



Newsletter May 2020

Challenging times... and a challenging newsletter to draft, given Bridge has now come way down on the list for some folk, yet others, in other personally unique situations, find Bridge a lifeline in this time of isolation.

I never would have thought in a million years as I drafted the January Newsletter, that things would be so utterly different by the time of the next edition.

Desperately strange and deeply sad..

Firstly, I trust you and your families are all well and safe and that this may continue right through this traumatic time. Please keep safe. that is the priority.

Secondly, this Newsletter obviously won't contain much by the way of celebrations of recent competitions or advertisements for future delights as things have all been put on hold. ☹☹☹ But Bridge is continuing to flourish albeit in a different format.

The on-line Bridge community grows a-pace such that sometimes it is difficult to get on-line as it is so busy. I played in a BBO* EBU Tournament recently when over 57 thousand people were on line playing in varying events at that time and that is just BBO.

There are different platforms to play on- some for beginners, some are free, some are high brow indeed, many are social with increased time per hand and chatting encouraged, some offer master points, some are club based, others are international, some are events for Teams of Four which *anyone* can set up, others are for pairs with reserves/robots to fill in if you don't have a partner, other events are teams of Eight and finally there are lessons and practice forums. There truly is something for everyone.

For those of you who haven't yet taken the plunge, this edition will hopefully support you to dip your toe in the water. For those of you who are already pros please actively reach out and support those you know who may be put off by the myths that accompany on-line bridge. We may know of members who used to physically attend a club but who have gone off radar. It is important in this time to reach out and ensure that 'out of sight' doesn't mean 'out of mind'. Bridge will survive but maybe in a different form and we need

to ensure our bridge community survives too. Underneath the bridge player exists a human being who may need support, comfort and some mental diversion whilst in isolation, because mental health and well-being is as vital as the physical. Playing Bridge can provide that for some.

As I saw on facebook recently: ‘ In a world where you can be anything, be kind.’

So reach out to someone today and help a friend. A random act of kindness...Sometimes all it takes is a friendly word to cheer someone up: in other cases you may be offering a life-line by supporting someone to play/learn to play on line. On-line Bridge is not as frightening as you might first think and if the restrictions caused by this pandemic last a long while, it may be all we have.

Stay safe guys, and keep on playing Bridge.



Editor

Stay safe, experiment with fun online Bridge in 2020/1

* BBO Bridge Base Online

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR ALL CLUB SECRETARIES

Don't forget that this Newsletter is issued to all clubs and players in Nottinghamshire that we are aware of so is an ideal way to keep your club connected with other bridge clubs in Nottingham.

It would be a great idea to have an article from all clubs outlining what they or some of their members have been doing in this time of isolation. People need to link into the wider bridge community.

Please send your individual or club photos/articles to the editor by email: tonitsmith76@gmail.com

NB: You do not need to be an affiliated club/member to have your news item included



♠ NCBA/COUNTY WIDE NEWS

Chairs Report

As expected all the normal County events have been cancelled. We are still reflecting on whether and how the normal range of County events will take place down the line. There are differing views: some feel that the restrictions will prevent 'normal' bridge play for at least 18 months given the demographic and close proximity required in a physical game. At the other extreme, some think we may be back in clubs this winter. We can't predict when and if clubs will re-open. We can be sure though that things will not be the same for a long time.

Some members will learn to embrace on-line bridge and not wish to return to the lengthy travel times in traffic to get to a club. There are concerns expressed at cross-County level that some smaller clubs won't survive- It's hard to secure new younger players at the best of time.

So what will the future look like? Who knows! The best we can do is to support clubs and members where we can and work towards building the on-line community because that at least will continue. It is highly possible that our normal winter Teams of Eight competitions will go ahead, but on-line. Similarly the inter-County League (aka County matches) are also likely to be on-line although MCWG are not sure yet if the last match from last season will go ahead let alone the 20/21 season! So how do we gear up for this? Supporting members to become at ease with this form of bridge is an essential first step.

Please take the step to get familiar playing on-line if you haven't already. Ask for help if you need it. We will need you playing this winter!!

Other local news is that obviously our AGM scheduled for May is cancelled. EBU have told us provided we give you usual notice periods we can re-arrange for later in the year. We will keep a watching brief on the Government guidance and decide a date later on after the net NCBA Committee meeting which is hoped will be by Zoom on 6 June. If necessary we may have to run our AGM in the Autumn via Zoom as well. For those of you unused to Zoom, it may be worth looking at some tutorials such as the following that our resident Zoom expert Pravin Tailor has identified.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMUxzrgZvZQ&feature=youtu.be>

Now it's time to thank several of our Committee members who had already notified their intention to resign from May this year. It's good to have new blood and a circulation of members in any committee. So thanks to Graham Brindley for his very long service, Shirley Ashtari who managed the T04 and other duties so well and Jane Hall with her attention to detail and meticulous running of the To8. Jane and Shirley have both offered to carry on supporting the To8 and To4 this year although this may have to be on-line. As a consequence of these changes and the Covid-19 position we find ourselves short of members in particular those with enthusiasm and abilities in the IT/on-line area. If you can help us in this respect even if in a little capacity, we would be very pleased to hear from you. Support doesn't have to mean full committee membership, so this needn't be a vastly time consuming commitment, yet helps to support our chosen sport.

Above all keep safe. See you on the other side!

Toni Smith
Chair NCBA

Regional Update

MCWG The Midlands County Working Group (MCWG), which comprises reps from each of the local County Committees, has been meeting weekly on line via Zoom/Google Hangup. The lead NCBA's rep on this group is Pravin Tailor and Toni Smith.

So what's happening in different Counties? It ranges between very little, sometimes because clubs are already leading on on-line playing, to a huge amount and it all depends if there are IT savvy and keen members on the committee to put the time in. But we all agree that for the near future, the future of Bridge looks on-line.

Collectively we have been sharing best practice and have identified some useful information, which you may find of interest.

♥ It is interesting to see how popular on-line bridge is in some places. Suffolk County report that they have re-vamped their website to provide an online service for its (about 1000) members <https://www.bridgewebs.com/suffolkbridge/>. They have been running online games (including a specifically “relaxed” session) and will now switch to being an EBU Virtual Club. They have an online team-of-4 league with 21 teams in four divisions already running. There are two experienced BBO directors in the county and now a quarter of the county’s club are running online. (Ed: WOW!!)They run a 28-board (Wednesday) and 5-board daily Funbridge competition. A great set of video clips for online bridge are available from [Little Clacton Bridge club – click here.](#)

♥ For Teachers, the situation is difficult. Stamford BC are distraught that their massive teaching programme is on hold as with social distancing. However there is a group in EBED leading on building on-line teaching. There has been a second EBED tutorial this week by Jacks Morcombe and it contains a lot of useful information. It can be found at https://youtu.be/1rpy_lhGSno, but go to www.facebook.com/pg/EBEDCIO/videos for the full collection. It has been live streamed to Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. This is especially geared to teachers, but there are useful ideas for others too.

♥ First for Bridge (the holiday company) is offering online BBO sessions geared to their typical audience (4 sessions a week labelled “club standard” and 3 sessions a week labelled as “Improvers, up to NGS-6”). There are various details on their website at <https://www.bridgewebs.com/first/>.

♥ Surrey CBA ran a NHS “Sim Pairs” event on five days this week using Caterham BC as the main host. See SCBA website at <https://www.bridgewebs.com/surrey/> and tonycherrettbridge@gmail.com. This is a great initiative and raised £6000 for NHS Charities Together, with 1051 players. Several Notts pairs attended- the consolidated results will be on the EBU site. When NCBA looked into running something similar in Nottinghamshire, it was already over-subscribed but there might be more scope later on- distance is no barrier now!! Well down Trevor Hobson Chair SCBA.

♥ There are **new** and **interesting** books being offered for free downloads – Swedish author (Mats Milstrand) covers very up to date approaches to bidding. You can find the details on <http://www.itbolaget.nu/bridge/nilslandbooks.asp>; they should be appealing to any county level players.

♥ The Sam Punch (Sociology of Bridge) initiative on researching the effects of Covid-19 on the bridge playing community, has reached some but not all participants. If you are interested see: [Recruitment Letter](#), [Participant Information Sheet](#).

Pravin Tailor
MCWG Rep

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**YES ANOTHER SURVEY!!**

**We know in Nottinghamshire there are a few clubs offering some on-line Bridge. This is really good news and congratulations to those early birds who got in quickly- we know some other clubs are unable to set up drives now on BBO as the system is at capacity. Although morning Teams of Four are easy for anyone to set up. However those current games are in general more of a social level with chatting and increased time per hand. There is a real need for this so thanks to all those who are putting in the effort to support Nottinghamshire Bridge in this way.**

### **Should NCBA be organizing some bridge drives?**

**Some people are keen others less so. I provide 3 quotes from players with different views about on-line Bridge:**

1. *“ last night I played online through BBO with three friends I know really well. We also had zoom on. We also each had a glass of wine in our hands. We had a great fun evening. Our ages are 82,80,75, and 75. I’m not great on technology but I’m quickly learning how useful it can be when you’re living in the strange times we are at the moment. I think when we eventually get through all of this that bridge lessons should incorporate technology into classes as part of the course.[...]”*
2. *“With the (BBO EBU) lockdown league running 4 times a week - the 6 daily EBU games on Funbridge and BBO, plus the games that some clubs like Retford / Nottingham / Mansfield are already running a few times a week, is there actually any need or room for anything further ? I don’t think we’ll attract many, if any, new players so we will either dilute the events that are already taking place or not get enough players to make it viable.*
3. *“ You may already be playing in the on-line BBO/EBU daily tournaments but, if not , I can recommend them to you. The standard is high: today we came up against Jeremy Dhondy (have I spelt that correctly?) and Andy Hughes , for instance. To achieve 50% overall, for my partners and I , is something of an achievement, but you may have you own views on that!. Anyway, for \$1.50 per player per session, it is worth the extra cost, all the hands and comparative scores being displayed afterwards. I regard the NBC drives, so splendidly arranged by David Dunford and the other local ones being set up as a bit of light entertainment alongside the battles of the EBU tournaments ”.*

OK -so some people are enthusiastic about on-line Bridge and others are less so. Of course we expect a range of views.

**What about you? Do you want NCBA to organize some drives?**

**What is the NCBA view?**

NCBA would be concerned if we could not offer some high level games- as opposed mainly social fun drives which clubs and BBO etc are currently already covering very well indeed. We will need at least our County players to practice before the expected 'County matches' commence in Autumn. We need to build and maintain a Nottinghamshire cameraderie and develop players for a County squad.

So we invite your views via a short survey. Some of these questions are member based and others club based.

**We need to hear from you all.**



**Nottinghamshire Contract Bridge Association**



### **On-line Bridge SURVEY**

- 1. Does your club offer on-line Bridge?**
- 2. If the answer is no, would you want them to?**
- 3. Do you already play on-line Bridge?**
- 4. If the answer is no, would you welcome some support to playing on line? (If so please tell us how to contact you.)**

5. **NCBA are proposing to organise a To4 series this summer similar to Suffolk (see above) Are you interested in putting forward a To4? (We would need to know your team members (max 6) by 20 May to get a league running by early June.)**
6. **If the Nottinghamshire Teams of Eight league this winter is on-line, would you be interested in putting a team forward?**
7. **Would you be interested in participating in the inter-county league ( aka County matches) this winter (please state whether you are ok with on-line as well as physical). This is important as we need to start building a list of interested people who have played or would like to play in County matches and partake of County development).**
8. **Some Counties are organising online cross County matches- eg Lincolnshire have played against Warwickshire recently in a virtual super bowl. We could join in too (an event for different grades). Would you be interested in this?**
9. **Please tell us which days and times of the day you prefer to play online. And any other ideas of course.**

**Deadline for replies: 15 May 2020**  
**[Sue3159wright@btinternet.com](mailto:Sue3159wright@btinternet.com)**



## **TEAMS OF EIGHT LEAGUE**

This is a highly popular winter County league. It will probably be an on-line league for the coming year. Here is convenyor Jane Hall reporting for the last year. The last few matches were sadly postponed because of Covid-19 but the final results are now on the county website .

“At the start of a season I might worry about bad weather preventing matches being played, or difficulties over agreeing fixture dates. But what actually happened exceeded my worst fears. First the closure of Clifton Bridge caused the worse traffic jams across Nottingham that had ever been experienced, and this resulted in four matches being rescheduled. Then we had the floods; two clubs lost their match premises to flooding and had to find alternative venues. Then the unimaginable happened and Coronavirus arrived in the UK; 11 matches were not able to be played and club bridge came to a sudden halt. All the clubs were understanding and helpful over all of these unprecedented events.

The season was not able to be completed but we have finalise the league standings. These are now up to date on the NCBA website.

I have carried out the checks to make sure that all clubs have complied with the rules around players' eligibility; there was 100% compliance. Congratulations to Nottingham who had an exceptional season winning all three Divisions; they would have represented the County in the Garden Cities Trophy if that too had not been cancelled.

I always appreciate feedback on how the league is run. I thank you all for making timely returns of your score sheets, this has enabled me to update the NCBA website fairly promptly. There were some concerns over some matches not being agreed by, or scheduled, within the time periods. Whilst no complaints were made I do hope this will not be such an issue next season.

Captains may like to check their scores on the EBU system. Log into MyEBU under your ID , pick Utilities, then EBU League, then under "Teams to which you belong" click on your team. You will be able to see the entered result and team players.

This season we had 10 clubs fielding 21 teams in the league. The same as last year. The number of players was also similar with 255 taking part. This represents around a third of NCBA membership; there are a few out of county players who are also team members of NCBA clubs .

I will be optimistically sending out information about the 2020/21 season early July. If you wish to withdraw a team, or enter a new one, please let me know by the end of July at the latest. I do not believe this lockdown will end soon for many of our members; a sizable number of whom are in the very vulnerable category. I will be keeping an eye on the situation and will consider any changes to the norm we might have to make.

Meanwhile enjoy the summer; keep safe and well” .

*Jane Hall To8 Convenor*

## **THE CLUBS' CONFERENCE**

**On the 6 March the Clubs' Conference was held in Ramsdale Conference Centre. This was a very constructive meeting exploring the issues facing Bridge in Nottinghamshire.**

**We developed a list of actions for clubs and for NCBA to undertake. However little action has taken place subsequently because.....**

**.....Covid-19 impacted the following week! We could never have guessed!**

**It is unfortunate and seems very strange now that we did not discuss Covid-19 and its impact on Bridge at all. It could have been a useful exploration of how we could keep Bridge alive and develop capacity in the online arena. But it was just before the storm broke. Our actions focused on 'old style' physical bridge so there is little rush to implement, accordingly a more detailed feedback will be forwarded to attendees and included in the next Edition as this one is getting a little large already!**

**Attendees:** Tony Garland (Newark) Tony Ward (Notts) Elizabeth Dunford(WBridgford) Mo Logan(Phoenix) Keith Abel (Retford) Michael Gyles (S Mansfield) Jane Fraser ( M Mechanics) Sue McIntosh(NCBA) David Dunford (Notts) Steve Fordham (Woodborough) Steve Crawford (EBridgford) Diane S



## **County League Subcommittee**

**This Sub-committee met on 3 May via Zoom. Very exciting! The purpose was a debrief on our performance in the Inter-County League last year, even with one match as yet unplayed. The current results are: our A team came 6<sup>th</sup>, our B team put out an exceptional performance and came 1<sup>st</sup>- first time for many a year- and our C team put a sterling effort in to come 3<sup>rd</sup>.**

**This was a very good result. Our plans for next year are slightly stymied as we do not fully appreciate how Bridge will be played given Covid-19. But we did take the opportunity to discuss how County Bridge can be effected over the summer. Our view is that we are keen to put on events but only if there is definite interest hence the importance of the survey in this Edition.**

**Please give us your views.**

**Sue McIntosh/Pravin Tailor**

## **CLUB AND LOCAL NEWS**

### **The Nottingham Bridge Club**

There can't be many people who are elected bridge club chairman one day, and the next informs members that the club is closed. But that is what happened when David Dunford was elected Chairman of The Nottingham Bridge Club on 15 March. However, he did get one game in before the club closed and is seen here ( Ed: sorry couldn't get permission to copy that photo 😊 )with the winners, Irene Brown and Stuart Wharton, of the Broadhead Bowl.

David had anticipated that the club would need to close, and plans to move the club online were already in place. "The social aspect of bridge is very important to many of our members," said David, "and I was keen to set up ways for them to keep in contact during the current epidemic. We now have a private Facebook group with around 70 members and my application to be a director on Bridge Base Online just got through before they stopped taking any more. I've been running private tournaments just for our members: over 70 have registered with me so far and we've been getting around 11 tables. For quite a few members, both Facebook and BBO have been a new venture, but the opportunity to chat to friends over a (virtual) bridge table is really appreciated."

A further venture for the club is a teams of four competition, with the teams organising their own matches on BBO. If other clubs would like to set up their own competitions, you can see how The Nottingham Bridge Club have organised themselves on the BBO page of their web site.

DDunford  
TNBC

### **NOTTINGHAM CAFÉ BRIDGE**

The April café Bridge was sadly cancelled along with all other events. However the chosen charity, Rainblows, which is a childrens' cancer respite unit at Loughborough for local children, still received an amazing £450 as so many attendees chose to donate rather than seek a refund of their entry fee. You will always find details of these popular events on the Nottingham café Bridge website.

Keith Spencer NCB committee member



**Remember- NCBA is your County Association. We exist solely to support Bridge in Nottinghamshire. And if you don't tell us what you need, we can't help!! We are up for CHANGE. Please communicate with us.**

In previous Issues we explained our agreed Strategy for promoting Bridge in Nottinghamshire under these main headings:

1. Advertising, and Publicity
2. Effective Communications
3. Training and Development
4. Internal review of how NCBA works
5. Events and County competitions

**URGENT :** Given Covid-19 we may need to amend our skill set to include those familiar and enthusiastic about on-line Bridge. If you are able to help NCBA in even a small way, we would love to hear from you.

**YOU CAN SUPPORT NCBA WITHOUT BEING A FULL COMMITTEE MEMBER SO IT NEED NOT BE TOO TIME CONSUMING.** Please ask any committee member for more information.

## **2020/21 NCBA Committee members and Officers (and their home club)**

**WE STILL HAVE VACANCIES AND ARE WILLING TO CO OPT PEOPLE ON. COME AND JOIN US!!**

**Chair Editor Toni Smith (Woodborough Nottingham)  
Treasurer Ian Dovey (West Bridgford)  
County TD and Webmaster Keith Spencer (Woodborough)  
To4 convenor Pravin Tailor (TNBC Woodborough) supported by ex committee member Shirley Ashtari(WBridgford)  
To8 convenor Jane Hall (non committee member) (Woodborough)  
County League sub committee and team captains Mark Goddard (Nottingham) Sue McIntosh (Retford) Pravin Tailor (Nottingham and Woodborough)  
County Events Sub committee Sue Wright (Mansfield) Sue McIntosh (Retford) Keith Spencer/Mark Goddard  
Other members Chris Frost (Phoenix) Maciej Lehman (Nottingham Woodborough)**

Any articles or bridge information for inclusion in future Issues happily received.

♥ Editor: [tonitsmith76@gmail.com](mailto:tonitsmith76@gmail.com)



**Above all,**

**KEEP SAFE!!**