

## Chairman's Report – AGM June 22, 2025

I have enjoyed my first year as Chair despite this being a very busy year for me. Any NIBU clubs which I have visited, both secretaries and club members, have always made me feel more than welcome and I have been impressed by every aspect of their bridge professionalism. I will hopefully be visiting many more clubs this coming year. I was privileged to be invited to Carrickfergus Bridge Club's fabulous 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations and played with my 91-year-old Mother who plays there every week.

I would like to thank many people for their hard work - Michael McFaul for the tireless tasks he has to carry out. Anne Fitzpatrick for looking after all our financial affairs - an onerous task. Ian Hamilton for the sterling work he carried out with Masterpoints, Interclub Duplicates, Simultaneous Pairs and helping with Tournament Directing duties. Helen Hall for her work as International Match Manager and website administration. I want to thank Wayne Somerville for taking over the website. Brian McDowell for all his work with the website and BBO and RealBridge duties. Harold Curran, our NIBU President for all the work he has done.

Many, many thanks go to Anne Hassan for all the work she has done as Competitions Secretary, continually trying to drum up entries. We are very sorry to lose her but she has offered to help whoever takes over the role. Also, many other people including Sandie Millership, Wayne and Norman Lacey and the Youth Committee for their endeavours with our young people. Sandie and Sam Barr who help with running the NIBU online competitions. Thanks also to the Tournament Committee, Selection Committee and the Tournament Directors. We are badly in need of more Tournament Directors and again we are indebted to Alan Hill who freely give us his time and help with regard to training TDs and running trials, etc. Many thanks also to his wife Heather for all the help she has given me personally – there are so many people who contribute in so many ways.

The deaths of Sam Hall and also Greer Mackenzie were a shock to us all. Both Sam and Greer were past chairmen of the NIBU and both were very fine international players. Greer also looked after our website for many years.

Over the past year, apart from visiting a number of clubs, I have been teaching in Carrick Grammar School and also Wellington College, helped by Robin Burns and Heather Hill. Getting more people into bridge is so important and if anyone at all could even go back to your former schools and suggest starting up a bridge club with the pupils, we at the NIBU can give you help with regard to teaching materials and whatever else might be necessary.

I have also helped St Malachys Bridge Club set up their online club, anyone is welcome to play – a Tuesday night at 7pm, although they will shortly be finishing for the summer. Although I had made up my mind, for health reasons, to take a back seat in international bridge I somehow managed to be involved this year in the Camrose and also the Senior Camrose, keeping me busy and out of mischief. Unfortunately, we didn't have much luck in

any of our international endeavours this year apart from my team in the Camrose managing to beat three of the other home countries. However, I do think it is still an achievement to be able to put in teams for these events.

Also, I have been trying to help and get involved with Tournament Directing and as I mentioned earlier if there is anyone out there willing to help in this regard, I think you would probably find it enjoyable and worthwhile.

My plans for the coming year are to encourage Junior Inter A and Inter B and novice players to enter competitions. Players or secretaries of clubs may contact me with any suggestions/ideas to encourage players and make this happen. I also want to encourage U3A members to join the NIBU.

Another aim I have is to get a lot of our clubs to reopen again after closure due to Covid and I will certainly try my best to visit relevant people or speak to them.

I have heard more than one person say 'What does the NIBU do for me?'. And I'm sorry some people think that. But apart from insurance help, ability to play in NIBU competitions for those of us who are more competitive, being part of a group who organise and sort out international and regional competitions, administration – keeping clubs informed about what's going on. So aside from all that, I want YOU to tell me or any of the NIBU Officers or Club Secretaries, about any suggestions you may have with regard to what the NIBU CAN do for you. One example may be that we produce a card for every person in the Union which gives details of your Masterpoints, grading and anything else you can suggest. Another thing might be separate sections for Senior/Intermediate/Novice in NIBU competitions – again more TDs needed and more entries – PLEASE Secretaries encourage ALL your members to play in our competitions.

Mental health is currently a very important issue. Getting out and meeting people and going to play bridge is a sure way to achieve this.