westmanstown Bridge Club Cup

- 1st Westmanstown- Tomas Roche, Mary Roche, John Macnamara, Ian Baker
2nd Westmanstown- Tony Smyth, Noreen Smyth, David Melody, Joe Coyne
1st A1 Leixlip – Anne Dunleavy, Olive Kenny, Marian McKay, Martha Kearns

Rory Cunningham Shield

- 1st Cnucha- Mary Flynn, Joan McAndrew, Rosaleen O'Loughlin, Marie O'Brien
2nd Roselawn- Mags Kelly, Paddy Cooney, Nuala Corcoran, Theresa McGivern
3rd Navan Road- Tom Craig, Miriam Dempsey, Andrew Smith, Maria Callinan

National Competitions:

National Pairs

- A 2nd Garry Windebank and Catherine Mahon
B 7th Mags Kelly and Paddy Cooney

National Teams

- A 8th Catherine Mullins, Constance Cunningham, Eleanor Greene and Teresa Keegan

CBAI Virtual Duais 2020 - Novice and Intermediate 'B'

- 7th Maura Colgan and Frances Daly

Spiro Cup

- 6th Willie O’Gorman and Roisin O’Gorman

Master Pairs

- 1st David Redmond and Liam Gaynor

Revington Cup

- 9th David Redmond and Liam Gaynor

Geraldine Trophy

- 9th David Redmond, Myles Fitzgerald, Liam Gaynor, John Riordan

IBU Sims Finished in top 20

Bernie Ryan & Eleanor Greene,	Dunboyne
Tomas Roche & Mary Roche	Westmanstown
Liz O Reilly & Helen O Reilly	Navan Road
Sheila Brien & Phil Fitzpatrick	Confey Castle
John O’Keeffe & Maire O’Keeffe	Celbridge Lucan Palmerstown
David Redmond & Liam Gaynor	Celbridge Lucan Palmerstown
Claire Shannon & Mary McLoughlin	Castleknock
Fintan Reddy & Marina Reddy	CLTC

CBAI Sims Finished in top 20

Tomas Roche & Mary Roche	Westmanstown
Pat Dempsey & Melanie Hill	Celbridge Lucan Palmerstown
Alison Blanchfield & Ann Dunleavy	Maynooth
Anthony Lambe & Fran Swift	Navan Road
David Melody & Tony Smyth	Celbridge Lucan Palmerstown
David Redmond & Myles Fitzgerald	Celbridge Lucan Palmerstown
Joan McAndrew & Frances Daly	Cnucha
Paddy Cooney & Mags Kelly	Novice and Intermediate Congress

County Development Officers’ Report

Wuhan will be remembered for many things, and not just for Bridge. It will be Covid 19 that most of us will remember. Was it the bats or was it the virus that escaped from the test labs in China? Our roles as Development Officers and involvement from March 2020 are briefly headlined by the following bullet points

- Contacting the clubs and talked to them about setting up virtual clubs
- We offered support to clubs that were interested

- Zoom meetings on the process for joining, and how to setup BBO sessions
- We made ourselves available to run events on BBO for Local Clubs
- We arranged and travelled to agreed meeting points to distribute Club packs in September
- We attended, Governing Council, Regional, Club, Cunningham League Meetings.
- We organised Improver classes for Nov/Intermediate grades on Zoom and BBO
- We Maintained communications with the President/Secretary/Treasurer of Our Region.

As CDO's would like to wish Paul Porteous, his wife Maureen, and family every good wish in their retirement. We have worked with Paul for many years now, and whether that was at meetings or over in the Office we always found Paul to be a gentleman, and always helpful. Paul has always been available to give advice, and very dedicated to his role. Paul has always been knowledgeable and efficient in his days as director of operations in Templeogue, and in latter days as CEO of the Contract Bridge Association of Ireland. We all agree that down the road Paul's career could probably inspire a book. Paul will be extremely difficult to replace maybe even irreplaceable.

Best wishes Paul and Maureen.

Bert McKay

Marian McKay

Barbara Burke

Keeping in touch with club members, keeping the club identity and encouraging members to play bridge involved input from club organisers, TD's, bridge teachers and the players. Some of them have shared their experience.

Keeping in touch with Members

We, in CLTC Bridge Club had our last face-to-face bridge game in the clubhouse, following our annual weekend away in Ballymascanlon - on 10th March 2020, as news of the approaching global pandemic started filtering into our consciousness. Little did we think that 16 months later we would still be no closer to returning to in-house bridge.

We experimented with Zoom, in the early days of the pandemic, in an effort to stay in contact – visually, with our club members. One of our members – Malcolm, was familiar with the concept of video conferencing, as a 3rd level lecturer.

He hosted weekly meetings, during which a number of other members provided bridge quizzes, and hand discussions to keep us all interested, during first lockdown. They were well attended, as the committee had undertaken to contact everyone by email/phone to explain the process of joining the meetings. The club ultimately acquired its own Zoom licence to facilitate committee meetings, ongoing club get-togethers and our annual club AGM. It has proved easy to use and very beneficial to the continual operation of the bridge club.

Around this time, our regional secretary Blanaid, had been encouraging us all to register with BBO and familiarise ourselves with the platform, playing casually with friends, or competitively with/against robots. She explained that the CBAI were liaising with BBO in order to facilitate the setup of private virtual clubs in Ireland, for interested clubs, affiliated to the national body. This we did, and happily the CLTC Virtual Bridge Club was established in June 2020. We perfected our play over the summer and by the start of the official new bridge year in September we had 57 of our members (>80% membership) playing regularly. The club has managed 100 online games since

inception. A wonderful achievement in such a short time considering the game has hardly altered much in the previous 100+years.

It just shows that one is never too old to learn new tricks.

David King

Starting a Virtual Club on BBO.

In March 2020, when we went into lockdown and our Bridge was suspended, we all hoped that this would be short lived. As the weeks went by it became clear that the closure would be prolonged. At the start a few of us played at a private table on BBO, but as the time went by and we became used to the online game, we enquired of BBO if we could get Director's rights, so we could start to run tournaments. Unfortunately, BBO was swamped at that time, and was struggling to cope with the huge extra demand, and were not extending Director Privileges to anyone else. Then in April, CBAI come to the rescue, and inquired of various clubs if they were interested in setting up a Virtual Club. John Riordan and I got in touch with our local clubs (Celbridge, Palmerstown & Lucan) to get the go-ahead, and we agreed to set up a Virtual Club for the members of these three clubs. We felt that each individual club would be too small to create a virtual club of its own. We got our Director's Username & Password in May, and we scheduled our first Virtual Club game on 19th May 2020, and we were to run games on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. We had a few nervous dry runs with volunteers in the days before the game, to try and gain confidence with the system, and to get used to the Director's options and commands. We also started a sustained effort to persuade all our member to join BBO and to start playing online with us. This took the form of multiple emails, messages on our websites, phone calls, and a short series of videos on our websites about how to get started on BBO, how to use the system and how to enter our competitions.

Our first night (Tuesday) saw 5 tables, but only 3 tables on Wednesday, and 5 tables again on Thursday. A slow start, but we continued to email, phone, cajole and entice our members onto the platform. The Tuesday of the next week saw 8 tables, and we thought we were "the business", but we made a mess of things on Wednesday, and we had to abort the tournament, which dented our confidence a bit, but the patience and understanding of our members was great. Gradually, bit by bit, we became more confident and competent, and we continued to encourage our members to join. In June we were averaging about 7-8 tables a night, and slowly but surely, as time went on, most of our members came on board. In March of this year, we were getting 15-16 tables a night. We had, by then, extended our Virtual Club to include a number of other players who had some sort of loose connection to our clubs.

Our intention at the start was to retain the cohesion of our clubs, to keep the sense of community and belonging that we had at the tables alive, so that our clubs would remain strong throughout the lockdown, and be able to resume when the lockdown ended. To that end, we allow kibitzing at our tables, to allow our members who either cannot play on any given night, or who have chosen not to play on in the Virtual Club, to keep an eye on us, and to feel that they are still part of the action.

There are still a few club members who for one or other reason have not opted to play (yet) in our Virtual Club. It is not simply a matter of age. Our oldest member (at 95) is a regular participant in our virtual competitions, and we have others over 90.

We have three directors, John Riordan, David Redmond and Myles Fitzgerald who share the running of the tournaments, and on the whole the work is not onerous. Most of the problems of the stability of the BBO platform have disappeared, and the system improves all the time.

While the Virtual Club has given us a lifeline to our Bridge during the lockdown, and we have learned skills that will stand to us in the future, we all look forward to getting back to our individual clubs, and to be able to greet and share stories with our friends and club-members.

David Redmond

Bridge Teacher

In March 2020, Roselawn Bridge Club was a relatively new Bridge club with 130 members. Approaching our 4th birthday, I found myself having to announce our closure for the unforeseeable future as the Covid 19 pandemic hit.

Only ten days earlier we had enjoyed our first successful Bridge weekend away. Everyone was still on a high and looking forward to our next adventure and now this. Of course, it was devastating for the whole world but from a Bridge perspective, I could feel a real sense of loss for all the members.

To keep all the members in touch and together, I set up a WhatsApp group.

Each day, I made up ten sets of hands, took pictures of them and sent them into the chat, asking the members to write down how these hands should be bid. At 6pm I would post the previous days answers along with the next set of hands. This continued every day for the following 2 months.

At that time eighty percent of our members were beginners and novice players and thus were very appreciative of their daily dose of bridge. I received positive feedback which encouraged me to continue with this set up.

Towards the end of April, I received an email from Paul Porteous which explained the BBO online bridge platform, and how it might be a solution for us, a way to continue enjoying bridge remotely.

My son Dylan, the computer tech in our house and TD for the Club, could see BBO's potential and immediately began researching all we needed to do to get the show on the road. I informed everyone on the chat what they needed to have in place for the arrival of BBO. We had volunteers to visit members to assist them with registering, I had one member come to my house on four occasions learning how to use his device (nothing was going to stop us). Within four weeks we were up and running as a virtual Bridge club.

We offered three tournaments a night, four nights a week, to our members delight. Some enquired if their family and friends could come and play. The answer of course, was an immediate yes as we were living in a lockdown and the main idea was to give people something to do and to help them through the pandemic., We have one member playing with his father who is 94 years young and another member playing bridge with his 85-year-old uncle who is living in Rathfarnham, another lady playing with her mother-in-law who is 86 and in Cork. We have many others playing with brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles none of whom live in the Roselawn area

After a short while, many members began to seek bridge classes. Some members wanted to do improvers courses while others felt it was an ideal opportunity for their respective partners to do the beginners classes. I felt I had enough inquiries to warrant the amount of hours it would take to put one of these classes together on BBO and to try it out. As a result, we now have five members of the

club with their partners playing who if it wasn't for the BBO and lockdown would never have taken it up. BBO gave me a unique opportunity to offer classes in a different way, I could schedule the classes more frequently and at times which suited the students. This way the previous class was still fresh in their minds and we could move on with the new lesson. I was able to use WhatsApp, emails and phone calls to deliver the lesson and follow up on any questions.

I also have the members who have found the refresher classes very helpful and have improved their Bridge immensely

Following the success of the group classes, I decided to go a step further and start doing one on one lessons. This proved to be an unbelievable success particularly considering that all of these students started playing in 20016/17. When I introduced them to my method and system, they were able to bring their Bridge to a whole new level, at a much faster rate than I or they ever thought possible, going on to win Regional and National competitions.

The club is proud of their achievements.

One lady mentioned to me she and her sister were trying to teach their other two sisters to play Bridge on Zoom as a way of them staying in touch but it was proving impossible and wondered if I could do anything for them. It turns out one of them is living in Scotland the other in Clane. Needless to say, we did some classes together and they are all now playing in our club as well as having their weekly sessions on Zoom. In total we have 24 new Beginners who completed the course on the BBO and so far, are all coming on fine

All I can say is the BBO experience for me and my teaching has been a very positive one and will continue long after we find ourselves back playing live Bridge, plus I think I will continue playing the tournaments as long as people want to play with relations or anyone else living far and wide

I am continuously putting on beginner and improvers classes, all details can be found on the Roselawn Bridge Club website

Brendan Doyle

See Bridge Teachers on menu (main page).

Bridge in your own front room now has its own TD

Growing up I remember bridge games in the front room of our home, but it always entailed 4 or 8 people and on the lucky occasion, when I was older, if someone didn't show I got to fill a seat.

But bridge in your own front room has taken on a whole different meaning these days. Covid times have forced us into a different version of that most social of activities. But on the upside, you are inviting the whole club into your front room. Not only that you also have a TD at your beck and call.

My wholehearted congratulations to the CBAI who very early negotiated a country wide access agreement to fast-track club TD setup on BBO. This happened just as it was becoming impossible to be granted TD rights on the BBO platform.

I was fortunate to be approached to investigate setting up facilities in our area. Once I formulated an approach, I jumped into educating players and TDs over the summer of 2020. One training session I had 20+ potential club TDs and maxed out one night with just under 80 pairs in 2 competitions. My strongly held vision, of clubs having a roster of club members being TDs, didn't come to fruition in its entirety, it did not stop clubs appreciating that the year just gone needed to be run online.

In the past year I have gone from weekly allcomers games to being a regular TD for a local club to special competition TD for various clubs in & out of the Region to National events.

So, what has it been like for a TD in these times? Well, it's a whole different scenario. On a normal night in the club the most common infringement will be one of 3; Lead out of Turn, Bid Out of Turn or Insufficient Bid. In the online environment this is impossible, the aul computer will not allow any of these infringements so in that respect it's a lot easier. However, the calls now are for "they played too slow so we were averaged" – "The computer got it wrong I'd have got one more trick" – "The Undo button is missing". On the "Slow Play" one, as I always say to those that raise it, it's too late to make that argument after the round is over; Call the TD during slow play and I can then deal with it if I can observe same. "Computer got it wrong" yes it can happen but in the last year I have only on a handful of occasions saw fit to change the result, I say to you, replay the hand after game away from the emotion of that particular hand and then tell me it got it wrong, and I will discuss with you and maybe agree. "Undo" oh wow is this a hot potato, while there are reasons why a TD may allow a bid or a card to be withdrawn it is nowhere near as prevalent or permissible as the occurrence of the request for undos in the online world; my answer to this, in your account settings you can turn on confirm bid & confirm card this way you have to confirm either your bid or card to be played, this will negate the requirement for an Undo. Personally, I have Confirm Bid turned on and the number of times it has saved me from an inadvertent click on Pass has been worth the effort of having to confirm every bid.

Finally, seats going red, the incidence of people losing their internet connection has been an eye opener to me and a challenge for the TD, at what stage do you replace a live player with a robot? It's a pondering question – I mentally juggle the number of minutes left in the round with the number of cards still to be played with the complexity of the contract in play and the level of players and of course the significance of the particular competition. I hope I get the balance right – feedback always welcomed.

To everyone out there, thanks for keeping our regular bridge nights going. For a lot of people, it was more than just the online bridge, a lot had to get used to "Online", "Browser"/" Webpage", "TYPING", right click here left click there, making sure you're not talking (typing) to the tournament when it's meant to be a personal message for your partner or opponents at the table; the list goes on. But all that pain and frustration has managed to save our club structures in the main and hopefully our sanity when we hit that 2nd lockdown in the new year. I fervently look forward to meeting you all again in the clubs and in person. But as of now I have no idea when that will be. So, keep the good ship Bridge afloat and see you all as soon as we can.

John Crimmins

Players

I miss the friendly chat and the sometimes not so friendly rivalry of the real-life bridge table. I miss the look on my partner's face when I put down my 2-point flat hand as dummy for their 1NT opener and then slope off for a cigarette. I miss the glass of wine and the post mortems at the end of the night. But when life gives you lemons, they say make lemonade and online bridge has been a godsend for many of us over the last year. It gave us something to look forward to on an evening when you just can't watch any more box sets. To my mind, it does have some small advantages. No more rushing the family through dinner in order to get down to the club by 7.15pm - you can finish your last mouthful and be at the table 5 minutes later. I also found it has given me time to focus on

my card play - somehow it seems easier to count to 13 accurately (4 times) in the quiet of my study. It's undoubtedly second best - but ultimately better than nothing. The question is - will we be able to competently hold 13 cards in our hands when we get back to the green baize - and remember not to revoke...??

Kathie McGrath

Where can I begin in explaining, the life line Bridge on line gave my life, as I lost my husband a year ago, I live alone. The pleasure in knowing I had Bridge either morning, or night club, definitely, helped me so much, to try and focus, not on my grief, for many hours, but concentrate (my partners might not agree) on the game. It's a wonderful hobby to have. Congratulations to all who planned and ran it. Brilliant. Very grateful.

Joan Murphy

I've been playing bridge for many years in Leixlip Bridge Club. I usually play in the morning and evening sessions. For the last 18 months I've been playing on line. It's not the same as meeting personally to play, but it's been great. It's been most enjoyable, and has prevented social isolation, especially during those severe lock down days. I found it helped as there is a structure to those bridge days. Hopefully we will be able to play in the clubs soon

Barbara Haslam

I have really enjoyed the Online Bridge, which has been a lifesaver for me last winter over the Covid19 period during the lock-downs.

Margaret Stanley

Thank you so much for Bridge Online during the pandemic. It was a lifesaver, and kept me sane over the last 18 months.

Nora Hughes

Found this invaluable over the winter. Gave some structure to my week and allowed me to keep on touch with my good bridge friends. Enjoyed it very much although looking forward to getting back to normal bridge at some stage.

Aine Condon

Finally, thank you from the Regional Committee to Paul Porteous and the staff at the CBAI office for all their help, and thank you to all the Club Secretaries and committees.