

Chairman's Report 2025-26

Here is an overview of the Oxfordshire Bridge Association (OBA) activities in my first year as Chairman. Additional information may be found in the various reports by members of the committee.

Community

A major role of the OBA is to promote the captivating game of bridge across the county. This includes all levels of ability, from social to international; for all ages, at school or working or retired; and for both online and face to face (FTF). The diversity is challenging, and while progress has been made during the last year, we still have some way to achieve our goals.

One avenue is Robert Procter's Community Newsletter, which we would like to become a vehicle for sharing your news or problems amongst our community. By sharing, we help each other. So please contribute to this publication (OBAeditor@gmail.com).

There is also the OBA website, where your special events, open competitions, or training opportunities may be advertised (OBAComp@gmail.com). We encourage clubs to reciprocate by advertising OBA events on their websites. The OBA website also contains links to various resources.

We have started to engage with unaffiliated clubs having successful meetings in Haddenham and Witney organised by Robert.

I thank Aylesbury Aces, Oxford, and Wallingford Bridge Clubs in running FTF Blue Pointed Swiss Pairs.

We need someone to co-ordinate the Promotion, Education & Social group.

Player attendance

Attendance has returned to pre-COVID levels, but this statistic masks a divide between some rapidly growing clubs and several in decline, in part due to the schism between online and traditional games. A key to maintaining numbers is teaching. The OBA can assist funding first courses for new players, publicity materials, and teacher training. The many new housing estates appearing across the county suggests that there is a potential influx of new players coming into our area. Yet many young or working people do not even know what bridge is. We need to spread the word.

Assistance for Clubs

Our stable finances enables the OBA to offer monetary support for clubs wishing to buy equipment, such as Bridgemates or teaching aids. Please let us know if the OBA might be able to help your club. For instance, we assisted the Oxford University club re-form with a financial award. We were delighted that this bore fruit when Oxford University won the Portland Bowl, and students have played in the County Pairs League.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The OBA has drafted a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion document, and suggested revisions to the Constitution, which await membership approval at the AGM. This is not as a result of any specific incident, but so if, in the unlikely event, one should occur, we would have mechanisms in place. Should clubs have accessibility issues, the OBA can help fund measures to remediate them.

Competitions

The OBA has strived to have a diverse mixture of competitions suitable for different abilities from Cafe Bridge and nine high, handicapped, pairs and teams, inter-club and inter-county teams. The inclusive format for the County Pairs has again been popular, but disappointingly less so for the equivalent nine-high event. The latter is an opportunity for less-proficient players to meet new opponents at their level, and gain experience of tournament play.

A new FTF social teams competition, the Mercian League, was introduced. We only had seven teams, and next season would like either to have two divisions based upon ability to make the games closer, or handicap so that every team has a chance of winning. Given some pleas for more FTF events, the turnout for some, such as the Harwell Cup, have been underwhelming. Please tell us what competitions that you would like.

The Congress was a great success. The newish venue has proved popular, and already entries well exceed those for this time last year. We have taken on board feedback regarding catering, and this year we are offering sandwiches and snacks booked in advance.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the OBA Committee and other volunteers who have contributed to the smooth running of the OBA. Special thanks go to Stephen Brown, who has helped steer me in this unfamiliar role, Robert Procter for his efforts to broaden our community, and Sandra Nicholson for checking OBA documents and assistance with league operations..

Malcolm Currie
June 2026