

Worcestershire Bridge News

August 2021

After a few months in which there was very little news, we now at last, thank goodness, have a flurry of activity as a return to face-to-face bridge becomes possible and we make plans for the coming year. Make no mistake, though, the world of bridge has changed forever and a far wider range of opportunities – much more online having been added to traditional face to face - is now available to all of us. Let's make the most of it!

Returning to Face to Face Bridge

After many months with no face to face bridge, many clubs are now cautiously returning to playing. However, just because we can doesn't mean that we all will. Many of us are still cautious about returning to crowded premises and many have found online bridge attractive in minimizing the travel overhead involved in playing our wonderful game and so some clubs have decided to focus almost entirely on playing online. The world of bridge has changed irrevocably and we are clearly going to be in a period of transition for some months. Consequently, we would urge players to support their clubs and clubs to co-operate with each other to try to ensure a good balance of face-to-face and online play is available to the bridge community in the County.

The Inter-Club Teams Competition

Remember this? It proved very popular and we were fortunate in managing to complete the 2019-2020 season before lockdown hit us in March last year. Once again there will be an Open Division and a Simple Systems Division. Our current plan is that both divisions will play online starting in November. We would encourage you to start to seek out team mates and form your teams now – note that for flexibility they can be of more than four players - and to look out for further details to be published in September.

Restricted Swiss Teams

Following the success of the Saturday Swiss Teams competitions called, variously, 9-High, 8-High and 6-High and restricted to the "average club player" over the winter, the Midlands Counties have decided to run a series of these events on alternate months, starting in September, through next winter. They will generally be held on the last Saturday of each month and be played over 24 boards. Details will be published and circulated very shortly.

County Events

The traditional competitions – Phillipps Pairs (MPs) and Pairs Ladder (X-IMPs) – will resume on Monday County Nights starting on 20th September. The functionality and increased popularity of online bridge enables these competitions to be accessible to all County Members and we would encourage, in particular, any players aspiring to play at County level to ensure that they participate in these competitions which both offer an excellent opportunity for players to sharpen their skills against good opposition and to showcase those skills to the selectors.

The Dawes League between the Midlands Counties will also be restarting in September. This will be played online unless agreed otherwise, thereby eliminating the travelling which has always been the bugbear of Inter-County competitions. The first match, which will be against Derbyshire, will be on 12th September. We would encourage any players interested in being considered for selection to contact Martin Gill, at martin4bridge@gmail.com.

The Malvern Congress

After much deliberation, the County Committee has decided that the congress will be played online this year with the hope that it will be possible to play it face-to-face next year. It will be played over three days, with two important competitions on Friday evening – a "Nine-High" competition and a "Newcomers" competition. These will be followed by a panel discussion, also online of course, of some of the more interesting hands that were played. See full details at <https://www.bridgewebs.com/worcestershire/MalvernCongressBrochure2021.pdf> and an entry form and some further details at <https://www.bridgeextra.com/malvgp21/>. In particular, we would draw your attention to the fact that a significant prize fund, to the current EBU scale, is available to those who are successful in the Championship competitions.

Learning Bridge

Teaching in many counties has all but ceased during lockdown but we in Worcestershire have been lucky that our teachers have worked hard to prepare and deliver online courses resulting in new players being introduced to our clubs. Steve Allerston, whom many of you will know, is intending to deliver a face to face beginners course starting in late September and broadly serving the Bromsgrove/Droitwich/Redditch area. Eileen Oakley, in Bewdley, is also likely to be delivering a beginners course, which will be online, starting around September. If any of your friends, who have watched you enviously enjoying your bridge, would like to learn to play, please put them in touch with the County Education Co-Ordinator, Mike Vetch, on 07812 746204 or at mike1958v@mail.com. Of interest, also, is that Eileen will be starting a course for pupils at Bewdley Primary School in September – it's great to see that the attractions of our game are being recognised by younger people once again!

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