



Attended by: Clare Batten, Hilary Kenworthy, Mark Goddard, Shirley Ashtari, Ewa Hardwick, Andrew Scott, Jane Holdrick, Stefka Samus, Louise Scull, Ken Smith, Gerry McCormack, Roger Stock, Mary Cousins EBU, Jonathan Lillicrop

Apologies received from: Jane Hall, David Nattrass, Sandy Fulton, Jenny Leggott, Elizabeth Dunford, Paula Foulds, David Flacks, David Green did not manage to connect.

Minutes from the meeting 6th August 2025

Meeting summary

Quick recap

The meeting began with administrative discussions about meeting minutes, recording options, and team registration issues, including concerns about players switching counties and an upcoming Greenpoint event. The main focus was on addressing declining bridge player standards in Nottinghamshire County, with discussions centred on the need for better resources, mentorship programs, and teaching approaches to help players progress beyond beginner levels. The group explored various solutions including forming a subcommittee, implementing different teaching methods, and establishing mentorship programs, while also discussing ways to engage younger players and promote bridge through advertising and teacher recruitment.

Next steps

- Ewa: Compile meeting minutes from the recording and distribute to attendees.
- Ewa: Collect and collate ideas sent by meeting participants regarding mentoring, teaching, and bridge promotion.
- Clare: Market the Greenpoint event after returning from holiday on August 23rd.
- Clare: Take promotional materials for the Greenpoint event to the midweek Congress at Harrogate.
- This group: Consider forming a subcommittee focused on driving bridge improvement initiatives within clubs.
- This group: Establish criteria for mentors.
- County: Establish a database of willing mentors.
- County: Explore ways to encourage higher-level players to participate in club games to raise the overall standard.
- This group: Consider developing strategies to help intermediate players who have reached a plateau improve their bridge skills.
- This group: Investigate mentoring opportunities for intermediate players by higher-ranked players.

- This group: Consider organizing social bridge games aimed at pairing county players with less experienced players.
- This group: Develop a plan for teaching beyond beginners.
- County: Consider setting up monthly online sessions where mentors can analyze previously played hands.
- County: Explore offering mentoring sessions on both BBO and Real Bridge platforms.
- County: Set up a rota of mentors for online sessions.
- Shirley: Email county players to gauge interest in becoming mentors and their preferred format.
- Shirley: Investigate who is prepared to become a mentor and compile a list.
- This group: Provide insights on why higher-level players don't participate in club games.
- This group: Define criteria for mentors who would be qualified to analyze hands and provide feedback.
- Mary: Share details of the teaching webinar on the 19th for posting on the county website.
- Mary: Add autumn classes to the promotional list for anyone planning to run beginners or improvers classes.
- Clubs: Reach out to non-active members to understand why they're not playing.
- Clubs: Identify potential mentoring chairs who could coordinate mentoring programs at the club level.
- Clubs: Consider publicizing Sandy Fulton's online lessons.
- Jonathan: Find out if any junior players are going to local universities and inform the group.
- Group: Meet again in 6 months to review progress on mentoring initiatives.
- Everyone: Send their ideas about mentoring and teaching to Ewa for collation.

Summary

Meeting Minutes and Team Registration

The group discussed meeting minutes and recording options, with Ewa mentioning an AI companion tool that could help with minutes but would require participant consent to record. Clare explained she couldn't take the minutes due to an upcoming holiday, and Hilary offered to make notes instead. The conversation then shifted to team registration issues, particularly regarding associate members from counties not playing in the League, with Clare noting concerns about Nottingham players representing Derbyshire in national events. Finally, they discussed an upcoming Greenpoint event scheduled for September 21st, which Clare planned to market after returning from holiday on the 22nd, including promoting it at the midweek Congress in Harrogate.

Technical and Travel Planning Meeting

The meeting began with technical difficulties as David had trouble accessing the meeting and eventually gave up. The group also addressed a technical issue with Stefka joining the meeting, suggesting she use a browser to access the Zoom link. The conversation ended with Mary joining, though she experienced some connection issues due to poor Wi-Fi.

Bridge Player Development Concerns

Ewa Hardwick, the secretary for Nottinghamshire County Bridge Association, organized a meeting to address concerns from players who felt they had reached a plateau in their bridge development. She highlighted the lack of resources and guidance for advanced beginners and discussed the importance of continuing education to prevent players from becoming disillusioned and stopping the game. Ewa mentioned the availability of resources like the EBU website, group lessons, and bridge software, but noted that beginners in Nottinghamshire lack opportunities to play against more experienced players. She also proposed the idea of mentoring, suggesting that mentors should be experienced players, and mentioned ongoing efforts to collect information on available teachers and resources.

Declining County Bridge Player Numbers

The group discussed the declining standard of bridge players in their county, with Ewa presenting data showing only 44 active players with NGS Queen and above, many of whom prefer online play over club games. Mark noted that better players are less likely to attend clubs due to factors like family commitments and the current weak game quality, creating a circular problem where players are not challenged to improve. Andrew suggested that the decline in university players and the focus on teaching conventions rather than decision-making are contributing factors, while Ewa emphasized the need to replace adult education lessons and promote higher-level play opportunities.

Bridge Mentoring Program Discussion

Clare presented a mentoring program idea from the American Bridge League, which would require club-level implementation and sufficient resources to match mentors with less experienced players. The group discussed challenges with finding mentors, with Andrew and others suggesting that online mentoring could be a viable alternative to face-to-face mentoring. Ewa proposed forming a subcommittee to drive improvements within clubs, and mentioned that the county receives monthly reports showing varying levels of member activity across clubs.

Challenges in Advanced Bridge Teaching

The group discussed the challenges of teaching bridge beyond beginner levels, with Ewa noting a gap between 2-3 year courses and suggesting Sandy Fulton's online lessons could be publicized. The discussion centred on the definition of beginners, with Gerry questioning if 2-3 years of play qualified someone as a beginner, while Louise highlighted the need to stratify improvers and match material to different skill levels to reduce dropout rates. Andrew emphasized the importance of creating a mentor database and identifying self-motivated learners, while Mary inquired about systems to help beginners transition from classroom to club play, with Gerry describing Nottingham's successful Wednesday sessions that mix experienced players with returning enthusiasts.

Bridge Club Teaching Strategies

The group discussed different approaches to teaching and progression in bridge clubs. Louise described Keyworth's successful fast-track course followed by gradual integration into regular club drives, which has led to 13 new members this year. Clare and others advocated for beginners joining main club drives to experience the full nature of bridge, while Andrew emphasized the importance of maintaining footfall and catering to both improving and casual players. The discussion highlighted various club practices, including Mansfield Mechanics' Thursday morning session for beginners and Derbyshire's level 2 game that started as a beginner-friendly session.

Bridge Mentorship and Skill Development

The group discussed providing resources and mentorship for bridge players to improve their skills. Jane emphasized the importance of finding a regular partner and using online resources to learn from experienced players. Andrew suggested conducting post-game analysis sessions, which were previously successful. Stefka proposed organizing online sessions with mentors to help players improve their decision-making skills. The group agreed to consider both BBO and Real Bridge platforms for these sessions, with Louise identifying four potential mentorship approaches. They decided to reach out to existing county players to gauge interest in participating as mentors.

Bridge Mentor Program Development

The group discussed establishing a mentor scheme for bridge players, with Mark emphasizing the need to limit the number of mentors and set clear criteria for selection. They agreed to hold monthly sessions for mentors to analyze play and assess their effectiveness. Mary announced upcoming teaching sessions and webinars, while Andrew shared his experience teaching beginners at various locations. The group also discussed promoting bridge through advertising and encouraging more people to become teachers.

Engaging Younger Players in Bridge

The group discussed challenges and opportunities in engaging younger players in bridge, particularly at universities. They explored the success of Mini bridge as an entry point for younger players and the importance of maintaining contact with junior players who move to universities. Jonathan suggested that financial incentives offered by EBU could help encourage university-based bridge clubs, while Clare proposed that EBU could help connect with junior players moving to local universities. The discussion highlighted the need for targeted efforts to create inclusive bridge environments for younger players.