

Worcestershire Bridge News

December 2021

Winter is here, venturing out in an evening is becoming less and less attractive but opportunities to go out and play face to face during the day are plentiful. And there is also plenty of online bridge available in the evenings. So there is no excuse for not playing as much bridge as we want to play!

Online Bridge Platforms

Online bridge, particularly on cold winter evenings, is clearly here to stay. The function of the various bridge platforms used by both clubs and individuals is occasionally misunderstood and so a very brief description is given here.

BridgeBase Online is probably the best known platform. It provides a wide range of facilities including the ability to run teams and pairs events for clubs.

RealBridge is a more modern platform, its development having only started less than two years ago. It incorporates integrated audio visual capabilities which enable players to see and talk to each other while playing.

Bridge Club Live, as well as providing a playing platform, is the modern day equivalent of "drop-in" rubber bridge club (even though only duplicate bridge is played).

The choice of which platform to play on very much depends on what players want. Bridge Club Live provides club facilities which enables anyone to drop in for as few or as many hands as you want. RealBridge provides a more social experience through its AV facilities and also provides some kibitzing of events being held on the RealBridge platform. BridgeBase provides a range of fairly basic facilities at low cost and also provides Vugraph coverage which is of a range of international events. The great advantage that online bridge has over face to face bridge is that we can now play in an event anywhere in the world without getting out of our armchairs! For advice on which platform to use, do feel free to contact me at the email address below and I will do my best to help.

County Events

The County programme has started well with the traditional competitions – Philipps Pairs (MPs) and Pairs Ladder – continuing online on RealBridge on Monday evenings. The weekend competitions, the first being the Healey Cup, have also got off to a good start with the Healey, also held on RealBridge, attracting six teams.

In the New Year we have the Club Representatives Pairs on Sunday 6th February and the County Championship Pairs on Sunday 27th March – see the County website for details of both.

The Malvern Congress

The decision to hold the Malvern Congress online this year proved to be right – the congress was extremely successful and enjoyed by eighty pairs participating in the Championship Pairs and 52 Teams playing in the Championship Teams. Both sessions were followed by a panel discussion of some of the more interesting hands with Ladies International Diana Nettleton, former Junior International Tom Paske, European Trialist John Sansom and former European Champion and Bermuda Bowl finalist Graham Kirby giving us the benefit of their experience.

Club News

It is interesting to observe attendances at the various clubs around the County. While it would be invidious to name individual clubs, particularly given that my knowledge does not extend to every club in the County, it is worth examining some generalities. A number of clubs have now resumed playing face to face and we are generally seeing attendances of between four and seven tables. Online clubs are seeing larger attendances. In particular those playing on RealBridge are seeing attendances of some eleven or twelve tables, the highest I have seen being fifteen tables. Whatever the attendances, it is clear that players are enjoying their bridge – which is what is important – and we should not forget the hard work that their organisers and committees are contributing in order that we can continue to play!

Forthcoming Events

The County Association is running a Charity Christmas Swiss Teams event on the evening of Monday 20th December in aid of The Parenting Project, of which the late Ian Thompson, a member and supporter of bridge in Worcestershire for many years, was a trustee. All are welcome – enquiries to me on the email address below or just follow the link on the WCBA website on the evening. We would emphasise that, while the event will, as always, be competitive, we expect everyone to play in the Christmas spirit and focus on making the event as enjoyable and sociable as possible rather than simply trying to win!

For more competitive players, the National Point-a-Board Teams takes place on RealBridge over the weekend of 22nd and 23rd January – details on the EBU website. Finally, a reminder that the Midland Counties Congress, with a wide range of competitions, is being held on BridgeBase Online over the weekend of 7th - 9th January – see www.bridgewebs.com/midlandcc/

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