

WORCESTERSHIRE CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

web site: <http://www.bridgewebs.com/worcestershire/>

A letter from Barbara Griffiths, WCBA Chairman

Bridge is a game that reaches out to all walks of life, from the young through to the old – indeed many people in their 90's still play. In an attempt to encourage more people to take up bridge, County members who are qualified teachers, dedicated to raising awareness of the benefits of playing bridge, have carried out a variety of very successful teaching courses during the year. These have taken place in Worcester, Redditch, Bewdley, Pershore and Stourbridge offering evening and weekend options to supplement the already well-established daytime opportunities in the Malvern area. All these lessons are being followed by supervised play sessions. An introduction by the teachers into 'Gentle Bridge' (such as 'Try Duplicate evenings) will be the continuation until such time as the new players feel confident enough to venture into our Clubs. From July, monthly 'Try Duplicate' evenings will be held at Ridgeway, Droitwich and Worcester but other Clubs may also decide to take part. It is the intention of these teachers to organise further courses during the coming year, the anticipation being players will graduate into Clubs within the County via supervised play, 'Gentle Bridge' and 'Try Duplicate' - the Clubs already welcoming new players into these evenings are seeing an increase in membership, consequently they are thriving.

Meanwhile, for those who are already established and regular club players, in order to develop their skills further, a series of Bridge Improvement seminars run by first team County players has been set up (addressing topics on bidding, defence plus the play of the hands). Seven sessions are planned for 2019, and there is a positive response from the participants. These may become a permanent feature.

During the last year the County has held two events on Monday nights at Cutnall Green in an effort to persuade members of Clubs within the County, whether they are affiliated or not, to join in a pleasant, relaxed evening alongside people who play regularly on County nights. These were the 'Pro Am Pairs' and the 'Invite a Guest' evenings, both proving to be very successful, receiving enthusiastic comments from attendees.

In a further effort to raise the profile of bridge, two clubs in the County, namely Worcester and Bromsgrove, have again organised 'Café Bridge' events. For those who have not experienced 'Café Bridge', players move between venues playing bridge in full view of customers who are frequently interested enough to ask for details. These occasions not only prove to be very enjoyable for the participants but also provide substantial funds for charity. 'Café Bridge' will again be held this year, thanks to the expertise of Richard Jephcott and Mike Vetch in carrying out the complicated arrangements required. Should any Clubs wish to adopt this idea I am sure Richard and Mike would be only too happy to give advice.

As you know, the County Committee have been in negotiations with a sports club regarding a joint project to secure our own venue. Sadly, the sports club has been extremely dilatory in responding to our communications, therefore it has been agreed this proposal has now failed. However, a sub-committee has been



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appointed to investigate a different approach, new avenues are being explored - the Committee are still of the opinion that our own venue would be advantageous. It would allow for afternoon bridge, teaching sessions, 'Try Duplicate', hosting County Matches and Competitions, obviating the necessity of negotiating outside venues, which can prove to be very costly. Bridge Clubs would be able to hire the venue for their own nights, the possibilities are endless. It could become a hive of bridge activity so let us hope it can be achieved.

The County are still holding the Grand Prix teams, an evening aimed at players who wish to experience County Nights without the intensity of playing against teams comprised entirely of members who represent the County in competitions. There will be seven nights this year. In the past members who play in the Tollemache have been excluded other than as hosts when needed. Last year teams were required to find their own hosts, this has meant that Tollemache players have been unable to play bridge on Grand Prix evenings. This year it has been decided they can play in the Grand Prix teams but only two players (not necessarily a regular partnership) can play in a team. Teams that have not entered before would be very welcome, just contact Paul Hammond to register.

We would love to see you at events such as the Healey Cup, the Chairman's Cup, and the Irene Allen, there is something for players of all levels so please continue to support them, playing against a higher number of pairs makes the joy of winning both more pleasurable and meaningful. Entries for the League and No Fears division have to be received by the end of July, so arrange your teams, submit your forms, Sue Lane will be waiting for them.

The County organised and hosted the annual Malvern Congress at the Royal Grammar School, Worcester in the last weekend of October and will do so again this year. The Congress is well attended with at least 50 tables, keen players from all over the country attend and enjoy their bridge. Saturday is Swiss Pairs and Sunday Swiss Teams, but there is also a No Fears division on Saturday afternoon and evening for those who wish to sample a Congress without taking part in the main events. Juniors (under 26) have also taken part, which is very encouraging.

It is my expectation that during the coming year I will visit a number of Clubs to introduce myself and have a pleasant afternoon/evening's bridge in your company.

All that remains is for me to wish you a rewarding bridge year. By this I do not just mean winning, although this is always gratifying, but at whatever level you play, either beginning your bridge experience or raising to the heights of playing for the County, you achieve something which not only enhances your enjoyment of playing bridge but also encourages you to continue.

With best wishes

Barbara Griffiths

WCBA Chairman