

STRATFORD UPON AVON BRIDGE CLUB

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2026

Welcome and Apologies

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to our Annual General Meeting. I would like to start by thanking you for attending today and to all members for their support over the last financial year. In particular I would like to thank everyone for their patience and forbearance during the recent refurbishment work.

Today we will review the Club's activities over the last financial year, 1 June 2025 to 31 May 2026, and I encourage you to ask any questions or give any comments/feedback about the affairs of the Club.

Membership and bridge playing

By the end of year we had exceeded our goal of 400+ members with numbers increasing from 385 (including 75 students) to 420 (including 96 students).

During the year the weekly timetable included six duplicate sessions, two improvers sessions (one of which is 'relaxed' improvers, two assisted play sessions and four teaching sessions. We have had increased attendance at most of these sessions which has improved our financial position and moved us up a whopping 7 places to 10th in the EBU annual league table of player sessions.

I would like to acknowledge those members who have played a significant part in making these sessions so successful. Steve and Sue Pearce run the Friday morning session which is becoming increasingly popular. They are also running a very well-received Tuesday evening 'Relaxed Improvers' and a monthly Mentored Pairs session. Many members give up their evening once a month to help our students in the Mentored Pairs and this is much appreciated.

The teaching team have been positively encouraging students to go to targeted Assisted Play on Wednesday afternoons with many progressing via that route to Improvers, and from there to Duplicate.

We exceeded the previous year's record intake with even more students going through our two year programme. Every year the teaching is reviewed, following feedback from teachers and students, and new elements introduced. Last year we introduced YouTube clips while this year it has been our own workbooks, and practice sessions for Year 1 students. We are delighted to see many students are now attending improvers and even duplicate sessions. I would like to thank Sandra, Teaching Team lead, as well as our teachers and volunteer helpers and mentors for their dedication and expertise in making the extensive teaching program so successful.

As well as running beginners' courses, we have run masterclasses from Ollie Burgess and Abbey Smith. These events were highly rated by attendees receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback.

In addition, Dominic Connolly kindly ran a series of Master Duplicate sessions without charge.

Finances

The Club achieved a surplus of £7,000 in the last financial year, due mainly to increased attendance at most existing sessions as highlighted earlier, and a temporary change in the VAT scheme.

The Management Team considers that the Club's balance sheet remains strong enough to maintain subscriptions, tuition fees, and bridge playing fees at the current levels for 2026/27.

Social events

The main social event of the year was the Harrogate Bridge holiday which was held in March 2026 and run by Oliver Cowan. It was a hugely successful and enjoyable event for the 93 members who attended. This time there were separate sessions for students although the only difference was they were given slightly more time to play the boards. Both experienced and less experienced players alike gained a lot from the event.

In addition a number of other social events were held including:

The Summer Party - June 2025

Curry Night - September 2025

Halloween Party - October 2025

Members Christmas Social- December 2025

Students End of Year Party - May 2026

All were well attended with members reporting how much they enjoyed and appreciated the various functions. A big thank you to Becky and the numerous volunteers who helped with the many tasks required to organise and run such events. We were sorry to lose Becky but now welcome Keith Henesey, with his extensive experience, to the role.

The next Bridge Holiday has been announced and will take place at the Cambridge Belfry in March next year. Keith's plans for the holiday are well underway and we are expecting it to be even more successful than last year, having taken on board the feedback received from the survey.

Management Team and Board

Finally I would like to thank the Management Team for their hard work during the year, as well as the Tournament Directors and Teachers, without whom we could not run such a variety of sessions six days a week. I would also like to thank all the helpers and assistants who do all the vital jobs in the background that keep the club running smoothly.

This club has a deserved reputation for being friendly, fun and welcoming to all. So my final thank you is to all our members who make this a club we are proud to belong to.

Alan Patel
Chairman
10 September 2026