

Oxfordshire Bridge Association
Officers' and other reports presented to the
67th Annual General Meeting – 11 June 2013

Officers' reports

Chairman

My report to you twelve months ago started with a list of 17 things that we had done or achieved during the year and finished with a list of 8 activities planned for the current year.

One of the things we had achieved was to “Agree aims and objectives for each of our management teams in the light of the survey findings” and our planned activities for the current year related to some of these. We have made more progress on some than others and some of our management teams have been more active than others. Where we have failed to make progress it is only right to question the extent to which we believe in the objectives we set ourselves – there is unlikely to be achievement without commitment. In this report I propose to set out the main things I think we have achieved, the main things I think we should still aspire to and what I think we should perhaps question.

Competitions

Achieved: Completion of competitions review, adoption of a number of changes, drafting (and publication?) of revised competition bylaws.

Aspiration: In conjunction with the Social Team I hope to see the introduction of a social regional team of four competition at a level appropriate to players from beginner to intermediate ability.

Question: Could and should we do something to make our County Night more attractive to our better players and our Congress more attractive to less experienced players?

Social

Achieved: Two extremely enjoyable café bridge events at Oxford and Henley and a combined education and lunch event (Long Crendon). These establish a methodology for further such events in conjunction with local clubs in the future.

Aspiration: I hope to see further similar events in other regions in the future and the creation of a network of people willing to help to coordinate such events. I would like to see the social pages of the OBA website become a “go-to” place for the social bridge player.

Question: How do we help people starting out in the game discover that there is enjoyment to be found playing outside the confines of their local club?

County Team

Achieved: The Selection Committee has reviewed its methods of operation and is in the process of introducing some significant changes to the way it operates.

Aspiration: I hope these changes will provide a more transparent link between performance in some Oxfordshire events and selection.

Question: The county's listed development objectives include “To develop learning opportunities for the county's more advanced players”. I am not aware that much has been done in this area so far and wonder about our level of commitment to it. My impression is that county players are more driven by the quest for personal success than for county success and I question whether it might be more beneficial for the county to concentrate on fostering team spirit rather than individual skills.

Education

Achieved: Updated the content of our website concerning the education provided by individuals and clubs in the county's catchment area.

Aspiration: I hope we will find someone willing to take on an active role in coordinating learning opportunities available throughout the county, particularly in helping beginners to find their feet and in setting up a mentoring scheme for those at a higher level who want to improve their game further.

Question: Would there be anything to be gained from getting our teachers together to exchange ideas and to explore common problems and consider how they could help each other?

Promotion and Youth

Achieved: Continued expansion of work in primary schools. The holding of the first Oxfordshire Junior Congress. Opening of “Bridge4Schools” website.

Aspiration: I look forward to the day when all our members, whether competitive or social, see valuable benefits from membership of the Oxfordshire Bridge Association and the English Bridge Union. We should then feel confident to promote our game amongst the public at large including unaffiliated clubs and bridge-playing groups.

Question: Should we already be spending county money advertising what our clubs and county association offer to the public at large?

Infrastructure

Achieved: Agreed a new rental agreement with the Oxford Bridge Club for the use of its premises. Designed a new website which will enable a number of officers to maintain their area themselves. Moved to a new accounts format.

Aspiration: I hope to see much wider use of the website in its new format, encouraging greater communication between clubs and county.

Question: Do people agree with me that our annual surplus is desirable as it gives us flexibility? Are there other areas we should be spending our money on?

I would like to stress that the above report contains my personal views and is not intended to represent the views of either the Management Committee or its six Management Teams. It represents a progress report with good bits of progress to be pleased about and bad bits to regret where progress has been limited. I would be pleased to hear other people’s views on what we have done, what we should aspire to and the questions we should be asking ourselves. I am willing to continue as your Chairman if you are happy to have me.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed so much to the management of the association during the past year. A number of officers will be standing down – I thank them for all their work over their years in office. Potential replacements have been found for most of these who will I hope be voted in later this meeting - I welcome them on board.

Robert Procter 28 May 2013

Secretary

The EBU has recently changed its criteria so that clubs may now affiliate without playing as many as 26 duplicate sessions per year, provided that they have the approval of their County. Following discussion at the Management Committee, it was agreed that the County would support Menagerie’s application to re-affiliate, and this was accepted by the EBU and became effective on 1 April.

In March, a formal complaint was received, alleging unacceptable behaviour from one County member to another during the course of a Tuesday evening duplicate. This prompted the formation of a County Conduct Committee and Disciplinary Committee, as provided for within our Constitution. The Conduct Committee investigated the complaint, decided it was justified, and agreed that it was appropriate to issue a verbal caution to the offending member. As this was accepted, the matter was thereby resolved and no further action was necessary. We are very grateful to the members of the Conduct Committee for carrying out this task, and would also like to thank those who volunteered to serve on the Disciplinary Committee if required. Both structures will remain in place for the future should they ever be needed.

Sandra Nicholson, June 2013

Treasurer and Auditor (for approval by AGM)

See separate document

EBU Shareholders

At the most recent shareholders' meeting in May, the Board presented a new five-year plan ("Bidding for the Future 2013-2018"). This indicates a continuing determination to support bridge education, and to engage with members at all levels. There is also more emphasis on recruiting additional clubs, including those not presently affiliated. A copy of the plan can be found on the EBU website under "Documents" and a small number of printed copies will be available at the AGM.

The Treasurer reported that the EBU was in reasonable financial shape, having reduced the anticipated deficit for the current year from £53K to around £23K. For the future the aim would be to achieve at least £20K surplus each year, in order to enable investment in developing the game. The intention is that this should come from a combination of increased income (mainly from competitions), and reduced costs. While no specific indication has yet been given of the likely P2P figure for 2014, it would therefore seem reasonable to expect that the Board's proposal will be for it to continue to rise in line with inflation, which would produce an increase from 34p to 35p.

The proposal to convert the entire organisation into a charity has now been dropped due to difficulties over support for internationals, which is not considered to be a charitable aim under UK legislation. However, the Board now intends to create an "EBU Youth Education and Development Fund Charity" which will embrace all current education activities for players of all ages. Detailed plans for this will be presented later in the year.

Considerable effort has been put into redesigning the Brighton Congress, which last year lost money for the first time. It is hoped that the new format will attract more players by offering a more varied selection of events, with less need for expensive overnight accommodation.

Finally, members may already have noted that the EBU website has recently been redesigned (with the development work done in house). A further development of this is that the complete contents of all English Bridge magazines will now be available online, although postal deliveries will continue unless members prefer to opt out.

Sandra Nicholson, Brenda Harris, Alan Wilson – May 2013

Team reports

Communications and Infrastructure

Website

Progress report from Website and Communications Officer to follow

Publicity

Once again the Andrew Robson Seminar held in April was a sell-out, resulting in a profit of £325.

There have been disappointingly low entries for the Oxford Times Cup and the Social Congress, despite extensive publicity sent to all clubs catering for novices (Aylesbury Vale & Aces, Wallingford & Oxford) and all advanced teaching/playing sessions held by OBL.

During the year, Lorraine Jones kindly agreed to take over responsibility for compiling and submitting our monthly County News entry in "English Bridge".

Newsletter

In the span of a youngish life (born, say, 1973) the shape of our county has altered, testing many folks' old affinities to Berks. Bucks or Banburyshire. Even in our global age, viewed from a table in Faringdon, say, a bridge club in Bicester may seem 'alien'. Equally, at a game in Oxford one might hear a voice ask, "Any idea where Chalgrove is? Or Dinton? Aynho? Henley? Chinnor? East Hagbourne?"

A number of affiliate-club secretaries have struggled to reply to my emails. In a different report to this AGM, the chairman of the County Selection Committee hopes more players will put up for selection and help to develop greater squad solidarity. Over time the OBA newsletter may help to foster a sense of a 'community of varied individuals who all share a love of the same game'.

One aim as I edit Oxfordshire Bridge is to visit a variety of locations in our county to remind members of the greater OBA world beyond their fave club. I aim too to feature examples of bridge played around the county (highlighting aspects of play that may help members to enjoy bridge more) as well as here and there to show that always behind a hand of cards is a person.

Any newsletter will announce some future events or report results of recent ones. The OBA website can do this more rapidly and in the case of results has space for full details, but I believe Oxfordshire Bridge can go on

adding something extra to the services that the OBA provides, so long as members continue to submit personal contributions as well as ideas for new or ongoing features.

The 'prize quiz' spotlights a range of attractive small businesses in Oxon and offers OBA members a chance to win a prize. Those who enter the quiz are fewer than those who tell me they enjoy it. A few find it too hard, while others would like it harder. Either way, they look forward to it and – in reading it – take in the OBA 'hard news' alongside and get frequent pointers to the OBA website.

The editor's thanks go to all of the numerous sponsors who have so generously provided a prize for our quiz entrants. The donors have included:

Blackwell's Music, Oxford; Great Western Arms, Aynho; Silk Tree Nurseries, Wheatley; The Spice Lounge, Oxford; The Plough Inn, Wheatley; Babylon Plants, Cuxham; Chinnor Garden Centre; Ye Olde Reindeer, Banbury; Fleur de Lys, East Hagbourne; The Trout Inn, Wolvercote; Gatineau Patisserie, Oxford; The Dinton Hermit, Ford; Mill View Plant Centre, Wheatley; The Seven Stars, Dinton; Wheatley Farm Shop; Castle Framing, Overthorpe; The George Inn, Dorchester on Thames; King Alfred's Head, Wantage; ExCellar, Oxford; Linda Benton, artist; Sally Nicholls, novelist.

Essential help in various forms was provided within the OBA by, among others, Emily Middleton, Claire MacDonagh, Janny Watson, Geoff Nicholas, Carol Benzie, David Marsh. And Stephen Brown. Many thanks.

David Bygott, editor 2010-2013

County Night and Competitions

This year's new competitions had a good entry for their 'maiden voyages' – that being the Swiss Teams in January in place (new format for the Harwell Cup) and the 'Friendly' Swiss Teams that replaced the Men's & Ladies' Pairs in November.

However, Oxfordshire was under-represented this year in both the Beck Cup – where we fielded a single team instead of the usual 3 – and the Corwen Trophy, where only one pair attended out of a possible four. It may be that these were one-off occurrences, but we will look into how to prevent this repeating.

We are also hoping to start a new Social Teams League across the county, in conjunction with Barbara Jordan and the Social Team. Plans and invites have been made and it is on track to run in the next season.

Blue points were introduced by the EBU in January 2013, and so far we have had successful blue pointed events at both county and club level with more on the way.

Within the last week or so, the new bylaws have been finished (at last!) so once a final proof read has taken place these shall be updated on the website for next year's season.

The 2013/14 calendar has also been started, which I hope to finish in a more timely manner than last year.

Rob Dixon, team leader, June 2013

Reports for Wessex League, Presidents Cup and Chester Cup competitions 2012 to 2013

As most of you probably know, it is with some regret that this is my last season as League Secretary. I have enjoyed undertaking the duties but it is probably best that I now hand these on.

Hugh Thomson (Wessex) and Mike Dobson (Presidents and Chester) have kindly agreed to take over the respective workloads, subject of course to agreement by the OBA. My intention is to undertake proper handovers very shortly.

The new League Management System was introduced by the EBU at the beginning of this past season and this has been a great success. All right, the Wessex League tables could do with an additional column added and maybe a bit of space for the League Secretary to "post" anything relevant to help captains and players understandings of current positions, but by and large the EBU has done very well here.

Wessex League (38 teams of eight)

Congratulations go to the following clubs, captains and representative players:

Division 1 Winner Wallingford A 105 VPs (retaining the title after a very close play-off with the runners-up)
Second Menagerie A 105 VPs

Division 2 Winner Oxford C 112 VPs
Second Abingdon A 101 VPs

Division 3 Winner Oxford D 99 VPs
Second Summertown B 95 VPs

Division 4 Winner Aylesbury Aces 89.6 VPs (seven teams)
Second Bicester A 82 VPs

Division 5 Winner Aylesbury Vale 81.6 VPs (seven teams)
Second Oxford F 70 VPs (on a tie-break from Oxford G with also 70 VPs)

Presidents Cup (nine teams of four in a knock-out)

Congratulations to Chris Cooper (captain), Stuart McPhee, Lorna Swadling, Alistair Gidman, Ian Angus and Ed Jones.

Chester Cup (eight teams of four)

Congratulations go to Mike Brown (captain) Clive Keep, Gillian Lonsdale, Nigel Wilkes and John Slater.

Summary

The only problem this season arose in the Chester Cup after the preliminary stages were completed. In the lower section, after the competition was split when twelve matches had taken place, a team had to withdraw due to the ill health of one of its players. Then another one of the matches in this section could not be arranged by the two captains so the end situation was not ideal. Clearly, this had no impact on the four teams in the upper section (those still vying for the trophy) so the competition completed satisfactorily. However, it is not clear how we are going to resolve this issue for future seasons.....some of the teams, I am sure, would have liked to play more matches and do enter the competition on that basis. The tournament committee will need to look at this again but adding more time to get matches played is not the solution. All it will do is leave the person running the competition with less leeway to get these things sorted.

Although, regrettably, there are still a few points to nail-down with regards to the rules of competitions the tournament committee most definitely agreed at our meeting last year that only members with primary county allegiance to Oxfordshire are allowed to participate in the President's Cup. (This brings us into line with most counties and also with our own rules for participation in our county championship)

The tournament committee also needs to look at the current rule regarding the play-off in division one when two teams finish equal (as they did this season). My firm belief is that these play-offs should no longer proceed; rather, the EBU rules for tie splits should apply. Fortunately, this season it did not matter but there could be problems in future if teams are unable to agree a play-off date before the annual Garden Cities event is scheduled to take place. (NB This past season the play-off took place after the Garden Cities but as Menagerie were unaffiliated at the time, the delay did not matter.)

Finally, my sincere thanks go to all captains. From what I have seen over the years they do a pretty good job in complying with the various rules. It is not always easy for some of the smaller clubs to field teams; particularly if they lose a player on the day of a match; yet rarely do captains abuse the system.

Geoff Nicholas (League Secretary), June 2013

Chief Tournament Director's report

I am pleased to report that there has been a good entry to most events this year. The entry for the new event in January, Swiss Teams Championship (14 tables) was encouraging. The format of the County Pairs having semifinals at two venues was good. Many thanks to Rob Dixon, Aleksander Lishkov, Lynne Hayes & Kathy Talbot for assisting with directing or scoring on a Tuesday night or at Sunday events and thanks to Jaap Hoek for transporting boards back and forth from the Oxford Bridge Club.

The use of the OBA Website for all results has continued to be successful and results have been posted with pictures of winners promptly after each event.

I have regularly (monthly) submitted Master Points to P2P for Tuesday, Sunday, Dawes League and Seniors events and these have all been registered with the EBU.

Stephen Brown, May 2013

County Team Management

One or two practical difficulties have arisen in organising county matches and teams this season, and Nick Smith took over as chairman of selectors during the course of the year with the aim of building a stronger and more organised committee. His report below summarises his proposals for doing this, and we hope to see significant progress over the coming year.

In other areas, we have looked to make some progress in using our better players as a resource to build the standard of bridge in the county through working with the Menagerie Bridge Club to develop a new style of play with an expert event. The Menagerie's "Play with 2 experts" pivot teams event will provide ordinary club players with an opportunity to partner two different members of the county squad over the course of an evening, and I hope will prove enjoyable and perhaps educational for all involved. The first such event will take place very shortly and already has a waiting list of people hoping to take part, so we can look to be it being repeated at some point in the future if all goes well.

Alan Wilson, team leader, June 2013

OBA Selection Committee

This has been a relatively difficult year for OBA selectors, both individually and collectively. The Chairman, Alastair Gidman, moved to London and decided to relinquish his duties while other members of the committee were sidelined by health problems, work commitments, uncertain futures and impending nuptials. There was a lack of clarity over selectorial roles and responsibilities, timetables for selection, etc. There were also major problems in the lack of pairs making themselves available for selection, especially for distant away matches.

The combination of these problems resulted in the regrettable situation that we were unable to raise a full team for the match against Derbyshire in December and, as a result, had to forfeit the C-team fixture. As Derbyshire is the county which has worked hardest to organise the Midland League over the years, this was especially embarrassing. The selectors and captain apologise for this unfortunate incident.

The remaining selectors elected me as Chairman in January and my priority since then, with three away matches coming up and Oxfordshire out of contention to win any titles, has been to ensure that we had the full complement of players for each of these games. I am pleased to report that we achieved this limited objective, most notably for the game against Lincs when snow and flooding rendered all travel rather problematic. Five new and talented pairs have been recruited to the squad from which the teams are selected and, although it has still been hard work to find twelve pairs for each game, I believe we can look forward to a situation where selectors can actually select, rather than twist arms and engage in last minute fire-fighting.

In the 2012-13 season which finishes in March, Oxfordshire 'A' finished 3rd in the Dawes League with 95 VPs; our 'B' team finished 2nd in the Porter Trophy with 97 VPs and the 'C' team, after its enforced zero against Derbys, finished 4th in the Markham Trophy with 93 VPs. A team of just four pairs was selected for the Tollemache Qualifier in November and played well after a "slow" start, finishing 4th in its group, but not making the final.

Thanks are due, most of all, to Chris Cooper, the appointed captain of the team who took on much of the managerial burden, to John Williams (in particular) who wrote long, witty and erudite accounts of all the matches in which he was playing, and to Esme Alden who continued to provide teas of the highest quality whatever the weather. Our enjoyment of these matches was hugely improved by the efforts of these three and it is to be hoped that they will continue in these roles.

I have been nominated as a selector for 2013-14 and I am prepared to continue in my current role if invited to do so. Kathy Talbot has been Vice-Chairman and I hope she will be able to continue in that role. But I know that a number of other selectors are stepping down at this point and there is a risk that we will be left with a worryingly small number of selectors. I am hoping the AGM will address this problem, if necessary, and try to ensure that we have a minimum of five selectors for the coming year.

The situation is, as ever, complicated by the fact that our constitution continues to stipulate that selectors are nominated by clubs (one per club). A number of clubs do not address this issue in time for the AGM or find suitable volunteers while individuals who are keen to become selectors and who would make a valuable contribution find themselves hamstrung by a situation in which their club already nominates someone else. My own preference would be to abandon this requirement and to remove the notion that selectors somehow "represent" the interests of a particular club. Selectors (in my opinion) should have only the interests of the county at heart with no bias towards their own club and, in reality, I believe this has always been the case anyway – I have seen no sign of club bias from any selector.

It is difficult to speculate on the decisions that may be made by a new committee but, if I am involved, I would like to see progress and evolution in the following areas:

- chairman takes lead role in managing responsibilities within SC (the selection committee) and reporting to the Management Committee at least annually
- each SC member has at least one (and generally two) role(s), decided each June for the year ahead
- primary discrete roles for 2013-14 to include:
 - vice chairman, taking on chairman roles when required
 - 'A' team (and overall) captain – may or may not be a selector
 - home match manager - including venue hire, tea arrangements, pre-dealt boards, hand records, directions for oppos, fee collection, cancellations, etc
 - away match manager - including travel arrangements, fee collection, Tolle accommodation, etc
 - match report writer/manager
 - availabilities manager, maintaining an up-to-date list (yes, no, maybe)
 - secretary, recording minutes, announcing team selections and other news, dealing with communications, etc
 - results and statistical information manager, producing regular updates
- a decisions diary, i.e. a timetable for making decisions (e.g. when team for Match X will be discussed, when finalised, etc)
- “public” opportunities for players (or pairs) to indicate and amend their availability throughout the season – we have been testing a system using Doodle software which may go “live” shortly.

A number of the roles listed above are already performed by the Captain and the Match Secretary, so those two figures would probably see a corresponding reduction in their workload. It would, of course, be simplest if the Match Secretary were also a Selector.

With a stronger and more organised Selection Committee in place, I hope we can look forward to regaining our Dawes League title, amongst others, reaching the Tollemache Final and fostering the skills of all the top and aspiring players and pairs in Oxfordshire bridge.

Nick Smith, Chairman of Selection Committee, June 2013

Education and Improvers

The Education Officer, who is standing down, had no report to present.

Youth and Duplicate Bridge Promotion

The Promotion Team has been created to encourage and support individuals and groups of all ages to play bridge and minibridge and to help those wishing to progress to duplicate bridge, including assisting any groups who wish to form new affiliated duplicate bridge clubs.

The Team comprises separate sub groups to deal with Youth, Adult Player and Duplicate Bridge Club Development, and Membership.

Youth objectives

The Youth Team set itself the following objectives at the AGM in 2012:

- For all schools in the OBA area to be aware of bridge and minibridge.
- To be given details of the schemes available from the EBU and OBA.
- To be given a contact point for advice and help.
- To be invited to competitive events managed and run by the OBA.

All these objectives were achieved in so far as all Oxfordshire schools were emailed with details of the first OBA Junior Congress, and the bridge4schools website. However as there has been no feedback at all we are presuming that our emails did not reach a discerning target. Further work in communicating the benefits of bridge in schools is being carried out. If this is successful the Youth Team will be looking for more bridge players in the county to volunteer to help school children.

The team has been praised for its website www.bridgewebs.com/bridge4schools, and more development work is planned. Thanks are due to Joan Bennett, Viccy Fleming, and Alison Nicholson who ably assisted team members to create the site.

Work on the budget for the Youth activities is outstanding, but in addition to the annual costs previously identified the OBA will need to consider an additional duplicating machine (vital for teaching over a number of

different locations), and additional training-costs. Support and development of bridge in schools also involves significant travel costs.

Clubs are requested to pass old playing cards, and other surplus equipment to the team for distribution to schools.

Player and Club Development

The objective is for all bridge players in the OBA area to be aware of duplicate bridge, and to be given the opportunity to learn how they could incorporate duplicate bridge into their own bridge groups.

- To provide documentation to support the move to duplicate bridge
- To be given a contact point for advice and help
- The OBA to provide members for on-site support
- The OBA/EBU to provide start-up interest free loans for wallets and cards
- In conjunction with the Social Team the OBA to run events for Novices & Students, and Next Steppers
- Affiliated clubs to be given the responsibility to “foster” groups new to duplicate.

The Promotion Team has not yet done any work on this although the Social Team is making considerable strides connecting with many of the groups of players that may be interested in switching from rubber and Chicago to duplicate.

Promotion Team Contacts:

Mike Fletcher, Emily Middleton, Holly Kilpatrick, and Mike Webley

Email: promotion@oxfordshirebridge.co.uk

Mike Fletcher, May 2013

Membership Secretary’s Report for 2013

On 6th June 2013 there were 1506 full members in the following categories:-

P2P Full	1286
P2P Junior	2
Direct Full	27
Direct Juniors	56
EBUTA Teachers	20
Partner Teachers	11
Bridge For All Students	104

Last year we were pleased to note the increase in Direct Junior Members. This trend has continued, going from 20 direct juniors last year to 56 this year. This is largely thanks to the Youth Bridge initiative.

Emily Middleton, 6.6.13

Social

Social Bridge Congress – Applications for this event have been slow again. Last year we had 12 tables. Robert Procter and I made a lot of visits to Clubs to personally talk about the Congress and encourage participation where we could. This year I did extensive mail outs. I sent to the large list of people expressing interest from the original questionnaire. I sent to all the people who came to the Congress last year. I sent to all Oxfordshire Clubs and clubs in close proximity to Oxfordshire. I sent to all teachers in the County that we know of. I sent to all the people who came to the Henley café bridge and to the people who came to the Bridge and Brunch day. Many thanks to the various people around the County who have made sure that the information was disseminated. Thank you to everyone on the committee for their help and support.

Rob Procter, very kindly, played with me at Witney bridge club and we talked to them about the Congress. I was asked for more information that evening and duly sent it the next day.

I think the main reason for the slow take up is that the concept of “social bridge opportunities” is still new for the County. Also I think the word “congress” could be off putting.

Sandra Nicholson gave me a contact for Lesley Millett from Leeds who organises a Social Congress and seems to have a good take up. I have made contact and she has acknowledged my email and will contact with some ideas and observations very soon.

I have had no enquiries at all re the Chicago bridge event on the Sunday. Frances Glassborow very kindly offered to help to organise this event. In the event that it does not happen at the congress this year he has also offered to run a Chicago event in the near future at Roke Village Hall (Wallingford Bridge Club) to raise awareness and to help to assess and promote interest.

I have had one expression of interest for the mini bridge.

Bridge 'n Brunch - This was held in April at Long Crendon bridge club. Gillian Weatherley presented an excellent powerpoint on the subject of being a bridge detective. She had prepared some hands to demonstrate her talk and people played them and she made them aware of the clues to be gleaned from the bidding, leads etc. After lunch a short duplicate session was played and scored. Although we only had 6 tables, the evaluation forms showed that those people that did attend really enjoyed it and would like more sessions.

Café Bridge - A café bridge event was run at Henley in May. It was very successful. Many thanks to Joan Bennett who helped enormously in so many ways. Joan's local knowledge was invaluable in finding such splendid venues for people to visit. 100 people were booked in and a waiting list started with 3 weeks still to go. The evaluation forms were so positive and I had so many really nice emails that another café bridge will now happen in Thame on Thursday 12th September. This event is being planned and organised by Peter Jordan with offers of help from several other people. (Nice spin off – some friends from Coventry Bridge Club came to the Henley café bridge and so enjoyed it that they are organising a café bridge in Kenilworth – also on 12th September as it happens!)

Social Teams League – this is planned to start in the Autumn. I met with Rob Dixon and we came up with some really good ideas. Rob has now drafted an invitational letter asking clubs/groups/organisations to let us know if they are interested in entering a team or teams.

Developing a Social Bridge Team – this, I think, was seen as an important part of my role when I became involved with OBA. It clearly hasn't happened and I am disappointed that I have not been able to do this. It hasn't been for lack of trying. However, I think maybe there is a growing awareness of my role and there is quite a lot of interest and support being shown. I do make it clear to people that I am not envisaging a Team that is heavy on meetings. All I need is one, or possibly two, members of each club to be prepared to liaise with me, by email or phone, to share ideas and examples of good practice and to inform people of events and encourage them to get involved.

I have enjoyed my first year. I have met a lot of very interesting people, I have expanded my knowledge of what is happening in the way of social bridge in the County, and more importantly for me, what isn't happening. I am also impressed at the amount of time and enthusiasm that so many people give so freely to make sure that bridge clubs thrive and operate for their members. I am looking forward to being involved with more ideas and developments in the coming year. Thank you all for your support.

Barbara Jordan, June 2013