

Marion Curran NEBA Chair - 80th Anniversary Dinner Speech

I feel honoured to have been invited to say a few words on this momentous occasion.

I do this as Chair of **NEBA** but also as a former member of both Whitley Bay and Tynemouth Clubs.

I first went to **WBBC** on a Saturday night in 1976. I had been playing in a Northumberland County Netball match at Billingham and dashed back to get to Whitley Bay for 6:30. I was confronted with a scary sight, lots of elderly ladies wearing hats and some had fox furs around their necks and there was I in my sports wear. This was the first time that I had played in a Bridge club and I had been to the library to consult a book on how to score. I played with Pat Barlow who had been to some Bridge lessons and we had also played at school at lunchtimes, We finished third but did not go back for about 3 months.

In those days there were many formidable characters playing especially on Thursdays when there were sometimes 25 tables with some in the foyer and playing one board rounds. Harry Hamblin ruled the roost and no one dared to contradict his rulings, all made without reference to the laws. I remember one AGM when Scottie tried to ask a second question and Harry said "Mr Scott you are only allowed to speak once in this meeting and you've already had yours. Sit down" Mr Scott had a stroke at the table many years later but insisted on finishing the hand before an ambulance was called. There were also a number of couples who played Nottingham club, Eileen and Bill Popplewell (she had been a Bluebell girl), Carl and Elsie Peirs, Lottie Hesslegrave was also a leading light Some pairs only played on Saturdays many playing "Asking Club" some with dubious tactics involving fingers on the table. One lady, Della played on Thursdays with a lady partner then on a Saturday with her husband and a different surname, Tynemouth played in the Rosslyn Hall in North Shields when I first started playing. They had some equally formidable players some of them unique to Tynemouth but many in common with Whitley Bay. They also had some good young players John Gladders, Fred Eisner and Julian Sykes to name but a few I could go on for ages remembering all those who are no longer with us, including some of my partners, notably Pat de Leeuw and Gill Sporton with whom I had much success in the early days I played three times a week Mondays Tuesdays and Saturdays always going to the Downton pub for a postmortem afterwards. I played at Cramlington on Tuesdays. Later on Arnold Deane who was NEBA Chairman asked me if I would play with him on Saturdays. I felt this was a great compliment and willingly agreed.

I also initiated the Bridge classes at Whitley Bay but after a couple of years I found I didn't have enough time so handed over the reins to Pat and Victor de Leeuw who then handed on to Rhona and Robert Stead.

More recently I also filled in occasionally with Robert Stead and David Morrison when they needed a partner but I have played most of my Bridge at Brunton.

I am very upset that the Club has had so many difficulties concerning the premises and hope that these can be successfully resolved. I hope the Club continues to go from strength to strength and is able to maintain its position as one of the top clubs in the country. It is very pleasing to see that your morning sessions continue to attract lots of

players and their enthusiasm for the game warms my heart. I hope that you are able to attract a good number of new players to your beginners classes in September. I wish that there could be more (some) younger players.

Speaking with my NEBA Chair hat on now, I am delighted to see that WB entered a second team of less experienced players in the Inter Club league. This is an excellent move as it gives these players experience of teams play which is in my opinion the most enjoyable form of Bridge. Perhaps some of them might like to enter our NEBA online league, details of which will be on our website. 2025 marks the 90th Anniversary of the founding of NEBA by Ewart Kempson, We are celebrating this event in a number of ways. We have inaugurated a "category pairs" event which is to be held at Durham on October 4th. We have been given a generous sponsorship by Portwood Insurance and money prizes will be awarded to overall winners as well as leading
Ladie's pair Men's pair Mixed pair Nine high pair

Please consider entering.

We are also holding a simultaneous pairs event in clubs on Monday 27 Tuesday 28 and Thursday 30 October, This will be scored across the field on each night, Whitley Bay could perhaps run a heat on each day/night. More details later but this will be a Charity event. We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers to come forward with some new ideas of ways that we could attract more players to play in our County events and even participate in National events such as the 9 High Corwen.

Remember that the Congress takes place at the Delta Marriott Hotel in November and there is a welcome pairs event for those with NGS 9 and below or those learning Bridge then.

Marion Curran - NEBA Chair