

In March 2020, Roselawn Bridge Club was a relatively new Bridge club with 130 members. Approaching our 4th birthday when I found myself having to announce our closure for the unforeseeable future as the Covid 19 pandemic hit.

Only ten days earlier we had enjoyed our first successful Bridge weekend away. Everyone was still on a high and looking forward to our next adventure and now this

Of course, it was devastating for the whole world but from a Bridge perspective, I could feel a real sense of loss for all the members.

To keep all the members in touch and together, I set up a WhatsApp group.

Each day, I made up ten sets of hands, took pictures of them and sent them into the chat, asking the members to write down how these hands should be bid. At 6pm I would post the previous days answers along with the next set of hands. This continued every day for the following 2 months.

At that time eighty percent of our members were beginners and novice players and thus were very appreciative of their daily dose of bridge. I received positive feedback which encouraged me to continue with this set up.

Towards the end of April, I received an email from Paul Porteous which explained the BBO online bridge platform, and how it might be a solution for us, a way to continue enjoying bridge remotely.

My Son Dylan, the computer tech in our house and TD for the Club, could see BBO's potential and immediately began researching all we needed to do to get the show on the road. I informed everyone on the chat what they needed to have in place for the arrival of BBO, We had volunteers to visit members to assist them registering, I had one member come to my house on four occasions learning how to use his device (nothing was going to stop us). Within four weeks we were up and running as a virtual Bridge club.

We offered three tournaments a night, four nights a week, to our members delight. Some enquired if their family and friends could come and play. The answer of course, was an immediate yes as we were living in a lockdown and the main idea was to give people something to do and to help them through the pandemic We have one member playing with his father who is 94 years young and another member playing bridge with his 85 year old uncle who is living in Rathfarnham, another lady playing with her mother in law who is 86 and in Cork. We have many others playing with brothers, sisters, aunts and Uncles none of whom live in the Roselawn area

After a short while, many members began to seek bridge classes. Some members wanted to do improvers courses while others felt it was an ideal opportunity for their respective partners to do the beginners classes. I felt I had enough inquiries to warrant the amount of hours it would take to put one of these classes together on BBO and to try it out. As a result, we now have five members of the club with their partners playing who if it wasn't for the BBO and lockdown would never have taken it up. I also have the members who have found the refresher classes very helpful and have improved their Bridge immensely

Following the success of the group classes, I decided to go a step further and start doing one on one lessons. This proved to be an unbelievable success particularly considering that all of these

students started playing in 2016/17. When I introduced them to my method and system they were able to bring their Bridge to a whole new level, at a much faster rate than I or they ever thought possible. An example, Catherine Mahon and Garry Windebank who came first in the IBU Championship, 2nd in the National As and 1stA in the MLR Pairs

Mags Kelly and Paddy Cooney came first in the Novice and intermediate Congress Gala pairs, first in the Mid Leinster B Pairs, Second in the Rory Cunningham Sheild. They were also part of the team along with Nuala Corcoran and Theresa Mc Givern who came first B1s in the Cunningham League.

Theresa Mc Givern and Anne Mc Carthney who finished 1st in the IBU sims pairs in 2019.

The club is proud of their achievements.

One lady mentioned to me she and her sister were trying to teach their other two sisters to play Bridge on Zoom as a way of them staying in touch but it was proving impossible and wondered if I could do anything for them. It turns out one of them is living in Scotland the other in Clane. Needless to say we did some classes together and they are all now playing in our club as well as having their weekly sessions on Zoom. In total we have 24 new Beginners who completed the course on the BBO and so far are all coming on fine

All I can say is the BBO experience for me and my teaching has been a very positive one and will continue long after we find ourselves back playing live Bridge plus I think I will continue playing the tournaments as long as people want to play with relations or anyone else living far and wide

I am continuously putting on beginner s classes and improvers classes

All details can be found on the Roselawn Bridge Club website

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