

Suffolk Contract Bridge Association

AGM 2020

Chairman's Report 2019-2020

What a year!

Back in February, when I first started thinking what I was going to say at this AGM, I was expecting to report a year that had been satisfactory but otherwise relatively unremarkable. As it's turned out, I still think it's been satisfactory, particularly so given the circumstances, but it's been far from unremarkable. We've all been faced with very a difficult situation, unprecedented in most of our memories, but as an Association we can be proud of the way we've responded.

Our clubs were all closed before the end of March, but within a week or so we had access to the game online in the Suffolk Sunday Pairs, soon followed by the creation of several Virtual Clubs, both using the Bridge Base Online platform. The view of the Committee is that we're unlikely to see the resumption of face-to-face bridge for some time, probably not before the end of this year, but the Suffolk Sunday Pairs is growing steadily in popularity and the majority of our clubs now offer opportunities to play online in one form or another. This was only possible because of the talent and hard work of a few individuals, notably **Peter Bushby**, who started it off, and **Jacks Morcombe**, the County's Chief Tournament Director. Between them they've established the Sunday Pairs and led most of the clubs to resurrect themselves in Virtual form. Jacks is a member of the County Committee, and Peter's a former member, and of course we expect Committee members to work on behalf of the County, but what they've achieved goes way beyond what can be expected, and we owe them an enormous debt of gratitude. So, within the next few days, they'll each receive a hamper of goodies, on behalf of all our members, as a token of our thanks.

We will continue the Suffolk Sunday Pairs as a permanent event, even after face-to-face bridge resumes, every Sunday when there isn't a County or major club event, with a new trophy awarded annually for the Pair with the highest average of the best ten results over the year. Normally it will run from the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in March, but this year it will start from next Sunday, the 28th June. If Peter and Jacks agree, we'd like to call that trophy the Bushby-Morcombe Cup as an ongoing tribute to what they've achieved in the last 3 months.

Peter and Jacks led the move to online bridge, but others also contributed. Special thanks go to **Malcolm Pryor**, who set up and manages the Suffolk Summer Online Teams of 4, which is proving hugely popular with over 20 teams playing in four or five divisions every week, to **Richard Evans** for promoting and communicating details of all these events on our excellent website, and to **Chris Chambers** who devised a spreadsheet that converts the BBO results to

a format that can be uploaded to the county and club websites, and to the EBU. We're very fortunate to have such talents amongst our Membership.

Our success online was noticed by the English Bridge Union, who asked Suffolk to present a web seminar to demonstrate to other counties how it should be done; Peter, Jacks, Malcolm and Richard did this to an audience of over 100 representatives of other counties. To be showcased by the EBU as an example of best practice is a great accolade for Suffolk.

Before the lockdown we did manage to complete much of a very full and successful programme of events and we'll hear a bit more about that shortly from our Competitions Secretary, **Chris Rickard**. With Chris's guidance, the committee has continually reviewed our events programme, discontinuing those that weren't popular, introducing some new ones, and modifying others according to the wishes expressed by you, our members. For example, you told us you preferred not to have to drive home late at night in the winter months, so many of our events now start and finish earlier. You told us you didn't like travelling large distances, so where possible some of our events are now multi-venue so you have a better chance of playing at a local club. We've also tried to help and encourage less experienced players, so 'Really Easy' and 'Relaxed' competitions now form an integral part of our major tournaments; **Chris and Paul Rickard** have been the main driving force for this initiative.

We completed our two Green Point Congresses.

The first, our main County Congress at Felixstowe in October attracted 55½ tables over the weekend, and in the Pairs, at least, Suffolk players figured prominently amongst the prizes. **Dave Allen and Paul Mclachlan** won the main Pairs event, the Congress Championship, with **David Willson and Simon Riley** 2nd. **Rick Hanley** won the Consolation final, playing with a partner from Essex; **John Wilmott and I** were 3rd. **Diane Whitley and Eric Newman** won the Open Pairs, with **Sam and Bim Wilson** 4th. In the Teams we weren't so successful: **Jill and Roger Tattersfield**, playing with team-mates from Essex, were our best placed in 3rd. **Mary Moir and Tony Trathen** again won the Relaxed Pairs.

This year, our County Congress will be online, still Green-pointed, on the first weekend in October.

The second Green Point event was the East Anglian Bridge Weekend, just before the shutdown. Attendance was reduced due to Coronavirus concerns and other factors, but still attracted 39 tables over the weekend. This time we were out of the main prizes – in the Teams **Rick Hanley** was our best placed player in 4th, playing with Essex team-mates. **Celia Jeal and John Bloomfield** were 3rd in the Pairs. **Mary Moir** was again a winner in the Relaxed event, this time playing with **Pauline Harnden, Mark Leggett and Tyler Mair** in the teams.

In the eastern Counties League, our three teams each finished mid-table in their respective divisions, which is about where you'd expect them to be, or possibly slightly above, given the relative strength of our players compared to the other counties in our league.

In the midst of all this, [Malcolm Pryor](#) still found time to represent England in the d'Orsi Seniors Trophy at the World Championships in China, and come away with a Silver Medal. Many congratulations Malcolm.

This is my last report to this meeting as Chairman.

I've been honoured to hold that position since 2012 and it's time for a change. Throughout these last eight years I've been wonderfully supported by a group of people who gave their time and energy, often at their own expense, to ensure that bridge in Suffolk has prospered; certainly the current committee members, and also those who have served on the committee in the past. They've done a wonderful job and I'm very grateful to them all.

The bridge world has changed markedly in those 8 years. In 2012 we were still coming to terms with pay-to-play and Universal Membership; pre-dealt boards were regarded with suspicion by many players and their usage was rare; electronic scoring was around but hadn't yet reached Suffolk. Now, we expect pre-dealt boards with the hand records that accompany them, we expect electronic scoring with results almost immediately. These are positive changes. Online bridge is clearly here to stay, and will be one of the next major changes even after we're again safe to play face-to-face bridge. How we integrate it into the county programme will be a challenge for our new committee.

The task of our committee is becoming progressively more difficult. Notwithstanding our successful events programme in the last year, the general trend of participation in major events in Suffolk, as indeed nationally, is downwards. So, as retiring Chairman I'd like to leave you with one thought: our Association is for all of us, and we all have a part to play. As individual members you can help by joining our events when you can, and encouraging others in your clubs to do the same. As club officials you can help by continuing to ensure your events and those of the county don't clash. And please remember that we're always open to suggestions as to how bridge in Suffolk might be improved.

Finally, enjoy your bridge. I look forward to the time when we can again meet face to face.

Jeff Orton

Chairman, SCBA

June 2020