

Dear Members,

I do hope you have all had an enjoyable, albeit somewhat different Easter holiday and that you managed to lap up some of that unexpected April sun. My regular exercise has included walks to the University parks, which look breathtaking in April. One of my cycling outings has been to the city centre and I have to admit that, in spite of what I expected, I couldn't believe what I saw – Oxford empty, Oxford closed for business, closed for study; all those beautiful libraries permitting sunlight but no students. My spirits were somewhat lifted by the beautiful blossom and lack of traffic as I cycled home via the Woodstock Road.

I find it hard to believe that it's only a month since a small but keen group of us played for the last time in Maison Francaise; it feels like another life but, then again, it was! Bridge wise, I don't have anything exciting really to report. As some of you will know, I run a club for juniors on Sunday afternoons, term time, and also teach Bridge at the local Dragon School; many of the pupils attend both so it has been an abrupt end for them as well. I have persuaded all of them, who can bid, to sign up to BBO (Bridgebase Online) and another seven pupils have signed up to train with Giorgio Provenza, the England Under 16 coach, which will give them a focus and play a part in keeping up their bridge.

I have cycled to the local juniors with bags of pre-dealt Jannersten hands, quizzes and bridge books and left them on doorsteps; I am also playing with them on BBO and giving feedback – in some cases, an awful lot of feedback! I may give them some mini seminars via video cameras and “NoFearBridge.”

My own experience of BBO has been very positive! I've played with regular bridge partners and also with total strangers, who could live anywhere in the world. A few nights ago, I was so worried about our Prime Minister that I couldn't sleep a wink so decided to play on BBO and I had some very eminent opponents, including “Al Capone” and “Barbiedoll” - both tired of me pretty quickly – Barbiedoll wasn't just a pretty face.

I'm sure that all your shopping habits have changed in the past month and two big changes, which we have made is to have regular deliveries from Bonners, the fruit and veg suppliers in the Covered Market. We have also felt obliged to support a friend who runs a wine company, usually supplying the trade, but because there isn't any trade, has switched to supplying the public.

Just a word of warning to you all – IF you decide to support a wine company and Bonners DO the fruit and veg order first and not while sipping the Chablis! As a direct result of this error of judgement, we found ourselves gazing at 6 kilos of both beetroot and tomatoes instead of 6 pieces!

We feel most fortunate to have a garden, a dog to walk (Max) and a cat (Prince Atticus), who joins the walks if he feels like it. Recently, we found him lying across a warm fruit cake, which I'd baked for a neighbour, so he's a mixed blessing.

However, we are mindful that not all of you have an outdoor space and pets for companions and hope, for your sakes that this lockdown does not last too long.

Much love and happy bridge and I truly hope it's not long before I see you all again.

Holly

13.4.20