

Chairman's Report OBC 2026

This is my 3rd Chairman's Report and uncannily similar to the previous two given the stability of club operations.

This table gives a quick overview of where we were when I became Chairman in 2022 as the club was emerging from the upheaval of the pandemic and now, here in 2026. This shows that, while player numbers have not fully recovered, they have settled into a "new normal". There are inevitable fluctuations year to year as well as with each year.

Year	Player numbers*	% face to face
25/26	13379	49%
24/25	13924	49%
22-24	13800	45% (2023)
19/20	16795	100%

*Figures do not include Saturday social bridge.

Of the 7 regular player sessions per week, only Wednesday afternoon Gentle Duplicate and Thursday evening Jack-high are entirely online. Tuesday morning GD, Wednesday evenings and a new Thursday evening session, introduced this year to run alongside Supervised Play, are all face-to face only. The most popular sessions by player numbers are the Monday and Friday hybrid sessions where about 60% choose to play online. Friday evening X-imp pairs has been discontinued due to insufficient numbers and Friday teams once a month is still being held online. We do not have any evidence, as yet, whether the introduction of the Oxford congestion charge/permit system is affecting attendance.

In addition to the annual competitions held in the club, many OBC players have also played a season of matches in the inter-club Wessex League, fielding 6 teams with many successes. In particular, Oxford A team won Division 1 and will represent Oxfordshire in the Garden Cities competition.

Education has had another successful year recruiting 104 new students into years 1 and 2 of the Bridge for All course (up from 74 in 2024), running several seminars and the very popular Andrew Robson teaching day. Sincere thanks and congratulations go to Ursula Bowler as Chairman of the Education Committee who has expertly steered this vital function of OBC for the past 4 years. She is now stepping down, but we should acknowledge her contribution in this role and her previous role as Secretary to the Trustee Board. The Bridge for All teaching team continues to be headed by Christine and Ian Bishop who have brought many improvements and modernisations to the programme.

We continue to run a number of primarily social bridge events, running as handicapped pairs, to bring together a wide range of players and giving less experienced players the chance to be successful. In addition to the annual summer and Christmas parties, Pro-Am competitions are popular and we remain very grateful to John Deech who has continued for a 4th year to support Wednesday evening bridge by donating to the provision of prizes, drinks and nibbles once a month. All these events, competitions and regular sessions are organized by Lisa Furnival, Chairman of the Bridge Committee and her team along with

Martin Illingworth as Chief Tournament Director so, on behalf of you all, I thank them for all they do.

I am also happy to report that the OBC finances remain healthy under the expert guidance and care of Peter Schroeder as Treasurer. The premises are well maintained by John Briggs as Chair of the Premises Committee and his team including Peter Finbow who quietly fixes lots of things round the club. John is retiring from his role so many thanks to him for all his service.

I am mentioning a few names but of course there are many others who contribute in a multitude of small or not-so-small ways so again, on behalf of you all, thank you to them too.

After 4 years as Chairman, I am stepping down so it only remains for me to give sincere thanks to my fellow Trustees for their support and diligence in their respective roles. I am fortunate both in my fellow Trustees and that my tenure has come in the still waters following a number of challenges for the club including the transition to charitable status, the major refurbishment of the premises and then the pandemic. I wish my successor similar good fortune.

Julie Anderson, Chairman, July 2026