

Stuart, you joined the club about 20 years ago and, as much as I hate to admit it, you caused a bit of a stir pretty much straight away. You were already known to a few members through Aviva and a several members of the 1st / 2nd team started talking that there was this “new guy who looks like he’s going to be half decent”. Little did many of us know at that point that you would indeed become that half decent player but also a half decent chairman.

After a few years of your being a member, completely unrelated to you, we went through a fair amount of turmoil in the committee and needed a change at the top. Bill Hall agreed to step into a one-year interim role as chairman to steady the ship but we all knew we needed someone in 2010 and onwards. During one of our many after bridge post-mortem sessions, Keith and I were kicking around ideas on who would be a) a sensible person to take over from Bill for whom people have respect and b) someone who’s got the drive and vision to be able to drive the club forward and help with that well overdue modernisation. Keith, having known you and a lot of your business acumen through Aviva, suggested you. I really couldn’t think of anyone better and the rest, as they say, is history. I did of course issue my normal words of caution and made sure we had a backup plan, just in case you didn’t work out. Ted Patten is still waiting!

So, what have you **actually** done?

Caused utter chaos and made everyone regret electing you chairman by suggesting we make the club a charity. The EBU had just wasted £1000s on their failed attempt and yet you wanted to do it to us? OK, we were wrong and the many, many hours mainly you and Keith put into the project paid off and The York Bridge Club was founded in 2012. You and Keith were the obvious choices of trustees and I was dragged kicking and screaming to be the 3rd.

You then decided to allow the inmates to run the asylum so to speak and separated the strategic board duties from the day to day committee duties with two completely separate bodies.

You modernised the playing environment with BridgeMates and a Duplimate. Even after you’ve left the board, you’re continuing this with the encouragement for Tablets to replace BridgeMates. You also introduced a proper membership database with Pianola to replace the 200GB Excel files which Keith was keeping.

I'm sure there's something I'm forgetting in all this! Oh, there's that little thing about a new building which actually has some parking! For the last 30 years I've been in the club, playing space and worse than that, parking has been an issue. Wilton Rise (prior to Holgate Road) was a fantastic old church with a great space to play in but parking for 3 cars, a bike and a scooter. The move to Holgate Road in '99 was infinitely better for parking believe it or not, but the space was never exactly ideal with that chimney in the middle and the smaller rooms upstairs.

As a charity we'd been looking at locations to move to for the last 10+ years and it was not until Martin joined the board and had a conversation with ASC next door that the new building was conceived. All the planning went on and then Covid hit. I had my cautionary hat on again and wanted to pause but you and Martin were all up for it and we made a collective decision to push on through with the knowledge that our members would be there to support us once we got out of lockdown. OK, I admit it now, maybe I was being a bit too cautious. Maybe it's time to start looking at the extension and hotel?

On a more serious note, I really cannot state just how much effort you have put into the club, charity and company over the past 20 years. I know it's been a big part of your life and you began your gradual stepping down a little while ago with the handing over the reins to Sally and now with your stepping down from the Board. I sincerely hope that this will allow you to get a little time back and allow you to put your feet up once in a while and to spend time with Janice. Can we check with Janice that this is actually a good thing though?

I don't think we can really repay you for all of the effort that you have put into the club, but we would like to present you with this small token of appreciation for everything you've done over this time and if the members present will all agree, I would like to propose you as our next Honorary President.