

Bridging the gap – your county and you



If you've never played in a county competition, maybe now is the time. Let's start by demystifying Merseyside & Cheshire Bridge Association...

Isn't county level bridge just for the top players?

No. You are probably already affiliated to the county without even realising it!

(For more about county affiliation (also called allegiance) click [here](#).)

We aim to run competitions that are attractive to everyone and are making a big effort right now to get more people involved in county events. With online bridge you don't even have to travel so, what are you waiting for?

Why do county events have funny names?

Mostly, they are named after people who got them started or have done a lot of work for the county over many years. To help newbies understand the events we run, we have created a **calendar/guide** (see below).

Don't I have to get picked to play for the county?

Merseyside & Cheshire Bridge Association (M&CBA) exists to promote bridge locally and to represent local interests to the EBU. As part of this role, we:

- Run events for all county members and
- Organise pairs and teams to represent the county in regional and national events.

If you have only ever played at your club, you are unlikely to waltz straight into the county's A team but, playing against people from across the county (and in some cases beyond), is a great way to broaden your horizons and improve your game. To find out which events might suit you see the **calendar/guide** (below).

How are county events different from club sessions?

Most clubs run regular pairs sessions, special events and a teams league/cup. The county just does the special events and the teams. Everyone who is affiliated to M&CBA (see above) is welcome to play in any of our events and some are open to all EBU members.

In addition, we enter teams in the Northern Bridge League, run the Merseyside & Cheshire Bridge League and enter pairs/teams in regional/national competitions. For more details...

(Yes, we know. See the **calendar/guide** below!)

Calendar and event guide

January

The Merseyside & Cheshire Cup

In the M&C Cup, teams compete on behalf of their clubs. Clubs can enter more than one team, but entry is limited to “Jack high” NGS grades so it is an ideal opportunity for less experienced players to do battle on behalf of their clubs!

January to June(ish)

The Cheshire Salver

The Cheshire Salver is the county’s “second tier” knockout teams event – so makes a great starting point for those new to county competitions. The teams entering the Cheshire Salver are joined by the first-round losers from the Lady Connell Cup (see below), so it works a bit like the Europa League!

February

The Grattan Endicott Trophy

Grattan Endicott OBE was, until his recent untimely demise, Life President of the M&CBA and gave great service to both the county and the EBU. You can read a brief biography here:

<https://www.ebu.co.uk/biographies/grattan-endicott>

Happily, his work was celebrated while he was still with us through the Grattan Endicott Trophy, also known as “The County Trials” since doing well may bring you to the attention of the selectors for representing the county in regional/national competitions. Also, the winning pair’s club is invited to represent the county in competitions such as the Northern Bridge League or the Garden Cities Trophy.

The main point for us is that it is FREE to enter so why not give it a go!

The Jean Keen Trophy

After many years’ service, Jean was “allowed” to step down from chairing the M&CBA Tournament Committee on condition that she provided a trophy for a new competition. I am glad to say that both Jean and her competition are still going strong 20 years later!

The Jean Keen Trophy is a ladies only (No, you don’t need a title!) teams competition with the emphasis on an enjoyable and competitive day’s bridge in a warm and friendly environment, including (pre-covid) picnics (in February???) and wine!

March

The Eric Howarth Cup

Eric was, like many top bridge players, a very kind person and very helpful to less experienced players. A Swiss teams event was started in his memory by his wife, friends and long-term bridge partners under the auspices of the North West Bridge Association.

When this split into three separate counties, it was somewhat surprising that the Eric Howarth Cup came to us, since Eric played mainly in Lancashire and Manchester. However, we are pleased to continue to honour him by running the Eric Howarth Cup as an open (i.e., not restricted to M&CBA) event.

April

The Preece Rosebowl

The Preece Rosebowl is another ladies only event, this time for ladies pairs, and is open to players from any county. In pre-covid times it was hosted by Blundellsands BC and was famed for its lavish afternoon tea!

May

The John Armstrong Trophy

John was a quietly spoken gentleman at the bridge table and a fine international player. He was based in Liverpool and was very highly regarded by all who knew him. He died prematurely and suddenly from a brain haemorrhage. The M&CBA's annual Swiss pairs event is named after him.

You can read his obituary here:

<https://www.ebu.co.uk/biographies/john-armstrong>

There is also a John Armstrong Memorial Award given by the EBU to "those players who play in the spirit of John Armstrong". For more information on the award click here:

<https://ebunews.blogspot.com/search/label/John%20Armstrong%20Memorial%20Award>

The Andrew Rosebowl

Geoff Andrew was another notable local player who played in Liverpool clubs for many years. The Rosebowl is inscribed in his memory and is awarded to the winners of this mixed pairs event. Unusually for a M&CBA event, the Andrew Rosebowl is held as a single session on a weekday evening.

June

The President's Cup

The President in question was Lieutenant-Colonel Percy Lionel Coates DSO MBE TD (the latter standing for Territorial Decoration not Tournament Director!). Percy's bridge career was nearly as distinguished as his military one and, as President of the North West Bridge Association, he started a competition between teams representing the counties of NW England and extended invitations to our neighbours in the Midlands, Wales, Scotland and the Isle of Man.

Although the format has varied over time, the President's Cup continues to be played by invited teams of eight+ competing for the magnificent trophy first presented by Percy in 1949.

The Jim Davies Cup

Jim was chairman of Wirral Bridge Club, and a prominent player in the Merseyside Bridge League, famed for his courtesy. Following his death, the club started a Swiss teams competition in his name which was opened up to other local clubs with the trophy being presented by his widow, Maud, at the inaugural event.

July to October

The Northern Bridge League

The NBL is a friendly competition in which the counties of northern England and north Wales are represented by teams of eight. There are three divisions and Division C is specifically aimed at club players so, if you fancy four summer Saturdays of good bridge and even better refreshments, why not give it a go?

You can read more about the NBL by clicking here:

<http://www.manchesterbridge.org.uk/NBL/index.html>

September to April

The Merseyside & Cheshire Bridge League

Our teams league is being re-launched this year and matches are expected to be played online or face-to-face by agreement. Teams from anywhere across Cheshire and Merseyside are welcome to enter. We are hoping to attract sufficient newbies to be able to run three divisions so that everyone can enjoy friendly and well-matched competition.

Details are still being finalised and it is hoped to run additional events such as a knockout cup or one-off Swiss teams event.

Watch this space! *(Well, look out for a further email really.)*

September to May

The Lady Connell Cup

When M&CBA was founded, Liverpool BC handed over the running of the county's premier championships to us together with the Lady Connell Cup and the Waterworth Cup (of which more below) trophies. Alas, the origins of their names remain shrouded in mystery.

Anyway, "The Connell" is now awarded to the winners of the county's knockout teams championship, who also go on to represent the county in the equivalent national competition, the Pachabo Cup. First round losers get automatic entry into the Cheshire Salver (you will have to go back to January to find that one).

November

The Waterworth Cup

The Waterworth Cup is the county's premier pairs competition and is held over two sessions. The top three pairs qualify for the equivalent national competition, the Corwen Trophy.

How to get started

More information on all M&CBA events (and affiliated clubs) can be found on the county website:

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/merseysidecheshire/>

Details of each event, how to enter and who to contact will be emailed to you in due course as well as appearing on our homepage. In the meantime, any queries, comments or suggestions should be emailed to Laurence Stone (laurence@thestones.me.uk), who chairs the Tournament Committee.