

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

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of the

West Midlands Bridge Club

1966-2008

Compiled by

Edward Legg

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Foreword

It was in January 2008 when I rashly offered to compile a history of the West Midlands Bridge Club before memories failed and the early days became forgotten. The Board gave its approval to the project.

It is termed '*A history*' rather than '*The history*' because inevitably, it is an idiosyncratic narrative compiled from many sources. Some information is unavailable, for instance the Board and Management Committee minutes from 1987 to 1993 are missing. Also there are gaps in the names of winners of trophies in the gift of the club and discrepancies between the minutes of annual general meetings and the cup engravings with regard to Bridge trophy winners. The narrative is also influenced by those available for interview and those who agreed to talk to me and provide me with information. Vigorous attempts have been made to ensure accuracy but difficulties must be acknowledged as memories fade and exact dates are forgotten; often more than one version of a story exists.

A number of people have given me helpful suggestions, either verbal or written, and while I have not been able to incorporate all of them, I am grateful to them for taking the trouble to provide me with the information.

It has been a hugely enjoyable process largely due to the many people who have given their time to recall events and remember anecdotes in order to assist in the writing of this narrative. A necessary and self-imposed deadline of 31st December 2008 was set for completion of this history as otherwise I could see the date of publication receding further and further into the future.

For providing the material that has been included, I am particularly grateful to Yvonne and Derek Andrews, Margaret Armstrong, Joy and Don Brett, Steve Byrne, Jayne Crump, Jan Eden, Cathy Everson, Darren Evetts, Carolyn Fisher, Pat Gadd, Dodo Georgevic, Ian Handley, Geoffrey Howard, David Jones, Norman Lawrenson, Wynne Lewis, Terry Meaney, Doreen and Norman Moores, Doreen Parlow, Louise Payne, Betty Scholes, Norman Selwyn, John Sreeves, Hylda Townsend and Roderic Walkington. In particular, Larry Sayer gave me a lot of information regarding the early days and Norman Lawrenson also supplied information and corrected substantial amounts of the narrative. Norman Selwyn and Frances Legg kindly read and edited late versions of the text and Roger Twyman transferred the final article onto the Club's web page.

Even after receiving so much help, misconceptions or any errors of omission or commission are entirely my own responsibility. This edition will be published on the West Midlands Bridge Club web domain and if anyone has more information which they believe could usefully be included, please do contact me.

Edward Legg

Wednesday 31st December 2008

Post Script: Many of the gaps in the names of winners of trophies have now been filled in this revised first edition.

Friday 22nd May 2009

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

Origins

It is not possible to outline the history of the West Midlands Bridge Club without first mentioning the Silhill Bridge Club from which the WMBC originated. Silhill was one of the first Bridge clubs to be formed in Solihull and the annual subscription was half a guinea (52.5 pence) as was the entrance fee; the table fee was one shilling (5p). David Brenholz founded it in 1948 and his sister Doreen Parlow, now in her nineties, continues to play Bridge on Saturday afternoons at WMBC with Pam Harris. Doreen joined WMBC when the club started in 1966 and she was made a life member of Silhill Bridge Club after 40 years. The Silhill club currently meets at St Helens church, an arrangement which started in 1977, but in the 1950's and 60's, it met at a variety of locations and it is clear from the history of the club that accommodation was a continuing problem over this period. It met at Kunzles café, on the corner of Poplar Rd and Warwick Rd. (1948), the Old School Building at 29 Park Rd. Solihull (1949), the Manor House (1951), the Royal Oak Hotel (1955), Solihull Motors (Les Kinchin was I think the owner) opposite Beatties on the Warwick Rd (1962) and the tennis pavilion in Mirfield Rd (1965). This latter site was leased from Rover and was acquired through the good offices of Bill Ethell who worked at Rover (three houses have since been built on this site). Many of the members at WMBC were also members of Silhill and amongst the first committee members was Bill Ethell who was a stalwart of WMBC and secretary of the School of Bridge. In 1990, Bill was in his 90th year, had his diamond wedding anniversary and his granddaughter married into the Mountbatten family. Unfortunately Bill died the same year while playing bridge at WMBC.

The Schism at Silhill Bridge Club

In 1965 there was dissension over a number of issues but principally the procedure regarding the casting vote of the chairman at committee meetings. Percy Thomas, the club secretary, was sufficiently concerned to take legal advice over the matter and at a subsequent meeting it was agreed unanimously that the rules of the club were in need of revision - a process not completed until 1967.

In the election for the Committee in 1966, there were two candidates for the position of vice-president. The candidates were Ms Marion Murtagh and Mr T A Cullen. However there were procedural objections and the outcome was that Mr Cullen became Vice President, Bill Ethell was elected President and Mr Percy Thomas was elected Honorary Secretary.

At the AGM on 13th May 1966, which had a record attendance, John Weston made an appeal that certain measures be adopted to help the club press forward and improve its image. He was supported by Mr Thomas. Among the suggestions John made was to have the facility of having sandwiches provided for those members who had arrived straight from work. The response of the committee is not recorded by any document seen by the author but essentially, John Weston was told that, 'If you don't like the way we run this club why don't you start your own?' Marion's response was that 'We may as well go and form our own bridge club'.

Subsequently, Mr Thomas indicated that he would be tendering his resignation at the next committee meeting because of the wide differences in opinion between himself and other members of the seven-man committee. The committee attempted reconciliation but to no avail. His resignation from the committee was accepted with regret. Mr Thomas indicated his successor could rely on him for any help he was able to give and that he would remain a member of the club but would never again seek office. However on 9th February 1967, Mr P Thomas, Ms Marion Murtagh, Mr C E Weston and Miss P Smith formally resigned from the Silhill club.

It should be emphasised that for the vast majority of members there was no continuing ill-feeling and many Silhill members did and still do play at West Midlands and vice-versa. Betty Scholes, a one-time president and life member at Silhill, still plays at both clubs as do many others.

Early Days at St Johns Hotel

On the morning after the May AGM, Marion telephoned John Weston to discuss the way forward. A meeting was held at Marion's house in Lovelace Avenue; those present included Marion, John Weston, Percy Thomas and Eric and Margaret Armstrong. There was a second meeting thought to be on 28th June, and which is the date commemorated by the plaque in front

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

of the tree at the entrance drive to 909 Warwick Rd. Twenty three people expressed an interest in becoming members and it was at this meeting that the new club was inaugurated. This second meeting was at John Weston's flat in Viceroy Close. The Solihull Times of Friday 12th August 1966 reported the formation of the new club as follows:-

Formation of New Bridge Club. (From the Solihull Times)

The inaugural meeting of the West Midlands Bridge Club was held at 48 Lovelace Ave. Solihull on Sunday when the following officers were elected.

President Mrs Marion Murtagh, Vice president Mr F Cyril Keates, Secretary Mr Percy Thomas, Treasurer Mrs M Armstrong. During the meeting four silver trophies were given for annual competitions. Plans were agreed for the tuition of beginners and the coaching of advanced players. It was announced by the honorary secretary that over 70 applications for membership had been received. It was agreed that the first 75 members would be accepted as founder members and would be exempt from entrance fees.

The club will next meet at the St. Johns Hotel, Warwick Rd. Solihull. Rubber bridge will be played Tuesday and Friday afternoons and Duplicate Bridge on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday evenings

A social evening, when dinner will be followed by Partnership Bridge, will be held on one Saturday evening of each month.

Applications for membership should be made to the honorary secretary Mr P Thomas, 91 Broad Oaks Rd. Solihull (SOL 0370)

Doreen Moores remembers an advertisement appearing in the old Solihull post office inviting people to join the club; it was followed by an invitation to a 'Grand Slam Dinner' which proved to be a very lavish affair paid for by Marion and, perhaps unsurprisingly, was very well attended. There was a two or three tiered wedding-style cake baked especially for the occasion which was decorated with playing card symbols. Shortly after that evening, regular Bridge sessions commenced at the same hotel.

While based at St John's, many teams were organised. One consisted of Noel Glynn, Marjorie Knox, Peggy Davies and Betty Scholes who played teams all over Birmingham, one being from Aston University led by Norman Selwyn. Norman won the pairs championship two years running (1969 and 1970) with different partners - George Balon and David Franks. Margaret Armstrong was giving bridge lessons at the St Johns Hotel at this time laying the foundations for the later formation of the highly successful School of Bridge. The period of sojourn at the hotel lasted about four years when the club was told that they would have to vacate the two rooms they used for Bridge sessions. Later, in the early 1970's, a number of West Midlands' Congresses were held at the St Johns Hotel.

Marion Murtagh: A Short Profile

Marion was universally remembered as a far-sighted, highly competent businesswoman who had correctly foreseen the likely impact of computer technology on business practice. She founded a company and bought a 'state of the art' main frame computer that her highly qualified staff used to provide services to industry. Her entrepreneurial flair was rewarded; she became wealthy and bought her first Rolls Royce. Larry Sayer remembers her as a truly amazing character; her charm, energy and intelligence were inspirational and no problem was insoluble when she was at the centre organising and motivating people. A wealthy self-made business woman was far more remarkable at that time than it is today and she was interviewed on 'Woman's Hour' a popular afternoon radio programme on radio 4.

The Purchase of 909 Warwick Road.

In 1969, Marion Murtagh purchased 909 Warwick Rd for £25,500 having being given an indication that it may be coming up for sale by Reg Burke, an estate agent who had some involvement in the Marie Curie Hospice and lived next door to the club (where the Church of the Latter Day Saints now stands). Reg handled the negotiations. The house was somewhat dilapidated and had previously been Windyflow School run by Miss Hoggart Hill and Miss Bagnall; it had been sold by them to the Marie Curie Hospice in 1964 prior to the hospice opening in 1965. Interestingly, the house had been the birthplace and home of a WMBC member, Rita Sanders; she was married from there in 1929. She was a lovely lady and I recall

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

her comments on slow Bridge players indicating that 'They think they are playing for the Town Hall clock'. She died in 1996.

Marion spent a further £5000 on furnishings and fittings to convert the building and bring it up to standard for use as a Bridge club and Bridge School. This involved substantial internal modifications on the first floor so as to provide a Bridge room for twelve tables across the front of the building. On the ground floor to the right was a bar, kitchen and other offices while to the left was a bridge room that could accommodate ten tables but which could be subdivided to provide facilities for rubber bridge or teaching.

Larry Sayer can remember querying Marion's personal expenditure on the project taking the view that the vast majority of the membership was well off and it should not be necessary to treat the members as deserving causes. She replied that she looked upon the expenditure as an investment for the future and pointed out that the facilities were urgently required. She preferred not to enter into wide-ranging discussions that could possibly lead to dissension and unwelcome delay. Accordingly, events proceeded with some urgency and the club was able to move into its new headquarters in early 1970. Duplicate sessions were started in Tuesday evenings, Wednesday afternoons and Friday evenings. Regular rubber bridge took place on Saturday afternoons and indeed on any other day when four enthusiasts were gathered together. It was agreed that bridge classes should start in the autumn and the possibility of running a Bridge congress was discussed. There was no doubt that the premises presented new opportunities and that Marion's astounding generosity (she let the club have use of the premises rent-free up until 1975) would enable substantial progress to be made.

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council agreed the change of use of 909 Warwick Rd. on Jan 1st 1970, when they knew that there would be a Bridge School at the premises. Marion invited some members of the SMBC to lunch at 909 and persuaded them it was not a gaming centre. In fact in May 1970, Duplicate Bridge was recognised as a game of skill and hence excluded from the gaming act.

Settling Down in the First Years at 909

After the purchase, many members of Silhill including Betty Scholes and Marie David, helped set up the furniture at 909. The School of Bridge was formed almost immediately with Bill Ethel as treasurer. Marion contacted Nico Gardener of the highly successful London School of Bridge with a view to initiating a Solihull School of Bridge. Arrangements were made for Margaret Armstrong and Larry Sayer to visit the LSB where they sat in on some classes and discussed with Nico his teaching approach. He provided teaching notes for two, seven-part series of lessons for beginners which ensured that the Solihull School of Bridge got off to a flying start in the autumn of that year. It must have cost a pretty penny but Marion 'airily announced' that the club would pay but Larry Sayer had no doubt that she funded the project.

Margaret Armstrong was treasurer of the School of Bridge for the first 7 years (1966 -1973) with help from her husband Eric followed by Larry Sayer, Robin Ogg and then Geoffrey Howard. Bill Ethel was secretary of the School of Bridge at this time and when he died, Margaret and Eric Armstrong took over.

The sessions at this time were Tuesday, Friday and Sunday nights and Wednesday afternoons. Carolyn Fisher remembers rubber bridge being played most afternoons run by Wendy Perks. The teaching of beginners and new entrants was done by Margaret Armstrong helped by Marie David. Jean Williams also had classes for teaching at the intermediate level.

George Townsend (husband of Hylde) was secretary of the club and initiated rental schemes as money spinners by hiring out rooms. All kinds of money-making activities went on. Hylde Townsend, Betty Scholes and Marie David organised sessions with bridge before and after lunch that they had prepared. They were very popular and the club was getting approximately £200 / month.

During this time, Jack Davies imported some Yugoslavian beech and West African makore to construct the handrails up the front stairs to the Bridge room and a shelf at the end of the Bar. Such wood is unlikely to be available today since makore is at a high risk of extinction in the

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

wild and is on the endangered tree list. At this time, the House Committee consisted of Jack Davies, Tony Cundy and David Williams and as always, it was trying to run the club on a shoestring. There is a story that differs slightly depending on who tells it (a common event when gathering material for this history) but whether it was the stewardess, Mrs Wright, who drew attention to mysterious noises emanating from the roof space or whether it was the decision to insulate the loft, the fact remains that Tony and David went up into the loft. The roof space was filthy and there was no cover on the hot water top-up tank. Tony looked inside and saw a few broken tiles as well as a perfectly formed pigeon sitting in one corner. After tying up the ball valve and draining the system, Tony picked up the pigeon which then promptly disintegrated in his hand. They then cleared the system and flushed it through.

Marion had dinner and 'super lunch' parties at her home of which many of the older members have fond memories. Jack Davies speaks of buffets of whole salmon and turkey served by a couple of waiters with a bar followed by Bridge. There would be four tables with 4-5 on each table. She also entertained outside her home; one such venue remembered by Jack Davies was the Welcombe Hotel in Stratford also a one-time favourite for the AGM of the Warwickshire Contract Bridge Association (WCBA). She also hosted magnificent and formal lunch parties (not bridge) with a cross-section of non-bridge and bridge-playing friends. She would have caterers in for as many as twelve tables in her dining room overlooking her garden.

From the earliest days of Bridge at 909, a regular social highlight was the monthly Saturday supper followed by Bridge. It would commence with Marion's invited guests wearing evening dress who would be entertained to cocktails in her private room (this was the old match room) while others gathered in the bar for the start of the evening meal. Marion wanted to entertain her friends and associates whether from Bridge or from wider business interests and perhaps the sense of a club within a club, which developed at his time, was an unintended consequence of the extreme generosity of an enterprising business woman.

Purchase of 909 from Marion by the Members

Marion's successful computer services business attracted the attention of an American Company. They made what was ostensibly a very good offer for the company, which she accepted. She made a series of visits to the States to help set up the new operation but when she wished to return full-time to the UK, her American colleagues made difficulties. She had accepted shares in University computers as part-payment for her company and found out that these were in practice worthless outside the USA. University Computer Inc. insisted that she should remain in the States full-time to run the business. Marion wanted to live in Solihull so she took the Americans to court and lost.

Around this time Marion had the club property valued; views differ as to whether this was because she wanted to realise some of her assets to start another business or whether she had decided that the WMBC should take over responsibility for the property. She decided that WMBC should have first option and offered it at £60,000 which would take into account inflation and the improvements made to the building. Some felt the price too high but because Marion had expended substantial sums to make the building suitable as a Bridge club, the house was less desirable as a residence and would be more difficult to sell. Larry Sayer, as Chair, was asked to seek a reduction in price but he pointed out that any debate on this point could only take place at a properly convened and notified meeting of the members.

Marion was apparently amused and bemused by the developing situation, however she had already had an offer from another organisation wishing to use the facilities for bridge and other related pastimes. She saw no reason to reduce her asking price. The committee then had to decide how to raise the money for the purchase of the Club house.

By this time in early 1975, the membership of the club had increased to around 250. There was therefore no reason for concern about the Club's long-term ability to finance this project and there was no doubt that the club could draw upon a formidable pool of know-how from amongst enthusiastic members to plan and organise the funding required. Jack Bailey and Larry Sayer sought advice informally from many of the members whose business expertise they respected. They were encouraged to recruit a small team to plan a way forward. The team included

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

accountancy skills and access to legal advice. As soon as possible the team would formulate a clear plan for raising the necessary funds which would be put before the members without delay. Accordingly they recruited John Saffery and Roy Harris to join them on a steering committee for the project. Jack Bailey and John Saffery recommended Robin Ogg to guide the Club on legal aspects of the venture. Larry Sayer, as the only survivor of this team, remembers Jack Bailey, John Saffery and Roy Harris as all talented, hard-working people who made an enormous contribution to the well-being of the Club over a substantial number of years.

It seemed unlikely that the Club would be able to raise all the required funds by borrowing from the members. A bank loan would be necessary but talks with members suggested that they would welcome direct involvement in an ownership scheme. Roy Harris suggested that the Club issue ownership units that would pay a fixed rate of interest after a fixed term after which the holder could either cash in the units or alternatively leave the units to continue to grow in value at a specified rate of interest related to the prevailing bank rate. On the 6th May 1975 this proposal was put before an EGM attended by 160 members and it was agreed. Details of a scheme based on £5.00 ownership units, to be redeemed in 5 years, were circulated to all members, who were asked to take up as many units as they could afford.

The method of purchase posited was to use £5,000 of club funds together with £55,000 raised from members to provide a total purchase price of £60,000

The support from the members was very gratifying. By June 8th 1975, the club had acceptances from 95 members for ownership units worth £19,635. By June 17th the figure had reached £24,555 and it was clear that sufficient funds could be generated. The final figure raised in debentures from the members was close to £30,000 which included two late applications from anonymous sources each for 200 units. There was also a loan from a brewery. The Club was now in a position to negotiate a £20,000 bank loan from Barclays which would enable the purchase of 909 Warwick Rd.

Formation of WMBC Ltd.

Jack Davies and a number of others were against the idea of a members' club and wanted it to be shareholding with shares restricted to members but the members' club idea won the day. Having established that financial resources were adequate, the next step was to instruct solicitors to purchase the property on our behalf. At this point the club was advised to make arrangements to safeguard its position as the owners of a property that was a considerable financial asset. Financial advice from knowledgeable club members led to a decision to consult Evershed and Tompkinson, a legal firm specialising in company law and the club commissioned them to produce the legal paperwork that would form the basis of a holding Company limited by guarantee. Such an arrangement was not the same as a limited liability company in which shares are generally purchased as investments that will hopefully pay dividends.

There was general agreement that the club needed to pay off the ownership units as soon as possible, although many members made it clear that they were prepared to make the funds available for an extended period if wished.

When the annual subscriptions became due in May 1976, they were raised from £6 to £10 for a single person and from £10 to £18 for double membership. In those days it was understood the couple applying for double membership were married. Jack Bailey, a lovely man, did not approve of couples who were not married getting the discount. A two hundred club was started and ran for some months and was reasonably profitable, but the raffle type scheme involved substantial efforts from those who ran it. The installation of a fruit machine was infinitely more profitable and had the added benefit that the involvement of members was voluntary. The club was also able to hire out rooms on a fairly regular basis and the resulting rents were useful. From time to time other successful fundraising events were organised by members and the club benefited accordingly.

The first directors of WMBC Ltd were L N Sayer, Chair, O J Bailey, Vice chair Miss M. Murtagh, Mrs M I Walker and Mr G F Howard, Treasurer. Later, in June 1976, C E Weston and J Davies

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

were appointed as additional directors. A meeting to formally approve a proposal for incorporating the club was held at an EGM on 9th March 1976 and the following month the club was given title absolute for 909.

Early Days of WMBC Ltd

In July, a request from the Midlands Backgammon Association to meet at the WMBC was agreed by the Board. They had a tradition of playing into the small hours of the morning but the board restricted it to 12.45 a.m; however when Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council informed the club the following February of gambling at backgammon until the early hours of the morning, the decision was rescinded the following year.

Room Hire fees were raised in April 1977 and amended to £25 for a single day with consecutive days at £20; £12.50 for a half day and a single session committee £5.00.

The first AGM of the club was held in the summer of 1977 but no record exists. It was around this time that increased work and domestic commitments persuaded Larry to stand down as Chair and Jack Bailey took over. Jack as Vice-Chair had played an absolutely key role in the successful campaign to buy 909 from Marion. Those who remember Jack will do so with much affection as he made a monumental contribution to the best interests of the Club, was very good humoured and a gentleman at the bridge table. He was also a very modest man and did not want to become Chair although he had stood in for Larry on a number of occasions.

On January 10th 1978, Marion resigned from the Board to become Life President and Michael Fisher joined the Board. Marion wanted him to become chair immediately but Michael felt other directors should have priority. At this time a 14 page rule book measuring 3" by 4.5" and with a blue cover was published. It was headed the '*West Midlands Bridge Club incorporating the Solihull School of Bridge*' of which Marion was Life President; some copies still exist but it has not been reissued as the Board consider a club rule book unnecessary. The management of the Club was vested in a General Committee of 15 members; from these a Chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer were elected who together with the Life President constituted the executive. There were three permanent sub-committees - a House Committee, Games Committee and a Wine Committee.

Promoting room hire continued and in July 1978 the Lions Club were hiring the downstairs bridge room on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. The interim Rotary club of St. Alphege's also made enquiries. Members of both groups were elected as social members of the club. A suggestion was made by John Weston that the downstairs room be redecorated. Many people have asked why, with the initials in C E Weston, he was called John; a story he used to tell was that he was once stopped driving by the police because of speeding and was asked his name to which he replied Cecil Eustace. The police waved him through on the basis that with a name like that, he had suffered enough!

In 1979 there were widespread industrial strikes. It was the so called 'Winter of discontent' and an interesting corollary of it was due to the dustman's action. The stewardess Mrs Wright had difficulty coping with the accumulation of used paper towels. A small incinerator was therefore suggested.

It was in 1979 that John Robbins persuaded the WCBA to introduce a 'two up/two down' for promotion /relegation in the Warwickshire pairs league instead of the previous 'one up/one down'.

Meanwhile revenue generation continued and in December 1979 room hire charges were increased as follows; - whole day £30.00, half day £15.00, single session Committee £10, private party £15. These were subject to further increases in March to - whole day £50.00, half day £30.00, single session Committee £15 and private party £20. The annual subscriptions were also increased to single £12.50, married £22.50, and country, junior and social member to £6.00. Clearly finance was an issue as the fruit machine was noted to be wearing out and another one was to be installed.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

In May 1980, because of fewer tables on Saturday afternoons, the session was transferred downstairs to save on cleaning. There was a proposal to form a separate company of the School of Bridge. The Board also voted to raise the Stewardess' salary from £300, or £500 dependent on employment of a cleaner each Friday morning; however the wages council stated that she was being paid too little and a new contract was signed in July 1981. I fondly remember the little moist fairy cakes containing cherries made by Mrs Wright for the splendid price of six pence each. They have now been supplanted in my affections by Jayne's cream scones and mince pies

The First Extension

In March 1982 a plan of a proposed extension was discussed and later, in 1983, Michael Fisher was made chair of the Board to push this through. The function of the new extension to the club was primarily to improve the facilities for members at no extra cost to members. The board received tenders for the extension in Feb 1985 and an EGM on 17th March 1985 was held to consider the plans. An issue of B debenture stock for £50,000 was made to finance the extension and the Mayor was invited to open the extension officially. Ms Murtagh generously sponsored the event and a number of donations were generously made by members of the club.

At this time, the ground floor was reserved for Chess on Thursdays and difficulties arose in accommodating the chess Club with the other activities; interestingly the games chess and bridge are subject to VAT but not physical games.

EBU Matters.

It was in 1984 that the EBU felt the need to reiterate the rule that members of County Associations must also belong to the EBU; this applied to the 20% of WMBC members that belonged to the EBU. This was also the year that the EBU magazine, previously issued quarterly, was now entitled English Bridge and issued bimonthly.

The Author's Early Memories

In late 1984 when I joined, many of us started Bridge with beginners' lessons led by Margaret Armstrong for two terms and then went on to Terry Meaney's session of assisted Rubber bridge on Thursday evenings where Terry was always very helpful in being available to discuss the bidding or playing of a hand. This was a useful session within the School of Bridge in which novices could practise their card-playing technique before attending improvers' lessons provided by Jean Williams. Alternatively further progression was made through the Bridge Circle which Jack Moss (upstairs) and Wilf Caddick (downstairs) used to run on Monday nights. Jack Moss ran it for 15 years (until he died in 1999) and encouraged joiners to the circle although he was not so keen to encourage movement out of it. I remember him shaking his head vigorously behind Eric Armstrong when Eric invited circle members to join the more competitive nights of Tuesdays and Fridays which my bridge partner Alan Gleaden and I decided to do.

That year the entrance fee was reduced to £10.00 for single and £20.00 for a married couple. Three, five and ten year subscriptions were offered. The question of whether Bridge circle members should be made full members was considered and discarded as Bridge Circle members were said to be happy with the status quo. It was at this time that the bank accounts of WMBC and the School of Bridge were merged under WMBC Ltd.

Smoking and Bridge

Complaints about heavy smoking in the club had been documented as early as 1978 when a suggestion was made that it be restricted to certain areas. The Board felt it could not prohibit smoking but could get an air purifier. Anti-smoking machines were also considered and rejected.

Measures considered necessary to combat the problem of smoking pollution continued throughout the following year and quotes of over £1000 for installing three air filters in the upstairs room prompted a search for cheaper alternatives.

However the issue of polluted air due to cigarette smoking was moving up the political agenda and becoming a serious health issue in the 1980's. In 1985 the EBU considered proposals to

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

restrict smoking for the first one and a half hours of bridge competitions. In 1991 the WCBA imposed a partial smoking ban on County tournaments. The smoking issue received fresh impetus when the popular entertainer Roy Castle was diagnosed with lung cancer in 1992. He was thought to have contracted it by playing the trumpet in smoke-laden surroundings during his act. In 1999 smoking was prohibited at WMBC except for the bar area. Finally anticipating the government's proposal to institute a smoking ban in public places in 2004, smoking was totally banned in WMBC from January 1st 2004.

Apropos smoking, many of the older members will remember Harry Rowe's mother who smoked at the Bridge table well into her 90's.

Mr & Mrs Wright: Stewards of WMBC

Mr and Mrs Wright had been stewards since the early days at 909, however Mr Wright's ill health was continuing to give cause for concern and eventually it prevented him from carrying out his duties as steward. Many of us were sad to see the steward and stewardess leave the flat in late October 1986. Mrs Wright was remembered with fondness for her excellent catering by many bridge players throughout the county and in recognition of this, the WCBA made a presentation to her.

When Betty and Bob Wright left, a couple with children became joint stewards; they provided lots of fried food but soon left. They were followed by a refined married couple who did not stay long as they found the work harder than expected. Another couple followed – a lady and her husband who was a chef and then Jayne and Aidan Crump came in 1988 much to the relief, and subsequent delight, of everyone.

Items from the AGM Minutes 1989-94

There is a gap in the club documentation from 1987 to 1994 for which there are no Board or management minutes available, however some AGM minutes were found.

At National level in April 1990, the EBU stated all bids above 3NT would become alertable having previously not been alerted; *plus ça change*.

At regional level, bidding boxes so familiar to us now, were used for the first time in all County matches and Invitation Pairs from 1991. As some of these events were held at WMBC, the WCBA contributed to the purchase of 15 bidding boxes for use at WMBC.

In 1990 the top floor of the Club was redecorated and the kitchen entirely revamped. There was a luncheon on Dec 2nd 1990 attended by the Mayor and Mayoress in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Club and the 20th anniversary of being located at 909. At the 1990 AGM the following were elected to the sub-committees

Bar	Jack Bailey and John Weston
House	Jack Davies and Frank Shaw
Social	Hylde Townsend, Renee Walkington and John Weston
Ethics	Margaret Armstrong, Roy Harris and Norman Selwyn
Tournament	Eric Armstrong, Jack Bailey, Gordon Clarke, Mike Meakin, John Robbins and Brent Wormald.

These sub-committee members constituted the Management Committee.

In 1991, the main card room and entrance hall were recarpeted and because the carpet no longer matched the curtains, Marion purchased some new ones in a sort of blue Paisley pattern which were hung in the main card room; they lasted until 2006. There was an increase in table money of 30 pence to £1.80 for duplicate players; visitors' charges were raised from £1.80 to £2.00. In 1992 the steward's flat had been fitted with a security system. There was concern over movement (or rather lack of it) from the Bridge School to the Circle and a new club duplicate session on Monday evenings was initiated to enable Bridge circle members to develop their bridge skills further and play on Club nights. Also new was a Saturday afternoon duplicate session starting at 1.45 pm and a supper evening on the first Saturday of the month. In October 1992, Jack Davies who had worked tirelessly for the Club, retired from the House Committee and was presented with a silver salver by Marion Murtagh.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

In 1992-93 the upper and lower extension rooms were redecorated and illuminated display boards fitted in the main card room - the latter thanks to Jack Davies' generosity. Further expense was incurred when £11,000 was spent on resurfacing the car park and £5-6,000 on car park security. In 1993-94 replacement windows were fitted in the gold room.

A Miscellany of Items from 1993-1997 including Celebration of 100 Years of Bridge.

One of the first items of news following the gap in the records was that in early February 1993, Jane Hall and Carolyn Fisher won the Ladies National Women's Pair's championship at Coventry and were subsequently invited to represent England in an international match.

In 1994 a number of houses adjacent to the club were knocked down in Hampton Lane, one of them belonging to a club member - Dr Richard Protheroe. The demolition was to make way for a Church of the Latter Day Saints. The change was mutually beneficial and the club was quick to seek reciprocal arrangements for car parking with our new neighbours.

In July 1994, Michael Fisher organised a promotional week to celebrate one hundred years of bridge. There were different events daily including a competition against an English international team with Vu-graph facilities provided. The WCBA were involved and a pairs' event followed a Bucks Fizz reception at the opening on Sunday July 17th; it was directed by David & Marilyn Jones. Gordon Clarke organised an excellent simultaneous pairs. Centenary plates, mugs and playing cards were produced and club ties were provided; Tony Poole had some polo shirts made and Michael Fisher, we are reliably informed by Carolyn, still has his. There was a mayoral visit and photographs taken.

As indicated above, bidding boxes had been used in County matches since 1991 and they were formally introduced to WMBC in October 1994 one Tuesday evening and, despite some resistance, used on all tables from March 1995. The following December, the WMBC strengthened its entry into the computer age by purchasing a new scoring program called SCBridge written by Stephen Bligh.

As everyone knows, there is a host facility provided by WMBC whereby visitors or members without a partner are always guaranteed a game and the host is exempt from paying table money that evening. In early 1995, Hylde Townsend took on the organisation of the host list which had been languishing somewhat; she made improvements in persuading members to sign up - mainly by buttonholing all E/W pairs who sat at her table. There was also more general concern over the future of the club at this time and that it needed more volunteers. In response to this concern, a club questionnaire was distributed to members by Evelyn Spicer.

Increase in Table money.

At a Board meeting on Sunday 11th June 1995 the following proposals to increase table money were agreed:

Duplicate on Sunday, Tuesday & Friday increased from £2.00 to £2.50; visitors £3
Duplicate on Wednesday & Saturday afternoon increased to £2.00; visitors £2.50
Bridge Circle on Monday & Thursday evenings £2
Rubber Bridge on Monday & Saturday afternoons increased to £1.50; visitors £2.00
Monthly Saturday Supper; supper only £5.50; bridge £1.50

In September 1995 David Jones resigned as Club secretary to take up a post as senior Tournament Director for the EBU.

In early 1996, Solihull Rotarians started to meet at 909 and a plaque was placed on the brickwork of the entrance. The University of the Third Age (U3A) and a Poetry Reading Society also started meeting at the club.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

Dress codes

Standards of dress were discussed by the EBU in 1991 and in January 1995, the minutes of the Management Committee recorded that a dress code of jackets and ties for social events should be recommended. Nothing happened of course, but it is interesting how dress codes have changed in the last 20 years - a much more informal approach being accepted these days.

The Gaming Machine

The club used to have a gaming machine in the lobby and many were the times on arriving to play in the evening, one would see in the lobby either the late Harry Rowe or Leila with her characteristic blonde beehive hairdo, feeding it with coins. At one time it was stolen by some cheeky burglars. They came, ostensibly to carry out maintenance on the machine and the front door had been held open for them by a club member as they took it onto their awaiting getaway van! The machine was ditched in January 1997.

Christmas Gala Evenings

The last Friday before Christmas week is traditionally the 'Gala evening' presided over by Hylda Townsend. A common format was to meet in the bar for drinks, play bridge from 7.00-10.00 pm and then partake of a simple supper followed by a raffle. The raffle has raised thousands of pounds for charity over the years. A particularly memorable Gala evening was held in 1996 when Jayne and Aidan Crump's daughters, Rebecca and Hannah (who were 9 and 6 years of age at the time) together with a friend Marie, performed an Irish step dance rendered familiar by the 1994 show *Riverdance*. They were dressed in ornately embroidered costumes and danced to the delight of everyone attending.

Proposed Club Extension

In the summer of 1997, the Board chaired by Michael Fisher commissioned a professional valuation of the club building and site. This mounted to £325,000 in favourable circumstances. At this time the Board was also deliberating on the possibility of refurbishing the Club or alternatively seeking a new location. We were already under notice to improve the catering arrangements for reasons of health and safety.

In October 1998, the architects Michael Edwards Associates were asked to survey the club site and produce a feasibility scheme based on the club's requirements. Two planning permissions were sought and obtained; the first for an additional bedroom for the stewards flat and the second for an extension at the rear of the building. This scheme comprised card rooms at ground and first floor levels replicating the 1980's extension together with toilets, office, and store and with a lift, rear entrance and staircase. The plans were displayed for members' information and at an EGM in May 1999 the Board obtained approval to proceed with this scheme which was to be funded by debentures Michael Edwards attended and responded to members' questions.

Club Management Structure

Also in November 1997, Michael Fisher first drew attention of the need for reform of the management structure of the club; he recommended the setting up of sub-committees with set responsibilities, which he outlined. They would have authority for initiating activity within certain financial constraints and without the necessity to continually approach the Board for approval. The sub committees were identified as Bar, Bridge, Social, Building (House) and Finance. All would include a member of the Board - not necessarily as chair. This important issue would not be revisited until 2003-4

Friendly International: England v Ireland

In Feb 1998, WMBC hosted a friendly international with 30 players from Ireland. Members of the Irish and English teams stayed with members of the WMBC over a weekend. One member recalls vividly the somewhat intense bridge conversations over breakfast of two of England's top internationals while another remembers the generosity of the Irishman staying with him who gave him (well his wife actually) a beautiful Waterford crystal decanter.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

Foreign Exchange Visits.

Visits to France started in the second half of the 1980's. The idea came from David and Adèle Ross. David, Belgian by birth, married Adèle an English girl from Solihull. They were both good bridge players and emigrated to the region of Amiens in Northern France because of David's work. WMBC were invited to send a party of players for a weekend of Bridge with players from several clubs in the Amiens region. The weekend base was the pleasant small town of Péronne in Picardy, members dredging up their school French with varying degrees of success and the French people practising their school English with a similar success rate.

In May 1986, fifty two French bridge players from Picardy came to a weekend mini-congress held at WMBC and stayed at the George Hotel. They visited Warwick castle followed by a pub lunch and a Swiss teams event on the Saturday evening. A visit to Mary Arden's house was arranged on Sunday followed by lunch at Marion's and bridge later.

There were three visits to France and two visits by the French to WMBC. In France, WMBC members were given a very warm welcome and generous hospitality. One such trip was to the railway carriage in the Forest of Compiègne where the 1918 Armistice Treaty was signed by the Allies. Other trips included St Quentin and Chantilly. After 4-5 years of these exchanges Adele and David moved (subsequently returning to Solihull) and the exchanges stopped. However in 2006 Some of Steve Byrne's friends from Normandy came in 3 cars over a Weekend and Steve plays Bridge annually in Normandy

Marion was anxious to arrange similar exchange visits with German players from the Club in Elmshorn, (pronounced Emms-horn) a small town some 23 miles north of Hamburg. Their first visit to Solihull was in October 1993. Return visits by WMBC were made in 1996 and in 1998. Roderic Walkington was closely involved in organising the visit to Solihull in 1997 and the return visit to Germany in 1998. About 32 people signed up in 1999 when John Robbins organised the German trip.

The key organising members of the German club were Karl Heinz and Renate Schrade. They now live in Tenerife and the German exchange has now been replaced by an annual WMBC visit to Tenerife by WMBC.

Club Matters and the Involvement of Bryants

In autumn 1998, an advanced session of Bridge was initiated and run by John Robbins which ran until December 2002. It attracted many good players and was appreciated by many including the author (a definitely weaker player) but it eventually folded due to an unfortunate lack of support.

The following year, a number of house and office improvements were made. The bar area had been redecorated at the end of 1997 but now the main card room windows were replaced and upstairs and downstairs extensions were painted. The trees round the car park were thinned and the hedge lowered in response to a spate of car vandalism; a 'Suggestion Box' was introduced four years after it was first mooted in 1995 though it has since been discontinued through lack of use. Smoking was permitted in the bar area only. The reupholstering of seats in the bar area was agreed. A computer committee was set up which included Brent Wormald and Jan Eden. It resulted in the club achieving Email facilities by December and a website domain up and running by July 2000.

On an administrative note, the Club constitution was altered so that, should the club be wound up and in order to prevent carpetbaggers, any surplus after appropriate disbursements would go to charity.

In July 1999, Bryant Homes made an offer for the club site. Michael Edwards Architects was asked to draw up a scheme to be included as a basis for an agreement with Bryant Homes and which would comprise of a two storey building of at least 10,000 sq ft, with a lift and space for 90 cars. A formal valuation was discussed but it was pointed out it was probably of little use since the club was primarily interested in acquiring new premises within a given area.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

Throughout 1999 and the ensuing years, various sites for the possible relocation of the club were put forward, amongst them - Marsh Lane, Moseley Cricket club, Old Edwardians and the Old Silhillians Club. Old Silhillians was the preferred location amongst members but was held to be an unlikely outcome by some at a very early stage. Our neighbours, the Church of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) registered an interest in acquiring the WMBC site and envisaged a swap with their premises on the Warwick Rd.

At the EGM of 16/4/2000 the following resolution was agreed: - *'The directors be empowered, at their discretion, to grant to Bryant Homes an option to purchase the club's existing premises on the following terms*

1. *option fee to be £90,000*
2. *option period to be 2 years*
3. *Exercise price to be satisfied by provision of alternative premises within 1.5 miles of existing premises to specifications agreed by the Board (with residual capital sum dependent upon such specification)'*

In October 2000, Bryants were now ready to sign the Option Agreement and accept total responsibility for negotiations with Marie Curie Homes as there was and remains a covenant which gives them the right to approve any development of the 909 site.

Annual subscriptions were increased by £5.00

EBUonline

In April 2000, the EBU formed an online Bridge Club called EBUONLINE. Louise Payne decided to join as it gave her an opportunity to play with her friend who lived in Newcastle. The club manager was Barrie Partridge, an EBU National Tournament Director. All members had an alias. Louise was *Lou P* and Barrie was *Pig Trader* - an anagram of his surname.

Many new friendships and bridge partnerships were forged which were cemented further by the formation of an email discussion group where bridge was discussed daily and much banter and teasing took place.

One sleepless night Louise thought 'Wouldn't it be a good idea to meet each other face to face (f2f) and play some bridge at WMBC it being such an ideally central venue'. She sent an email the following morning to the group and was met with a resounding "YES" and thus the first 'Online f2f Congress' was underway. Louise organised the monies, liaised with Jayne regarding catering, made alias name tags and a date was set in January 2001. On-line bridge players came from all over the country.

Thus the first ever EBU on-line Christmas party was slated for Sunday Jan 14th 2001 at WMBC. The day dawned and Barrie and Louise awaited member's arrival in the hallway. Each put on their name tag and went into the bar. As they stood in the hall, they could both hear the squeals of delight as people met up with bridge partners that they had never seen before but partnered regularly. Expressions of "You look exactly as I imagined" or "You look nothing like I imagined" were common. Louise had played regularly with a man from Wiltshire, who was called Corby. Although elderly, he was teased that he was really young and virile and they nicknamed him 'Medallion Man' which he took in good part. Everyone trooped into a 'Christmas' lunch which was Jayne's usual gorgeous fare and everyone was stunned by it.

The party then went upstairs for two sessions of bridge; the tournament director was Barrie and the scorer (using her laptop - a novelty in those days) was Anne Jones - Chairman of the Laws and Ethics Committee of the Welsh Bridge Union. To say the bridge was light-hearted was an understatement with lots of banter and joking from table to table as hands were played. Cries of "You are supposed to be playing bridge, not enjoying yourselves" were heard and jokes shouted out to friends at the other end of the room. Despite this, the standard of bridge was good! They broke for tea and Corby was presented with a medallion as 'Medallion Man' which raised the roof to what by all accounts was already a hilarious affair. The sight of this eighty three year-old man with his shirt undone to the waist and sporting a medallion, playing bridge

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

after tea was almost too much to bear and everyone who arrived at his table couldn't play for laughing.

The prizes were presented by Barrie. Corby donated the Corby Cup and Louise donated the Lou P Shield. Another online congress was held the following year, this time a much more official affair organised by the EBU, but nothing took the place of the wonder, laughter and enjoyment of that first get-together which EBU online members still talk about to this day.

Payment of Tournament Directors

Directors for special events have always been remunerated but it was during 2001 that payment was introduced for hosts and directors for ordinary evening sessions. The payment for tournament director's was to be £20 and for the host £10 per evening. It was to start on Feb 1st 2001 for a three month trial period.

Many members were unhappy with this development; John Weston in particular was saddened by the proposal and spoke strongly against it. By May, this had been amended to the host not paying table money while it was decided that tournament directors for routine weekly club sessions would not be remunerated. However according to the Board minutes of Sep 2nd 2001, payment of directors for Tuesdays & Fridays was still in place. In the summer of 2002, the conditions for payment of tournament director's (should they wish to claim it) was amended in that the results must be available within 10 minutes of the end of the session.

Those tournament directors that played could claim a sum of £10 if they wished to do so plus a free evening. They would be expected to score up the event as quickly as possible. The tournament director for Tuesday and Friday evenings was expected to provide the results in a format that could be displayed at the club and uploaded onto the website. Their partner would not pay table money.

It was two years later in November 2003 when payment of tournament director's was finally rescinded except for major club competitions; only county-approved directors were to be used for two session club events.

Relocation of WMBC and other Club Concerns

During 2001, Bryants (*Taylor Woodrow took over Bryants in January 2001 but retained the Bryants homes trademark*) were in discussion with Marie Curie with respect to the relocation of the Warren Pearl Hospice next door and which delayed finalising the Option Agreement. Hearing of the Club's possible move, the EBU chair approached the club in order to explore the possibility of relocating their offices to Solihull, renting our proposed new clubhouse for some international tournaments, sharing offices with the WMBC and with WMBC being able to use the title '*WMBC home of the National Bridge Centre*'. The EBU required 5000 sq. ft. of office space and 2500 sq. ft. for storage. The proposed clubhouse would accommodate 64 tables. Additional building costs would be £220,000 and overheads about £10,000. The idea was explored further though it was thought unlikely a site of sufficient size would be found to accommodate the EBU and the WMBC. It was essential that building costs were met by the WMBC so that there would be no dispute over ownership in the future and that the EBU be asked to provide the extra overheads plus room hire charges. John Weston stated that it was important that the WMBC retained its name and responsibility for all that took place on the site, however it was thought that planning permission would not be forthcoming if there were EBU offices on site.

In July the Board agreed that the Chair be authorised to sign the Option Agreement between Bryants and WMBC with respect to the relocation of the club premises.

Also in mid 2001, Roy Moore agreed to act as financial advisor to the Board, Bridge Management services were given a year's contract for provision of administrative services and a Duplimate dealing machine was purchased for use on Tuesday and Friday evening duplicate sessions. The table money was increased from £2.00 to £2.50 in 2001 but stayed at £2.00 for Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. Members were allowed to use the car park for short-term parking. Steve Lapworth kept up the pressure about the web-site being out-of-date while to combat an outbreak of 'Bridge rage', the Board produced a notice to try and discourage the increasing unsportsmanlike trend to argue with tournament directors and not accept their rulings.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

The End of an Era

On Nov 27th 2001, Marion Murtagh died. She had been extremely generous to the club paying for many of the furnishings and club celebrations from her own pocket. It was decided that the President's Cup be renamed the Marion Murtagh Cup in her honour and John Weston, the half-brother of her former husband Bill Powell, became Life President.

Final Signing of the Option Agreement and other Matters

In February 2002 concern over the deterioration of the fabric at 909 was sufficient for the Board to sanction the refurbishment of the entrance hall; smoke and heat detectors were also installed. In May, Alan Bailey had the Bridge cartoons framed that adorn the bar walls, in part for the Queen's golden jubilee celebrations. At this time it was confirmed that ex-members of the School of Bridge could join the Bridge circle. Only ex-members of the School of Bridge could attend Thursday evening sessions and Monday evening upstairs sessions.

After over a year of discussion regarding clarification of the Option Agreement, Michael signed it on behalf of the club on 22 March; however Taylor Woodrow were reviewing the agreement and the option fee was still on deposit with Bryant's solicitors; in August, Bryants finally added their signature to that of Michael Fisher and a £90,000 cheque was given to WMBC's solicitors. It was stipulated that any site offered must be within 1.5 miles of the existing club. Preliminary discussions then took place between Bryants and the local planning authority for the siting of the WMBC clubhouse on the old Sillhillians ground. It was clear that the Old Sillhillians were unenthusiastic.

A new bar till was purchased which provided receipts for the first time and a year later it was reprogrammed enabling two tier prices to be registered -one for visitors and the other for members.

A first attempt at a relaunch of a newsletter was distributed. An earlier attempt had been made in the summer of 1994 when Tony Poole produced one which ran for about 18 months and included interesting hands. This latest newsletter, started by Larry Sayer was produced on occasions during the next 2 years to help to reduce criticism from the membership of not being kept informed. Encouragingly, a 50% response to a questionnaire distributed by Larry Sayer indicated that 22 members expressed an interest in helping the club in some capacity or another. The questionnaire also revealed that 60% of the membership had started through the School of Bridge - that most play once or twice a week - that Duplicate is the preferred vehicle for playing Bridge and that the facilities were generally thought to be good, with the exception of the chairs and the heating/cooling system. The catering was thought to give the club an enviable reputation.

During 2002, the EBU issued a 'national development plan' for nationwide discussion the main thrust of which was creating business partnerships with those with a common interest. Some interesting statistics from Terry Collier, the general manager of the EBU at this time, indicated that it was estimated that there were 1,000,000 bridge players in England; 90,000 played in affiliated clubs of whom 30,000 were EBU members. Mr Collier later left the employ of the EBU because he had been soliciting support for a rival national Bridge association amongst EBU staff.

Wireless connections for scoring were discussed within the Board but it was recognised that it would have to wait until the future direction of the club was settled. The '*Bridgemate*' scoring system whereby scoring is done at the Bridge table was further discussed in Oct 2006 but was put on hold until the refurbishment was complete and the financial situation was more clear.

Comments regarding the poor lighting in the main card room led to new lights being introduced in March 2003.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

Reform of Club Structure

There had been a mood growing over several years (starting with the questionnaire in May 1995), that reform was necessary, long overdue and that there needed to be greater consistency within the club. It was at this time (April 2003) that the management Committee was asked to produce a document outlining their role. The issue over the lack of clear remits for the management Committee and its associated sub-committees had been raised by Michael Fisher in 1999 and was now addressed by a Working party set up by the Board to execute a terms of reference document. The review was undertaken by Larry Sayer and Norman Selwyn. A document was submitted and indicated (amongst a number of points) that the Management Committee felt it should have some autonomy for small sums of money. It also felt there was a great deal of experience amongst the membership for dealing with some of the planning and developments required in the future. The Board felt that the Management Committee was responsible for matters relating to the playing of Bridge including tournaments, organising social events, suggesting repairs & maintenance and running and stocking of the bar. It made only recommendations where there were financial implications. The Board suggested that the remits of the sub-committees be drawn up in order to flesh out a future structure for the club from these documents. This document was tabled in May/June and the Chairs of the House, Social and Tournament sub-committees edited it. The paper was discussed extensively, going backwards and forwards between Board and Management Committee throughout 2005 until a final draft was ratified by the Board in February 2006.

House Matters and the Two EGMs that Considered the Relocation of the WMBC

The bar was redecorated in May 2003 but external redecoration was postponed until the possible relocation was settled. Figures in June showed bar profits down 15%, membership down 10%, room hire down 45% and expenses up 15%. It was agreed to institute a bar tariff with members enjoying a discount while the Saturday supper price was increased to £7.00 (including coffee) for members and £9.00 for non-members. It was also agreed that the sub-committees could commit items of expenditure of up to £500 without prior reference to the Board but the items must always be arranged through the treasurer. The board authorised the purchase of a Personal Address system at £340 for the use of room hirers and tournament director's.

It became apparent that Bryants were unable to find a site that complied with the option agreement's requirements, the 1.5 mile limit being the problem. A firm proposal to relocate at Cranmore House, the former offices of Bryants, was offered. Plans were displayed prior to an EGM in August.

On 3rd August 2003, an EGM was held to vote on the proposal that 909 relocate at Cranmore house off Cranmore Boulevard. 119 members attended. Alan Pagett outlined a history of the project starting with the agreement in 1999 that it was necessary to renovate and modernise the club premises. There had been problems of repeated flooding due to sewer blockages and also problems with the electrics and central heating system. The kitchen was inadequate and there were few facilities for the disabled. Plans drawn up to rectify these failings as well as to increase the bridge playing areas had been estimated at just over £250,000. A few months later, an unsolicited approach from Bryant's was received wishing to purchase our site and build a new clubhouse for us within a mile radius on freehold land. At an EGM held on April 16th 2000, the Board was authorised by the members to negotiate with Bryant's. An Option Agreement was subsequently signed in 2002 and the fee of £90,000 was received. Various sites had been suggested including Dog Kennel Lane and the Blythe Valley estate. The favoured location of the Old Silhillians had fallen through as planning permission was not forthcoming. The site now proposed was at Cranmore Drive adjacent to Cranmore house Shirley. It was freehold but some 1.9 miles away. Cranmore House was to be demolished and a clubhouse built plus residential accommodation. Existing planning approval was for industrial use. If this was not acceptable to members we would have to stay on the current site.

As discussion progressed it was obvious that members did not have sufficient information either about the site or the financial implications to make an informed decision. The EGM was adjourned until November to enable more information and revised site plans to be obtained from the developers.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

During the period between the EGMs, Bryants received planning permission for the freehold Cranmore site and a planning sub-Committee consisting of Roy Moore, Michael Fisher and Larry Sayer was formed to attend meetings with Bryants. Meanwhile Pat Wells updated the 1999 estimate for extension and other works which came to £331,000. At this time there was understandable frustration at all levels that the club was not progressing. This was in part due to a combination of the necessarily protracted negotiations over the club's future, the associated work and research involved in assessing the offers of a number of developers and the deteriorating fabric of the building.

On the podium at the EGM on Nov 9th 2003 held at Bushell Hall in Solihull School was a panel consisting of the President Michael Fisher, the Chair of the WMBC - Roy Moore, Norman Selwyn, Ian Yarwood auditor and Andrew Taylor of Taylor Woodrow.

130 members attended having received details of the proposal and costings. There was a specific 'Question and Answer' session followed by a general forum followed by a vote.

It was explained that if the new clubhouse was built more than a mile away from 909, then WMBC would keep the money under the Option Agreement; if it was within a mile, WMBC would return it. The value of land at the Cranmore site was £750,000/acre. Security and crime fears were raised. The estimated completion date was Aug 2005. There were thoughts that if we stayed at 909, WMBC may lose members because of the severe disruption arising from the refurbishment. Pat Wells felt it could be done for less money and with minimal disruption. Norman Selwyn stated the four year delay was not the fault of the Board but that, in order to act in the best interests of the Club, the board was obliged to discuss all the options presented by all developers expressing an interest.

The proposal now was to move into existing premises at Cranmore Boulevard where it was later intended to build four apartment blocks containing ninety-six flats. A club house and steward's house would be provided, all fees paid and security parking for one hundred cars would be provided. The club would be provided with £410,000 in cash in addition to the £90,000 from the option agreement.

The advantages of moving were that we would have a purpose-built, fully secured, two storey clubhouse with a total area of 9600 sq ft. - a ground floor with bar, kitchen, restaurant and conference room; a first floor devoted to bridge playing with a personal address system, full extract ventilation system and facilities for automatic scoring with table top keypads. There would be money in the bank of approximately £500,000 for developing the club and it would not be necessary to raise subscriptions or table money and therefore the further envisaged funding of about £200,000 would not be required. There would also be no disruption to members in their use of the club as bridge facilities would be available at all times.

The disadvantages of moving were that the club would be on the outskirts of Solihull rather than the centre with the general ambience being less attractive; income from car parking would be lost and there could be less car parking spaces. The catchment area round Cranmore was already served by three bridge clubs and the ensuing competition would be mutually disadvantageous.

Rejection of the Move to Cranmore House

The resolution that *'the board of directors be empowered at their discretion to accept a proposal from Taylor Woodrow Ltd that the new clubhouse and steward's house detailed in the Option Agreement be located at Cranmore Drive Shirley adjacent to Cranmore house'* was defeated by 153 to 73.

Following this decision, the Board were prevented from progressing formally until the expiry of the option agreement in August. Unable to provide an acceptable site for a new club, Taylor Woodrow came back with a scheme to develop the existing site.

Consequences

With the rejection of the Cranmore plan it was necessary to effect a reduction in expenses and increase revenue. There were a number of concerns viz. income from table money had been decreasing for several years, room hire income was going down, there had been increased

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

costs of Match points from 34 to 36p in mid-October and there had been a decline in the numbers of those training in the School of Bridge. In late 2003, the Finance Committee took steps to:-

- Eliminate the Bridge diary subsidy
- Cancel the advert in the EBU magazine costing WMBC £660 / annum
- Rescind the payment to tournament directors for ordinary club sessions but allow tournament directors and their partners a free evening
- Discontinue from April 1st 2004 the costly (£1500/annum) and time-consuming effort of producing envelope prizes. Interestingly Wynne Lewis argued for abandoning envelope prizes as long ago as 1996 at a Management Committee meeting.
- Terminate the contract with Bridge Management Services.
- Suspend Sunday evenings which attracted too few tables.

In addition, the board wished to achieve greater consistency throughout the club and to this end:-

- The membership of the Club and bridge circle was reviewed and the two tier system of membership was abolished after the AGM in September 2004
- Table money fees and subscriptions were made consistent throughout WMBC from January 2004.
- Anticipating the government's proposal to institute a smoking ban in public places in 2004, smoking was banned in the club from January 1st 2004
- Bridge circle members were entitled to match points from 1st April 2004
- All Monday evening and Thursday evening sessions (previously Bridge Circle) were to become regular club evenings from April 1st 2004
- Thursday morning sessions were to be brought within the ambit of the WMBC Education policy. Discussions were started with Margaret Armstrong about the future of the School of Bridge.
- It was agreed to make the Visitor's fee of £3.50 standard throughout club but for reasons not clear, this was not achieved until Jan 2007. Also the subsidy to Thursday mornings was not ended until August 2007
- Efforts were made to avoid the substantial concern of the Social Committee regarding the unilateral cancellation of social calendar dates.

In January 2004, Larry Sayer, Roy Moore and Pat Wells formed a planning Committee and preliminary estimates for refurbishment were provided of £377,000 for building work and alterations specified by the club.

Continued Pressure from Developers and Lack of Board Unanimity

Taylor Woodrow then proposed a five storey building comprising thirty apartments and a ground floor bridge club of 7000 sq. ft. with underground parking on the site of 909. The Board was sceptical however because

- WMBC would have to relocate to another site for eighteen months
- there was insufficient parking provision
- there were financial considerations
- the probability that a mixed development may not be successful

The alteration of the terms of Taylor Woodrow's interest again meant the Board had to consider it seriously. One of the concessions was to use the Cranmore facility as a temporary WMBC during the build. Cala estates were also interested and asked for details of requirements while in April, Ross Estates also joined the list of developers interested in the site.

There was now concern that negotiations with other developers would jeopardise the Option Agreement which was due to expire on Aug 1st 2004 but the high maintenance cost of the existing building was a key factor in the Board's considerations.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

In Aug 2004, Ross developers presented a plan for the site involving eight town houses and two maisonettes with the Bridge Club in the middle. There would be parking for forty six cars. It was during this time that the Board became fundamentally split as to how best to proceed.

In early 2005, Ross developments submitted further proposals but the Board was concerned about the proposals on both legal and commercial grounds. There were fundamental disagreements over car-parking, financial liability, planning permission, collegiate decision-making and contradictory legal advice over an exclusivity agreement. To resolve the situation, an EGM was scheduled for June 12th 2005 with the resolution "*That the Board if Directors of WMBC Ltd be authorised to proceed with further negotiations with Ross Developments Ltd in accordance with the documents and information enclosed.*"

However the complicated issues referred to above still required clarification; there was substantial professional advice not to proceed and in the event, the EGM scheduled for May 22nd did not take place as Ross Developments withdrew their involvement.

The refurbishment scheme was now the only option and it was agreed to go ahead with the conversion and upgrading of the existing building. Architect plans were requested and specifications obtained and costed. Tenders were sent out to three building contractors with work scheduled to start in September 2005 and finish in March 2006.

Increasing Revenue

Further efforts were made to increase revenue:-

- Annual subscriptions were increased to £30.00 and £15 for social/country members.
- Married couple subscriptions were discontinued from the same date.
- Circle members were reclassified as full members following amendments to the Articles of Association and subscriptions were increased to £30 from September 2004.
- The School of Bridge would continue with Thursday evening rubber bridge sessions but a time limit was now imposed on how long students were allowed to play in this section.
- Room hire charge was increased to £40.00 for the University of the Third Age
- The monthly charge for car parking was put up to £40.00.
- A charge of £50 was made for each bridge catering function.

Housekeeping Tasks

Housekeeping tasks also kept the club busy and areas of concern for action by the House Committee were the antiquated heating system, boiler room clutter, the garage, exposed cables, office security, a wonky handrail to the entrance and leakages. Trees growing on the boundary with the church were also causing problems. All of these were dealt with by the autumn.

During the summer, changes to the Articles of Association were made to the effect of increasing the number of members to which the company proposes to be registered to 800. There would continue to be between 5-7 directors who would serve for 3 years and be eligible for re-election. The president would have voting rights at Board meetings. The attention of tournament director's was drawn to ensuring visitors sign the visitor's book.

The website was upgraded as there was a wish for a historical record of results and also that the results should be available on line within 24h. This was carried out successfully by Jan Eden.

It was agreed that those who attended the School of Bridge classes would be able to attend Monday & Thursday evenings until their annual subscriptions became due the following year. The need to look into attracting youngsters to Bridge was also a concern. Alan Pagett did his bit by conducting intermediate bridge classes at Copt Heath Golf club which turned out to be a great success and at least four attendees later became WMBC members.

During January 2005 the board sent £500 to the Asian Tsunami Appeal.

Resignation of the Club Secretary and other Matters.

In January 2005, Norman Lawrenson resigned the club secretaryship – a tremendously onerous post which he had carried out with distinction for several years. There was now a

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

need for extra help in the secretarial and financial areas of the club. Up to this point, the Club secretary and Company secretary posts were combined and the person responsible also looked after the membership. It was suggested that these duties be split; Larry Sayer agreed to be Company secretary until the AGM and Pat Wells agreed to be membership secretary. Beryl Latham agreed to take on the coordination of office work until a new secretary could be found. Subsequently a number of women club members volunteered for office duties and the club is highly indebted to them for transforming the office. At the time of writing they are Christine Begg, Mary Currigan, Bridgett Hardstaff, Doreen Havilland, Chris Killeen, Beryl Latham, Pam Leek, Chris Swanston and Myra Twyman. Also, in response to a member's request for somewhere to sit and relax outside, a teak garden bench was installed in front of the club house through the good offices of Margaret Wort. Rumour has it that a certain chocolate labrador is very impressed with it.

Terry Edge became the webmaster and was shown by Margaret Armstrong's son Andrew, how to load results into a new web domain devised by Andrew. Terry also introduced new features to the web site.

Annual subscriptions went up by £5.00 to £35.00.

At this time, there had been a concerted and vociferous campaign for new chairs. Mary Gray, who many will remember, was Chair of the House Committee at this time and had been very persistent in seeking resolution of the chair issue. A questionnaire in January 2004 had revealed that members found the club facilities generally good but with the exception of the chairs (and the heating/cooling system).

The Saga of the Chairs

In March 2005, Mary persuaded the Board that some of the chairs were dangerous and they were discarded. In January 2006 some sample new chairs were introduced for members' comments. This succeeded in eliciting in March a petition signed by 132 members expressing concern about the state of the existing chairs. In April there was a suggestion that replacing the red Rexene (a sort of waterproof imitation leather – very 1950's) chair covering would be sufficient and I think three chairs were so re-upholstered. It was however made very clear that members were unhappy with this suggestion and in July the Club managed to acquire some blue-cushioned armless chairs from a hotel for the princely sum of £3.00 each. However there were still a considerable number of the old Rexene covered chairs left and in Sept 2006 a further four sample chairs were placed in card areas for members' comments and finally in April 2007 one hundred chairs in a chocolate brown material and with arms were ordered. It is a shame that Mary was not around to see her campaign finally bear fruit - she would have been 'tickled pink'. The old Rexene chairs were thrown out with great glee and from the great height of the top of the fire escape to the ground below. I believe Jayne and Aidan were informed not to use the outside door to the bar at this time!

Housekeeping Matters

- Separation was effected of the telephone lines of bridge catering from WMBC
- Japanese knotweed, a notifiable weed, was noted to be present in the grounds
- New insulation was installed to keep the temperature of the beer down.
- Teething problems with the Duplimate machine required new software to be installed
- A safety survey identified a dangerous grade of asbestos in the plant room which was removed in August
- In the autumn, a new style Newsletter was initiated by Chris Killeen which was well received.

In July 2005, the building and refurbishment scheme went out to tender and the board later accepted the tender from RMB maintenance of £512,560. The overall estimated cost of the project was £600,000 to include fees furnishings etc.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

In late summer, the Finance Co. started to make a determined effort to categorise the costs of running the Club. More clarity regarding room hire costs and catering costs was effected by the use of separate invoicing.

The offer from the Church of the Latter Day Saints

In early October 2005, there was an approach from the Church of the Latter Day Saints to occupy the 909 site by effecting a straight swap with their offices at 751 Warwick Rd. (between Solihull school and the new Women's Institute hall). If WMBC accepted this offer, there were a number of positives. There would be lower maintenance costs, no need to borrow large sums of money, large open rooms which could accommodate 40-50 tables on one storey, full air conditioning and double glazing. The site was secure with gated access and egress. There would be a shorter time scale of completion and the site would still be in the town centre. The negatives were, car parking for only 52 cars; no accommodation for the stewardess and family, no bar or kitchen facilities and the rates were likely to be high. There would be legal and associated costs to bring the building up to bridge club standard.

The Board had to consider these issues and the contractor was reluctantly put on hold. Later in December, the Church of the Latter Day Saints offered to buy the 909 site for £1.5 million with no exchange now being considered. The offer was later declined.

Back to the Saga of the New Club House and a Further Two EGMs.

An EGM took place on 25th September at the West Warwickshire Sports and Social Club. The resolution before the meeting was to extend the club and refurbish. A positive vote would commit the club to upgrading WMBC viz repointing, reroofing, window replacement, chair replacement, redecoration throughout, carpet replacement, installing air cooling, upgrading kitchen and installing a lift and disabled toilet. A financial estimate had been prepared and the total cost would be in the region of £600,000 leaving a shortfall of £320,000. The work was to start on November 1st 2005 and take 36 weeks.

The proposal that the board proceed with the extension and refurbishment was passed by 123 to 41 against and the proposal that the board be authorised to raise £350,000 by the issue of redeemable stock was passed by 119 to 41.

Pat Wells was nominated as the single point of contact between the club and the contractor - RMB maintenance and the proposed starting date was the second Monday in November.

At a further EGM held on Dec 4th 2005, the chairman Roy Moore reported that the offer from LDS had fallen through and the only option other than the agreed refurbishment was to consider building a new club on the site of 909 and he requested further time to consider this possibility. This was agreed by votes of 167 for to 84 against.

The board's mandate was thus either to:-

- pursue and bring to fruition the building of new club premises in the existing car park **or**
- proceed with building the rear extension and carry out a full refurbishment as detailed and presented at the last AGM.

It was agreed that Pat and Larry should follow up these issues with a professional planning engineer Richard Cobb; Graham Fairley, a member of the Club, also gave of his advice and expertise.

The new club house option was eventually abandoned since planning permission would have been problematic and the number of car parking spaces reduced. This left only the refurbishment scheme which had been costed at £600,000. However Pat Wells was convinced it could be done more cheaply and he produced a revised and less expensive proposal for the refurbishment. He proposed retaining the existing step in the first floor levels, foregoing male toilets at the first floor level and providing unisex toilets for the disabled at both floor levels; also by omitting the extra bedroom in the steward's flat, a considerable amount of alteration work in the old house would no longer be required. Apart from the considerable cost saving it became clear that with careful organisation, bridge could continue in the club throughout the construction period, thereby minimising revenue loss. The kitchen facility would only have to close down for a 5 week period.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

On May 26th 2006, the Board approved the proposal to go ahead with this cheaper option costing about £400,000. Thankfully it was decided that the convening of yet another EGM was unnecessary and steps were taken to raise money from members by means of a loan note scheme which was brought to fruition by Norman Lawrenson and Peter Court.

As the nature of the building work had changed substantially, fresh tenders were sought and RMB were again successful. The reroofing was to be done separately by Jayne's husband Aidan while the redecoration, new windows, recarpeting and new lighting was dealt with by the Board.

Other Matters in Early 2006

- A group of about a dozen French people was to be invited in March 2006
- £800 was raised for charity from the Christmas gala
- Fly parking was becoming a problem and so coloured car windscreen stickers were introduced for members for the first time in the year 2006-2007
- The terms of reference for the Management Committee were ratified by the Board.
- The Board accepted a proposal for an *Answering machine / call diversion system* to increase efficiency and avoid disruption of the WMBC office because of catering queries
- A meeting of the Management Committee and the Board was proposed for February 26th with a view to pooling ideas for the future of the Club.
- Car parking charges were increased by 25% from May 1st 2006
- Bars were fitted to the windows of the office following a break-in.

Two stalwarts of the Club left - Jim Moyden who was like gold to the House Committee, went to the North of England and Steve Lapworth went to Australia after many years directing the Saturday afternoon session. Norman Lawrenson took over Steve's role of directing on Saturday afternoons.

EBU's BB@B initiative

The EBU's new rules on alerting and announcing came into force on Aug 1st 2006 and were communicated to members as was another useful document, the alliterative 'Best Behaviour at Bridge'. The latter document, fully supported by WMBC, was introduced by the EBU to make Bridge more enjoyable for all players and to combat the increasing tendency of a very small minority of players who made the experience for others at the bridge table an uncomfortable one. The friendly guide they issued was to:-

- Greet others in a friendly manner prior to start of play on each round.
- Be a good 'host' or 'guest' at the table.
- Make your convention card readily available to your opponents and fill it out completely.
- Make bridge enjoyable for yourself, partner and opponents.
- Give credit when opponents make a good bid or play.
- Take care of your personal grooming.
- Ensure that your mobile phone is turned off.
- Enjoy the company as well as the game.

Sportsmanship though not referred to directly in the document was nevertheless implicit in the guide.

Pulling Together

In May 2006 the Chair, Roy Moore, addressed the Management Committee putting forward his view on the future development of the club and indicated we now had an opportunity to end dissension in the club and to move forward. The Board united around the refurbishment and extension scheme proposed by Pat Wells and a resolution that *'the board of WMBC should with immediate effect set in motion the necessary steps to carry out a refurbishment and extension of 909 Warwick Road based on the plans recently prepared and discussed'* was passed unanimously.

The Management Committee minutes of June 2006 recorded that the prolonged gestation period between planning and implementation had enabled all critical issues to be discussed

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

thoroughly allowing a less expensive but good plan to emerge. Tendering was to take place in July and August with work on the main contract starting on 16th October 2006.

In detail the work involved:-

- A platform lift to be installed
- Kitchen closure for 4-6 weeks to enable the upgrade to be effected
- A second entrance for the disabled at the rear of the club which meant no gutting of the hall and staircase was required.
- An accessible disabled unisex toilet on the first floor, ladies' toilets on both floors and a gents' toilet downstairs.
- Four new match rooms.
- The existing downstairs gents' toilets to be removed for the kitchen extension
- Reroofing to be done
- The sycamore tree between the WMBC and the church to come down
- Reduction of the tall chimneys
- Replacement of windows
- Carpet replacement and redecoration throughout
- Installation of air cooling equipment
- A report on the electrical network
- Disposal of the garage

The Gold room was used as an office throughout the duration of the new build and refurbishment.

Briefing meetings were held every Wednesday to review progress throughout the project. The builders partitioned the car park for their work compound using the Hampton Lane thoroughway as exit and entrance. The electrical report showed that while rewiring was unnecessary some remedial electrical work needed to be done and modular fluorescent luminaires were installed.

During the building/refurbishment there was, contrary to expectation, surprisingly little disruption to the club though there were no kitchen facilities for a month and members had to remember to bring their own drinks. While the men's toilets were out of action, a Portaloo was made available outside the front entrance for the duration of the building programme.

An interior design consultant was asked to advise on curtain fabrics, colours, carpets, furniture, and window blinds. This included the bar area, however the redecoration of the bar area was later postponed. After the handover date of March 30th, the carpeting was completed, the drapes and fabric patterns decided and the redecorating started. A hundred chairs were ordered. The overall inclusive cost of the project was £500,000 of which £221,000 was raised from members in £500 lots, the balance being available from the Club's accumulated funds.

Club Restructuring

In October 2006, Roy Moore asked Edward Legg to produce a paper on the structure and function of the Management and Working Committees. Previous discussions (detailed above) over the terms of reference of the Management Committee and its working sub-Committees had led inevitably to fundamental questions about the way in which the club was structured and administered. Communications within the club were recognised as being complex, inefficient, inappropriate and out-of-date.

The papers were produced, merged into a single paper by Margaret Wort and on 4th Feb 2007 the Board met with the Management committee to discuss the structure, function and responsibilities of both the Board and the Management Committee. Peter Court then became Chair of the Management Committee and the Board agreed to allow the Management Committee three months to establish a new framework of operation. Three months later in May 2007, the Management Committee was disbanded and replaced by a Club Committee later renamed Members Forum.

The structure introduced for the working Committees was and remains as: - *Bar, Bridge, Education and Training, House and Social Committees*. The *Finance Committee and Laws and Ethics Committee* are populated from either Board members or by powers of co-option. Peter Court was co-opted onto the finance committee in July 2006 and became Chair in December 2006. It was noted that the initial estimate for extension and refurbishment had risen and that

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

there was a need for more rigorous budgeting. The Board asked for a revenue plan and subsequently, Peter Court tabled a business strategy and plan. It recommended more tuition, positive attempts to increase membership, increasing prices to outside bodies, revisiting room hire fees and booking processes and looking at all items of expenditure; specifically:-

- The collection of table money was tightened up.
- Zip-up plastic wallets were introduced in which to place table money
- A more secure table money storage facility was purchased.
- A second-hand telephone system was purchased from EBay
- A decision was made that there would be no discount for prompt payment that year
- More determined efforts were introduced to ensure people borrowing computer-dealt boards were invoiced.

An attempt by the Management committee to bring Thursday mornings into line with the rest of the club was overruled by the Board and a request from the Health Authority to have a permanent parking space on the site for a mobile scanner unit was turned down.

Changes in Education & Training

October 2006 was clearly a time for producing papers and Chris Killeen was asked to produce a paper on education for consideration by the Board. These concerns had first been raised over two years previously and the issue had lain fallow since the Management Committee had wanted a sub-Committee to consider present and future educational requirements of the club. The Board wanted a director of Bridge Education to be appointed in order to effect this. In April 2007, an Education Committee was formed and its remit ratified by the Board in July. Alan Pagett the chair of the newly formed Education and Training Committee, planned a new Education & Training program which was initiated by the E & T team and was broadly in agreement with 'Standard English' and 'Bridge for All' promoted by the English Bridge Union Teaching Association (EBUTA). Alan introduced extra bridge teaching sessions to be held on Mondays and Tuesdays. White boards were placed in the Gold room and bridge rooms for teaching purposes.

The Tablecloth Story

The celebrations for the opening of the newly refurbished club were approaching and it was decided to get new table cloths for the new bridge room and, if possible, for the whole of the upstairs rooms. Enquiries at the EBU shop indicated an outlay of £900 would be required. John Lewis sold curtain material from which we could make our own but would have cost about the same amount.

Mary Currigan heard about this and said she knew someone who sold material in Birmingham Rag Market. Judith Churchill and Peter Court went to see what they had got and found their 'shop' and warehouse which seemed to specialise in upholstery for Indian restaurants. It contained many rolls of material which would have suited an Indian restaurant but was not suitable for a Bridge Club. After much scratching of heads they produced the material we subsequently bought although Judith and Peter said it was not quite what they were looking for. Peter suspected they were rolls they had had in stock for a number of years. Fortuitously, they had two rolls which totalled exactly the length we were looking for. They were not exactly the same colour but this was used as a bargaining ploy (Peter defies anyone to spot the difference) and they paid just over £100 in cash. The shop assistants carried it to Peter's car before they could change their minds.

Back at the club, more negotiations took place to make the material into the tablecloths needed. It turned out there were three sizes of table. Chris Killeen's sister provided templates; the preferred method was to sew the corners so they would not slip off and stitch a hem to prevent them from fraying. Nobody had scissors up to the job of cutting the material or a suitable sewing machine. Finally, with 3 days to go to the grand opening, Liz Court, Prue Rodger, Mary Currigan and Chris Killeen spent a whole day cutting and another day sewing to produce fifty excellent tablecloths with a day to spare. Peter thinks the thread cost about £10.00 and, with ancillary expenses, the cloths cost the club about £2.00 each rather than the £15.00 they would have cost from elsewhere.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

Peter's suggestion that Liz make a business out of this was, we are assured, firmly rebuffed; they would never get such a good bargain again. But, who knows, when it comes to refurbishing the bar

CELEBRATION WEEK: SUMMER 2007

Carolyn Fisher chaired the Celebration week working Committee; the week was to commemorate the opening of the new extension and refurbishment of WMBC. Prior to the formal reopening of the Club, it was decided that 909 Warwick Road become Marion Murtagh House and a suitable plaque was placed in the entrance porch.

All Carolyn's hard work came to fruition on a very wet June 30th when the Solihull Liberal Democrat MP, Lorely Burt and the Mayor, Councillor Gary Allport attended the opening. This was a remarkable event whereby the Mayor cut the ribbon to the club entrance and Lorely unveiled the plaque under a bevy of brollies. There followed a marvellous meal prepared by Jayne and Margaret Wort welcomed the Mayor, his consort and Lorely. I remember it particularly well, as seated next to Lorely, I had the embarrassment of having to explain a political joke I told her in which I messed up the punch line.

The Celebration week was a great success thanks to many people but particularly to Carolyn Fisher and Darren Evetts.

Miscellaneous Club Matters

- Jean Williams retired after many successful years teaching Bridge to improvers at WMBC.
- Jayne Crump took possession of a new tumble dryer.
- The cellar was noted to be filling with ground water again.
- There had been problems with the telephone contract and progress was made with the purchase of a more up-to-date and flexible telephone system.
- The recently introduced new computer accounting system was also working well.
- Louise Payne took over from Terry Edge as webmaster.
- A tournament director's course was run by Steve Byrne because of a shortage of TD's particularly at the Monday evening bridge sessions
- The ventilation equipment on the West side of 909 was screened off
- Front flower beds were replanted.

Undercurrents

Before continuing this history it might be useful to take a look at some things that never change – the suggestions and complaints received by the Board. Club members want to improve the bridge-playing facilities and the ambience of the club and it is only by listening to members that the club improves. The following is a list of suggestions/complaints which have been made over the years to the Board. It does not aim to be comprehensive and it does not purport to select the most frequent or necessarily the most important. It is introduced to provide an appreciation (if any were necessary) of some of the difficulties associated with the running of a modern high quality bridge club. The list below is also designed to show how the Board and its working committees have listened to the complaints, responded and resolved many of them.

Some N/S seats on a Wednesday afternoon should be reserved for the infirm

Bridge playing room is too hot.

Bridge playing room is too cold.

Play is too slow

Not enough hands are being played

A visitor exhibiting drunken and abusive behaviour.

Non-computer dealt hands to be used

Window is kept open

Window is kept closed

Table cloths look shabby

Overcrowding on Monday and Thursday nights compared with other nights

Noise levels too high

Members are opening and closing windows!

Poor etiquette and unfriendly attitude especially on Tuesday and Friday evenings.

Website not being kept up to date

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

*Lack of rigour in security of office, table money and computer access.
Blackpool movements are not liked
Reservation of places at tables causing difficulties.
Complaints of smells from kitchen.
Members fiddling with the thermostatic valves on the radiators
The Club does not need to expand
There is nowhere to sit outside
Dissatisfaction with running of tournaments
Reserved seats issue for N/S
Concern over late starting*

Though many were resolved successfully, the Wisdom of Solomon could not solve them all.

Overheard in the bar of the WMBC some time between 1970-2007.

Again before returning to the narrative here are a few stories members have told me:-

- 'I have never voted Tory in my life'.
'But Hermione, you know how to use a knife and fork'.
- 'What do you play?'
'Bridge'
- 'I won't be attending the Christmas party because I do not have evening dress'.
'You're not a socialist are you?'
- 'Guess what? A pair of men's trousers has turned up in the lost property but nobody has claimed them'
- Perhaps they belonged to the man who knocked on the door of Jayne & Aidan's flat dressed in his birthday suit. Jayne went to the door and could see this guy who was completely naked and he said 'Oh! I think I have got the wrong house'.
- 'So we were on a Mercian Bridge holiday and a party of Swedish airline staff had flown in to Torremelinos. Some of them wanted to play bridge and were accommodated by Max Powell. An attractive Swedish air hostess with plaited blonde hair was at my table. "Hello, where are you from?" I asked. She said "I am coming from Stockholm". When she put down dummy with beautiful trump support and a singleton ace she said "You like my arce, yes?"'

Further Improvements

During May and the following summer of 2007, further improvements to the club were made in rapid succession:

- Extra notice boards and white boards were fitted;
- 10 new tables were purchased
- The office purchased a new printer.
- A bridge brochure was prepared for the club
- Re-decoration was mostly completed.
- Many of the old wall hanging pictures were sold, amongst them images of flowers, coloured silhouettes, French cathedrals and also the bizarre inclusion of a pre-1947 map of the British Empire that used to hang in the bar.
- A book exchange was set up through Dennis Heighway's good offices in the match room
- Web pages were updated to provide an extended history of greater than one week.
- '**First for Bridge**' a specialist bridge holiday firm sponsors our web site
- North orientation was standardised throughout the club.
- A new bridge scoring program - 'ScoreBridge' was adopted by WMBC and was a great improvement on the previous 'SCBridge' program.
- The remits of House, Social, Administration, Education/training and Bridge committee were ratified by the board
- The Board gave its blessing to a request to have Marion Murtagh House as the home venue for the WCBA and the Warwickshire pair's events
- A large number of changes were introduced to improve the Articles of Association.
- The School of Bridge and club accounts were merged.

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

- New bridge classes were started for beginners, improvers with additional assisted sessions with Alan Pagett, Beryl Latham, Derek Andrews, Steve Byrne and Martin Ayers.
- Visitors to pay £3.50 in all club sessions including bridge played at the Saturday suppers
- A student database was prepared and set up by the office for Education and Training sessions.
- A weekly office roster was produced
- A new accounting system for diary dates was initiated based on office diary and the use of proformas
- A decision was made to use new web site called Bridge Webs becoming fully functional in 2008
- In November the final settlement of building took place and the first annual draw of loan notes took place at the Gala night in December 2007.

West Midlands Bridge Club Congress 2008

Following the successful 'Celebration Week' after the refurbishment in 2007, it was decided to launch a Bridge Congress in June 2008, the first one for over 20 years. Led by Carolyn Fisher and Darren Evetts, the Club managed to get partial sponsorship for the prizes and had a successful weekend which even made a small profit! It also succeeded in bringing in new members.

The Future

This takes us to mid 2008 and is where this narrative ends. Big challenges remain for the Club. The most immediate is the EBU's scheme for universal membership for members of affiliated clubs via the 'Pay to Play' scheme now agreed by a majority of the shareholders. A more long-term issue will be the consequences of the decision that the Marie Curie Hospice move to the Marsh Lane site and the existing site be offered for redevelopment. Other challenges are retaining and improving upon the club's membership and encouraging others to play Bridge. Meanwhile the quiz nights, introduced and led by Graham Sherlock-Brown, have proved very popular and are great fun. Jayne and her helpers viz. Ellie, Anne, Bobbie, Shelley, Carol, Ted, Joe and of course Hannah and Rebecca, continue to make socialising at the club so enjoyable.

Epilogue

It may be that some members feel that insufficient attention has been given to the immense contributions made by individuals in the early days of this history of the club. An enormous amount of work was done in the nineteen seventies and eighties in order to make the club an enduring success and in this regard, the club owes a huge debt to the School of Bridge. However, while there is widespread recognition by club members of the work that went into making the club a success from the start, it is the more recent events that people tend to remember best. The last few years have seen a resurgence of the energy and enthusiasm that was such a feature of the founding members and which had lain dormant so long pending the difficult decisions affecting the club's future location. The club is especially fortunate in having so many members who are willing to act as unpaid volunteers and give of their time to a game they love and want others to enjoy.

There is no room for complacency however and the current brochure describing the programme of weekly events shows how dynamic the West Midlands Bridge Club continues to be and how it caters for all types of Bridge player. This compilation is a tribute to the West Midlands Bridge Club, it is a tribute to the infuriating and addictive version of what is essentially a game of cards, and it is a tribute to all those members who contribute to the enjoyable club ambience of the playing of bridge at Marion Murtagh House.

E F Legg 30/1/09

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

APPENDICES

Honorary life members

Recommended by the Board with a maximum of 6 at any one time

Pre 2002	Marion Murtagh, C E (John) Weston, Jack Bailey,
2002	Jack Davies
2004	Margaret Armstrong, Michael Fisher, Norman Selwyn, Hylde Townsend,
2008	Roy Moore

Recipients of the Dimmie Fleming Award for Services to Bridge

Pre 1998	Hylde Townsend*
1998	Marion Murtagh
2000	Yvonne Andrews

*Hylde is also one of only 11 Vice-Presidents of the EBU and the only woman Vice-President.

Cup and Competition Winners

Burke Cup: (Men's pairs)

(Presented to the club by Reg Burke Part of the West Midlands Bridge Club Congress since 2008)

1966-67	Dr L Glass	
1967-68	Mr C Keates	
1968-69	Mr R Houghton	
1969-70	Mr S Gore	
1970-71	Mrs M Walker	
1971-72	Mr L Levy	
1972-73	Miss G Hill	
1973-74	J Robbins	
1974-75	K Verma	
1980	Mr P M Feeney	Mr K H Jordan
1981	Mr R N Flood	Mr R A Bowles
1982	J Weston	G Howard
1983	D Hulston	E Powell
1984	C Hall	P Bowkley
1985	R Edwards	N Woosnam
1986	B Wormald	I Johns
1987	E Richart	P Owen
1989	J Sreeves	C Noble
1990	C Hall	P Bowkley
1991	M Fisher	R Harris
1992	R Edwards	P Heatherington,
1994	A Sant	L Reece
1996	N Selwyn	D G Franks
1999	P Oldbury	B Wormald
2000	A Knight	T Poole
2001	Steve Byrne	John Robbins
2002	Adam Wood	David Franks
2003	Lesley Reece	Norman Selwyn

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

2004	Roger Flood	Pip Whitehouse
2005-	Adrian Knight	Leslie Reece
2006	cancelled	
2007	Wynne Lewis	John Cooper
2008	Mark Johnston	John Thoms

James Doyle Memorial Trophy (Open mixed pairs)

(Inscribed October 17 1970 it is known as Doyle Plate and has been part of the West Midlands Bridge Club Congress since 2008)

1971-72	Mrs E Dixon Green	Mr D Collins
1972-73	Mr & Mrs M B Wheeler	
1973-74	Mr & Mrs M B Wheeler	
1974-75	Mr & Mrs A Cohen	
1975-76	<i>No competition</i>	
1976-77	<i>No competition</i>	
1977-78	Miss Y Moffoot	T.D.J. Botting
1978-79	Mrs C Fisher	T.A. Parkes
1979-80	Mrs C Fisher	T.A. Parkes
1980-81	Mrs S Darby	V. Garrod
1981-82	Mrs M Armstrong	G.S. Moffat
1982-83	Mrs M Murtagh	E.J. Armstrong
1983-84	Mr & Mrs D Andrews	
1984-85	Mrs E O Jones	E.J.F. Powell
1985-86	Mrs C E Fenwick	G.N. Orford
1986-87	Mrs A Stockham	J Gooderidge
1987-88	Mrs M Armstrong	R Bowles
1988-89	Mrs A Stockham	J Gooderidge
1989-90	Mrs M Armstrong	R Bowles
1990-91	Mrs I A Bird	K. E. Oddy
1991-92	Mr & Mrs H J Brown	
1992-93	<i>trophy not inscribed. No Competition?</i>	
1993-94	Mrs S Cope	R.S. Edwards
1994-95	Renee Walkington	Geoff Beamond
1995-96	Mrs D Georgevic	P Saings
1996-97	Mrs H Townsend	K Jordan
1997-98	Mrs B Latham	A. L. Wragg
1998-99	Mr & Mrs H McBride	
1999-00	Miss P Braddock	T. A. Parkes
2000-01	Mrs S V Goldman	M Amos
2001-02	Miss P Braddock	T.A. Parkes
2002-03	Mr & Mrs A Rose	
2003-04	Mrs P Booth-Jones	J. T. Jones
2004-05	Mrs P Watson	I Woodward
2005-06	<i>trophy not inscribed. No Competition?</i>	
2006-07	Margaret Wort	Darren Evetts
2007-08	Janet & Tony Cundy	

Founder President's cup (pairs)

1966-67	Mr Foster	Mr Higgins
1967-68	Mrs M Armstrong,	Mr M Levey
1968-69	Mrs M Armstrong,	Mr M Levey
1969-70	Mr R Houghton,	Mrs L Couteur

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

1970-71	Mr N Selwyn,	Mr I Handley
1971-72	Mr F C Keates	Mrs M Murtagh
1972-73	Mr D Ray,	Mr R Seldon
1973-74	Mrs M Armstrong,	Mr M Levey
1974-75	Mr S Gore,	Mr D Davies
1975-76	Mr G F Howard,	Mr C E Weston
1976-77	Mrs J Williams,	Mr M J Willoughby
1977-78	Mrs M Armstrong,	Mrs S Wheeler
1978-79	Mr G F Howard,	Mr R L Harris
1979-80	Mr G Preece,	Mr T A Parkes
1980-81	Mrs M Armstrong,	Mr E S Moffat
1981-82	Mr G F Howard,	Mr R L Harris
1982-83	Mrs M Armstrong,	Mr P Edwards
1983-84	Mr D Hulston,	Mr N Selwyn
1984-85	Mr D Hulston,	Mr N Selwyn
1985-86	Mr D Hulston,	Mr N Selwyn
1986-87	Mr & Mrs O J Bailey	
1987-88	Mrs M Armstrong,	Mr R Harris
1988-89	Mr P Heatherington,	Mr N Selwyn
1990-91	Mr G H Clark,	Mr M Fisher
1991-92	Mr & Mrs P David	
1992-93	Mr C Weale	Mr D Money
1993-94	Mrs M Armstrong	Mr R Harris
1994-95	Mr R Bugg	Mr A Jones
1995-96	Mrs M Murtagh,	Mr B M Fisher
1996-97	Mrs A M Dawson	Mr J Roberts
1998-99	Mrs N McWhirter	Mr A C Poole
1999-2000	Mr A Pagett,	Mr G Beamond
2000-01	Mr & Mrs C Hall	
2001-02	Mr & Mrs D Butt	
2002-03	Mr & Mrs C Hall	
2003-04	Mrs K Mustin	Mrs L Payne
2004-05	Mr R Moore	Mrs A Crow
2005-06	Mr & Mrs A Buck	
2006-07	Pat Gadd	Ros Tulloch
2007-08	Beryl Latham	Albert Bayley

Greswolde Bowl (Swiss Teams)

1971-72	Mr E J Armstrong
1972-73	Mr J Robbins
1973-74	Mr J Robbins
1974-75	Mrs E Doyle, Mrs M Nock, Mr F L Keates, Mr I R M Campbell
1975-76	Mrs J M Davies, Mr G Rosser, Mr & Mrs Spence
1976-77	Mr & Mrs P O'Connor, L Levey, M Porter
1977-78	J D Morris, G R Heather, S K Fishburne, S A R Fowle
1978-79	J D Morris, G R Heather, S K Fishburne, S A R Fowle
1979-80	M J Wilson, M Arrand, S K Fishburne, M Amos
1980-81	Mrs M Armstong, R Bowles, M Airey, M Arrand
1981-82	Mrs M Armstrong, P Abbott, R Jephcott
1982-83	J Collin, D Nelson, R Smith, S Wood
1983-84	M Airey, M Arrand, J Fawcett, S Green
1984-85	M Airey, M Arrand, M Allen, R Bryant
1985-86	Mrs M Armstrong, C Weston, D Cass, S Byrne
1986-87	M Amos, D Williams, G White, S Gore
1987-88	S Byrne, P Chapman, Mrs B Cocen, Mrs L Grounds
1988-89	Mr & Mrs M Fisher, Mr & Mrs C Hall
1991-92	Mrs M Armstrong, G Link, R Bowles, R Harris

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

1992-93	Mrs M Armstrong, G Link, R Bowles, P Whitehouse
1993-94	Mrs S Cope, Mrs N McWhirter, R S Edwards, L Johnstone
1994-95	G Beamond, D Crofts, J Robbins, N Orford
1995-96	M Armstrong, R Harris, R Bowles, P Whitehouse
1996-97	M Armstrong, S Moffat, R Bowles, R Harris
1997-98	J Robbins, G Clark, P Oldbury, B Wormald
1998-99	P Hackett, J Hackett, B Cornelius, S Fenton
1999-2000	L Reece, N Selwyn, Mr & Mrs Morris
2000-01	D Croft, M Meakin, Mrs J Bodin, D Moir
2001-02	C Fisher, B M Fisher, J Hall, A Bayley
2002-03	C Fisher, J Hall, L Reece, N Selwyn.
2003-04	J Robbins, P Oldbury D Kenward S Byrne
2004-05	M Armstrong M Allen, R Bowles P Whitehouse
2005-06	I Handley G Cuthbertson, R Bryant, M Allen
2006-07	L: Reece N Selwyn, D Franks A Knight
2007-08	L Reece, N Selwyn, D Franks, A Knight

909 Cup (Pairs' event)

This cup was donated to the club by Marion and is inscribed the Marion Murtagh Trophy It is a pairs' event held after the AGM.

1992	Brent Wormald & Albert. Bayley
1993	John Robbins & Wynne Lewis
1994	Margaret Armstrong & Larry Sayer
1995	Mary Gray & Barbara Wright
1996	Carolyn Fisher & Brent Wormald
1997	John Robbins & Brent Wormald
1998	Don Brett & Joy Brett
1999	Margaret Armstrong & Larry Sayer
2000	Gordon Clark & Carolyn Fisher
2001	John Sreeves & Evelyn Spicer
2002	Pat Watson & Bill Hood
2003	David Kenward & John Robbins
2004	Mr & Mrs Malcolm Chambers
2005	Larry Sayer & Steve Byrne
2006	Carolyn Fisher & Michael Fisher
2007	Barry Holloway & John Wright
2008	Louise Payne & Pat Gadd, A Knight & P Knight

Ladies Pairs Award

Part of the West Midlands Bridge Club Congress since 2008

2001	Carolyn Fisher & Jane Hall
2002	Carolyn Fisher & June Harris
2003	Margaret Buck & Anne Crow
2004	Anne Carmichael, Gill Adams
2005	Carolyn Fisher & Jane Hall
2006	Cancelled
2007	Dodo Georgevic & B Roberts
2008	Margaret Armstrong & Carolyn Fisher

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

Millennium Cup (Swiss pairs)

Part of the West Midlands Bridge Club Congress since 2008

The Millennium cup was purchased by the club in 1999 and played for in May 1999. It was to be a member's-only cup but when the option to sell and move came on the scene it was diverted to be a major national trophy in 2000.

1999	C Fisher	B Wormald
2000	B Wormald	P Oldbury
2001	Cancelled	
2002	Cancelled	
2003	J Dhondy	K Bennett
2004	D Kenward	J Robbins
2005	J Hall	C Fisher
2006	R Langowsky	J Wernicke
2007	J Wright	B Holloway
2008	Y Andrews	D Andrews

Morgan Cup (teams)

1966-67	Mr Morgan, Mrs Cooke, Mr Weston Mr Foster
1967-68	Mr Campbell, Dr Glynn, Mr Vince, Mr Friswell
1968-69	Mr Campbell, Dr Glynn, Mr Friswell, Mr Ray
1969-70	Mr D Gilbert, Mr W Marston, Miss G Hill, Mrs M Hudson
1970-71	Mr & Mrs Armstrong, Mrs Townsend, Mr Levey
1971-72	Mrs Townsend, Mr E Armstrong, Mr M Porter, Mr L Levey
1972-73	Mr & Mrs E Armstrong, L Levey, L Sayer
1974-75	Mrs J M Davies Mrs E Dixon-Green, Mr D Collins, Mr Rosser
1976-77	Mr & Mrs E Armstrong, R Harris, P Hill
1977-78	Mrs M Armstrong, R Bowles, M Allen, M Airey
1978-79	Mrs E Dixon-Green, N Jones, R Jones, N Malden
1979-80	N Woosnam, J Collin, M Leese, G Hearst
1980-81	G White, A Cundy, S Gore, P Bowkley
1981-82	Mr & Mrs O J Bailey, B M Fisher, E F Powell
1982-83	Mr & Mrs C Hall, P Bowkley, Mrs C Fisher
1983-84	G Preece, T Parkes, M Amos, A Watson
1984-85	A Knight, A Ward, M Airey, G Burke
1985-86	R Edwards, G Burke, M Airey, I Grounds
1986-87	D Crofts, G Clarke, E Powell, M Meakin

No information since 1987

West Midlands Bridge Trophy

1969	Dr & Mrs L A Best, Mr H K Cooke, Mr S G Moffat
1970	Mr & Mrs Armstrong, Mr Airey, Mr Collins
1971	Mr & Mrs Woodward, Mrs E Le Couteur
1972	Mr A Glynn, Mr M Allen, Mr I Handley, Mr R Bryant
1974	Mr & Mrs Harris, Mr S Gore, Mr G Howard
1975	Mr & Mrs Harris, Mr S Gore, Mr G Howard
1976	R J Granvill, P A Jackson, P J Bailey, E F Elsworth

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

Weston Trophy (Swiss Pairs)

The original Trophy went missing and was replaced by John Weston; it was a gift from King Bhumipol of Thailand. It was originally played for as a Teams competition.

1975	Mr R Bryant	Mr M Allen	Mr N Selwyn	Mr R Harris
1976	Mrs B H O'Connor	P V O'Connor	L Levey	P J Baker
1977	Mr B H O'Connor	P V O'Connor	L Levey	M A Porter
1978	Mrs M Armstrong	P Bowles	M Airey	M Allen
1979	J G Pyner	R S Holmes	J E Gooderidge	M Johnstone
1980	Mrs J Fenwick	J Fenwick	N Jones	Mrs E Dixon-Green
1981	Mrs M David	E Armstrong	P Bird	D Crees
1982	A Ottey	Mrs G Burke	D Jones	C Maher
1983	Mrs M Armstrong	P Edwards	D Beavon	R Beech
1984	Mrs C Fisher	Mrs J Hall	C J Hall	P Bowkley
1985	Mrs M Armstrong	M Allen	P Edwards	R Bryant
1987	Mrs G Morris	G Morris	Mrs H Townsend	J Robbins
1988	Mrs Birch	Mr Birch	Mrs Parker	Mr Parker
1989	Mrs E King	P Bower		
1990	P Edwards	D Cass		
1991	P Edwards	D Cass		
1993	Mrs M Armstrong	R Harris		
1994	Mrs E Lang	C Lang		
1995	Mrs S Watton	J Watton		
1996	M Amos	A Knight		
1997	Mrs M Armstrong	L Sayer		
1998	Mrs S Goldman	P Chapman		
1999	S Byrne	J Robbins		
2000	Mrs A Bailey	A Bailey		
2001	Mrs P Watson	W Hood		
2002	A Knight	A Poole		
2003	J Robbins	D Kenward		
2004	J Robbins	D Kenward		
2005	no results could be calculate			
2006	R Bryant	R Langowski		
2007	Mrs E Lang	C Lang		
2008	M Bailey	R Wilson		

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

WMBC Committee 1967 – 1976

1966-73 Ms Marion Murtagh (Chair), Mrs Margaret Armstrong, Mr Percy Thomas (Secretary), Mr Eric Armstrong, Mr Larry N Sayer.

1974-75 M Murtagh (Chair), M Armstrong, L Sayer (treasurer),

1975-76 M Murtagh (Chair), M Armstrong, Robin Ogg (Treasurer),

Directors of WMBC Ltd (1976 – present)

Chairs of Committees who were not board members are in italics

Feb 1976. L N Sayer (Chair), Jack Bailey (Vice chair), Mr Geoffrey F Howard Treasurer, M Murtagh, Mrs Margaret I Walker (secretary). In June 1976, Jack Davies and C E (John) Weston were appointed as additional directors.

1976-77 L Sayer, (Chair), O J Bailey (Vice chair), J Davies, G F Howard Treasurer, Ms M Murtagh, C E Weston, Mrs M I Walker (secretary)

On 10.1.1978 M Murtagh resigned from the board and became life president. Michael Fisher replaced her on the Board

1977-78 M Murtagh (life president), L Sayer (Chair), O J Bailey, J Davies, B M Fisher, G F Howard, C E Weston. M Walker (secretary)

1978-79 Marion Murtagh (life president), O J Bailey (Chair), J Davies, B M Fisher, G F Howard, L N Sayer, C E Weston. M I Walker (secretary)

1979-80 M Murtagh (life president), O J Bailey (Chair), G F Howard (vice Chair), J Davies, B M Fisher, L Sayer, C E Weston, M I Walker (secretary)

1980-81 M Murtagh (life president) O J Bailey (Chair) J Davies, B M Fisher, G F Howard, L Sayer, C E Weston, M I Walker (secretary)

1981-82 M Murtagh (life president), O J Bailey (Chair), J Davies, B M Fisher (vice Chair), G F Howard, C E Weston. M I Walker (secretary).

1982-83 M Murtagh (life president), G F Howard (Chair), M Armstrong. O J Bailey, J Davies, B M Fisher, L N Sayer, C E Weston, and Mrs N F Richardson (Secretary)

1983-84 M Murtagh (life president), B M Fisher (Chair), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, J Davies, G F Howard, N Selwyn, C E Weston.

1984-85 M Murtagh (life president), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, J Davies, B M Fisher, G F Howard N Selwyn, C E Weston, Mrs N F Richardson (Secretary)

1985-86 M Murtagh (life president), B M Fisher (Chair), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, J Davies, G F Howard, N Selwyn, C E Weston, Mrs N Richardson (secretary). Club Manager - Mr P Bowkley (resigned in 1986)

1986-87 M Murtagh (life president), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, J Davies, B M Fisher, N Selwyn, C E Weston. Mrs June M Harris (secretary)

1987-88 M Murtagh (life president), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, J Davies, B M Fisher, N Selwyn, C E Weston, Brent Wormald,.

1988-89 M Murtagh (life president), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, J Davies, B M Fisher, N Selwyn, B Wormald, C E Weston.

1989-90 M Murtagh (life president), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, J Davies, B M Fisher, N Selwyn, B Wormald, C E Weston.

1990-91 M Murtagh (life president and treasurer), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, J Davies, B M Fisher, N Selwyn, B Wormald, C E Weston, David Jones (Club Secretary).

1991-92 M Murtagh (life president and treasurer), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, B M Fisher, N Selwyn, C E Weston, B Wormald, David Jones (Club Secretary).

1992-93 M Murtagh (life president and treasurer), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, B M Fisher, R G A Moore, N Selwyn, C E Weston, B Wormald, David Jones (Club Secretary).

1993-94 M Murtagh (life president and treasurer), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, B M Fisher, N Selwyn, C E Weston, B Wormald, David Jones (Club Secretary).

1994-95 M Murtagh (life president and treasurer), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, B M Fisher, N Selwyn, C E Weston, B Wormald (Chair Tournament Co.), David Jones (Club Secretary).

1995-96 M Murtagh (life president), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, B M Fisher, B Latham (treasurer), N Lawrenson, N Selwyn, C E Weston, B Wormald (Chair Tournament Co.)

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

1996-97 M Murtagh (life president), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, B M Fisher, B Latham (Treasurer), N Lawrenson, N Selwyn, C E Weston. B Wormald, Steve Byrne (Club Secretary)

1997-98 M Murtagh (life president), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, B M Fisher, B Latham (Treasurer). N Selwyn, C E Weston, B Wormald, Alan Pagett (Club Secretary)

1998-99 M Murtagh (life president), B Latham (Treasurer), M Armstrong, O J Bailey, B M Fisher, N Lawrenson (Club secretary), N Selwyn, C E Weston B Wormald,

1999-2000 M Murtagh (Life president), M Armstrong, Jan Eden, B M Fisher, B Latham (treasurer), N Lawrenson (Club secretary to March 2000), A Pagett, N Selwyn, B Wormald, *John Robbins (chair Mgt Co.)*. In June 2000, Evelyn Spicer resigned as assistant secretary.

2000-01 M Murtagh (life president), M Armstrong, J Eden resigned as director but continued as Club secretary to the Board, B M Fisher, B Latham (Treasurer), A R Pagett, N Selwyn, B Wormald, *J Robbins Chair Mgt Co*

2001-02 M Murtagh (life president), M Armstrong, B M Fisher, J Eden (Club secretary), B Latham (Treasurer), Roy Moore, A R Pagett, N Selwyn, B Wormald, *J Robbins (Chair Mgt Co) Jane Hall (Chair Social Co.)*

2002-03 C E Weston (Life president), M Armstrong, J Eden (Club secretary), B M Fisher (Chair), B Latham (Treasurer). N Lawrenson (Chair Mgt Co.) A R Pagett, L N Sayer, B Wormald, *Jane Hall/Malcolm Chambers Chair of Social Co.*

2003-04 B M Fisher (Life president), R Moore (Chair), M Armstrong, S Byrne, M Chambers (Chair Social Co), J Eden (Club Secretary to Feb 2004).B Latham (Treasurer), N Lawrenson (Club Secretary), L Sayer, *Margaret Wort (Chair of Mgt Co.) Mary Gray (Chair of House Co.) Joy Brett chair of Social Co*

2004-05 B M Fisher (Life president) R Moore (Chair), S Byrne (Chair Tournament Co.), B Latham (Treasurer), L Sayer, Mr Pat Wells (Chair House Co.), *N Lawrenson (Club secretary from Mar 2004), M Wort (Chair Mgt Co.), J Hall (Chair of Social Committee)*

2005-06 B M Fisher (Life president), R Moore (Chair), S Byrne, B Latham (Treasurer), N Lawrenson, L Sayer (Company Secretary), P Wells (Chair Mgt Co.), M Wort.

2006-07 B M Fisher (Life president), R Moore (Chair), Mrs Carolyn Fisher (Chair Bar Co.), Mrs Chris Killeen, B Latham, N Lawrenson, P Wells (Chair House Co), M Wort, *Mr Peter Court Chair Management Co.*

2007-08 B M Fisher (Life president), R Moore (Chair), C Fisher (Chair Social Co.), C Killeen (Chair Admin), B Latham. (Chair Bar Co.), N Lawrenson, (Chair Bridge Co.), P Wells (Chair House Co.), M Wort, *Management Co. disbanded and replaced by Club Committee chaired by M Wort.*

2008-09 B M Fisher (Life president), M Wort (Chair), P Court (Company Secretary), C Fisher (Chair Social Co.), C Killeen (Chair Admin), B Latham (Chair Bar Co.), N Lawrenson (Chair Bridge Co.), P Wells (Chair House Co), *Club Co. renamed Members meeting.*

MEMBERSHIP FIGURES

	1966	Approx. 75 founder members;
	1975	WMBC 250 members;
Jul	1992	WMBC 330 members;
Feb	1994	WMBC 350 members; Bridge circle 150 members
Oct	1994	WMBC 359 members;
Jun	1996	WMBC 352 members;
Mar	2000	WMBC 385 members; Bridge circle 150 members.
Jun	2003	WMBC 385 members: Bridge circle: 150 members
Jul	2004	Total Membership 530
Apr	2005	Total Membership 517
Apr	2007	Total Membership 512
Apr	2008	Total Membership 545
Apr	2009	Total Membership 553

A History of the West Midlands Bridge Club

References

- 1 Silhill Bridge Club: The first fifty years. Published. 1998. Researched and written by C G Coton
- 2 Minutes of the Board of the West Midlands Bridge Club 1975-86 & 1993-2007
- 3 Minutes of the Management Meetings of the West Midlands Bridge Club
- 4 Minutes of Annual General Meetings of the WMBC
- 5 Minutes of Extraordinary General meetings of the WMBC
- 6 Minutes of the Warwickshire County Bridge Association 1964-2007
- 7 Bulletins of the Warwickshire County Bridge Association 1973-1994
- 8 Name engravings on various Bridge trophies
- 9 Various conversations with members of WMBC as listed in the foreword.