

Chairman's Report, July 2022

Our last AGM was held in July 2021 and time has flown. Since taking on the role of chairman, I have enjoyed collaborating with our team of trustees, officers and the many volunteers, all of whom put in so much work to keep the club afloat. I would particularly like to acknowledge the personal support that I have received from the club secretary, Ursula Bowler and from our communications officer, Richard Sills. Ursula is standing down from her role as secretary and will be greatly missed. She does so much to ensure things run smoothly, produces exemplary minutes, understands G-drive and has made my life very straightforward. And she plays rather good bridge. Thank you very much Ursula.

The trustees have met quarterly using Zoom and have discussed progress towards achieving the key objectives in our 3-year strategic plan. Membership numbers have fallen slightly since the pandemic (a national trend), but I am delighted that behaviour at the bridge table has generally been friendly and encouraging and that our conduct committee has not been used this year. I have tried to promote a friendly welcoming atmosphere in my online chats. Marketing is an area we plan to strengthen over the next 12 months so that we do more to promote the activities of both the Bridge Club and Oxford Bridge School.

Steven Bliss our treasurer has kept a close eye on our finances. Unsurprisingly income has dropped. Although online bridge has been successful, numbers playing bridge at the club have only increased slowly since we reopened and income from education also reduced. However we are holding our own and I am optimistic that things will improve. Steven is standing down as treasurer at the AGM and on behalf of all members I would like to thank Steven for his meticulous work and the other members of the finance team for their support. We could not have had a better treasurer.

Liza Furnival, chair of the bridge committee, ensures our bridge runs smoothly with the help of our directors, especially Martin Illingworth, the scorers, IT wizardry (thank you Steve Fisher), dealers and of course the other members of the bridge committee. Hybrid bridge works well and attracts players from other parts of the country and indeed elsewhere in the world, but I know many members are looking forward to more face-to-face games.

Education is a key part of our strategy. Unfortunately, Peter Sherry was unable to continue his role as Education Secretary and resigned in autumn 2021. Ursula Bowler and I, between us, chaired the Education committee. We lost an experienced teacher at the end of the 2021 and I am very grateful to Sheila Parry and Ann Lee who took over the classes. I would also like to thank our other excellent teacher, Christine Bishop and of course the class assistants. Steph Bliss stepped down from organising the

education seminars in June (Annabel Barnett is taking over- thank you, Annabel) and Steph is also demitting from her role as a directly elected trustee. I would like to thank Steph for all she has done over a number of years both for education - so many members have benefitted from Saturday seminars- and as a trustee. The education team provided me with invaluable support when I was feeling my way, so in addition to the teachers and Steph, thank you Jenny-Lee Economou, Susan Fletcher, Kathy Talbot, Anne Lamming and Fran Pike.

As you will have read, the trustees were pleased to reach an agreement with Charlie Bucknell of Bucknell Bridge. I would like to thank Joe Brash, a directly elected trustee, for playing a key role in negotiating this agreement. We have agreed that Charlie may use our premises for classes that complement but differ from those offered by our own bridge school. Charlie's pupils will become members of our club and the classes will feed learners into our duplicate games including Learn and Play and Gentle Duplicate. The agreement with Bucknell Bridge is consistent with our charitable purposes: the advancement of amateur sport by promoting the game of bridge for the benefit of the residents of Oxford and the surrounding area and the provision of facilities for the learning, teaching and playing of bridge for the benefit of the residents of Oxford and the surrounding area. The agreement also helps us to meet one of our strategic goals - to strengthen the teaching of bridge. I hope that Bucknell Bridge is a great success.

Julie Anderson, chair of our premises committee, keeps a keen eye on our building and ably helped us to address the health and safety issues posed when we reopened the club. Our risk assessment has needed regular updates as national guidance changed. Thank you for all your work, Julie. I would also like to acknowledge the work of all those on the premises committee including Juliette Riehl, our new House Officer, Chris Bone and Richard Sills.

Richard Sills leads our membership, communication and marketing team (as well as doing so many other jobs for the club). In addition to the tireless Richard, I would like to thank Matt Wilkinson (membership) and Brian Mills (website). Paul Watson heads up the conduct committee and it is excellent news that this committee has had no complaints to manage in the last 12 months. We all hope that this trend continues and that our members continue to play with a friendly, albeit competitive, spirit.

I was delighted when Sandra Devaney, one of our directly elected trustees, volunteered to chair the social committee. The committee are planning a range of events to promote a return to the club. I should also mention the very welcome contributions of Charlie Bucknell to the discussions - many of the ideas for relaxed fun games come from Charlie. An Easter session started things off and future plans include an Open Doors Event (Sept), Charity Events, monthly Speedball Bridge and

monthly social bridge followed by hand discussion. Annabel Barnett and Sandra have also managed to arrange an Andrew Robson day on 16 March 2023 (put it in your diary now). Lots to look forward to!

I have used every opportunity (to the amusement of my bridge partners) to discover more about your knowledge and skills. Thank you for being forthcoming even if you did suspect you might then get asked to do something. Thank you also for completing our on-line survey. I am so very grateful to all of you who have said "yes" when asked to help. The club is completely dependent on the good will and engagement of its members.

My congratulations to all those club members - senior and junior - who have succeeded at high levels nationally and internationally. In conclusion, despite the recent challenges, we continue to enjoy our bridge and there are opportunities ahead. We are fortunate to have such a great team working away on behalf of the club. I am really grateful to you all.

Susan Burge, Chairman OBC