

# Bagworth Whistlestop Bridge

## Annual Report 2023-2024



### BAGWORTH WHISTLESTOP BRIDGE GROUP



#### Message from the Chair

The club has had another successful year with the number of members continuing to increase and the scope of club activities continuing to expand.

The average number of members playing each week has increased by over 20% from last year. This substantial increase is made more impressive by the fact that numbers of players at other clubs are declining.

It may seem obvious to state that the number of members in a club is a function of new members joining and of the retention of existing members. New beginner members are brought in from the training courses that are run by Shelagh; new experienced members are attracted by Bagworth's growing reputation as a welcoming, friendly club; beginners (and many existing members) are retained by the supervised play sessions run by Carol and Shelagh. Existing members also play a part in the retention process by being welcoming and friendly to new members. I think the club is very successful in this by following the ethos set by Carol and Shelagh from the beginning of the club. I know of many clubs which run successful beginners' programmes but fail to retain these players as they are not made to feel welcome when they start playing duplicate sessions.

We have seen ourselves as being part of the wider bridge community and the wider general community. As part of this openness, we have played a match against Market Bosworth Bridge Club, we have visited Stamford Bridge Club for a club session, Shelagh is now on the committee of the Leicestershire Contract Bridge Association, and we have invited the President of Market Bosworth Bridge Club to present the club's trophies at the AGM.

As part of the wider community the club has made the following charitable contributions over the last twelve months - £200 to Forever Savvi from the profits of the 2023 Swiss teams event, £100 to Mind and Cancer Research from the simultaneous pairs competition, £300 to Cancer Research from the 2024 Swiss Teams event and individual contributions for Alzheimer's in support of Gosia's sponsored walk.

We now have three club competitions (up from two last year), we took part in a simultaneous pairs event for the first time, we had our first

team match against another club and we had our first visit to another bridge club to play duplicate bridge.

During the AGM we will be asking members on their thoughts on how the club can improve. Any suggestions made at the meeting or made later privately to any member of the committee will be gratefully received.

## **Our Members**

We have 58 club members, all of whom attend the face-to-face sessions regularly. Currently we have lost two members -Janet Dagley and Pauline Haywood from our regular sessions but hopefully they will return soon. Dave Wenham has left the area but remains a member and tries to visit us for our special events. Additionally, we have a further 10 players who are not members but regularly play with us on Monday evenings on RealBridge. We have been pleased to welcome Guy and Laura Bryant, Kate and John Collier, Robert Missenden, Philip Price, Ian Grudgings , Mary Lou Willison and Stewart Tyers as new members. Waiting in the wings, hopefully, are 5 new members from our learners' group. The unusual and very pleasing thing is that our membership is growing unlike many bridge clubs. We believe this is because of the way our members interact with each other in a friendly and respectful way. Long may this continue. Regular attendees make life easier for our directors and we appreciate that people turn up in good time and often let us know when they are not going to be attending. We are delighted to welcome Mary Weeks as the membership secretary who is taking over this role from Shelagh Rumbelow.

## **Committee**

The committee have met via zoom for their 5 meetings this year. Much of their time is spent discussing and preparing for events including visits, competitions and party food as well as doing the usual business of their role. We have been pleased to welcome George as our new chair who is a very experienced bridge club chair. He has initiated new competitions and worked hard to share responsibilities for the club across the wider membership. These have included Neil Stokes as web master, Mandy Bearne for publicity and Mary Weeks for membership. We are especially sorry to be losing Mary Danaher from the committee who tireless works on providing our refreshments and organising the party food. Sadly, we shall be losing our treasurer John Morris. He is probably due a well-earned rest after five years and has done a brilliant job of setting up the online systems for invoicing and banking. Throughout it all he has been supported by his right-hand woman, Marilyn, who has been working behind the scenes all along. The committee was joined by Derek Lambourne after the AGM in 2023 and John has been busy training up Derek in preparation for becoming the new treasurer. We are hoping that you will elect him to this position at the AGM.

## **Our Bridge**

A total of 85 bridge sessions have been held over the year with a mix of online play via Real Bridge and face to face bridge. We had a two-week break over the Christmas period and the number of playing tables in our face-to-face sessions has moved from an average of 6 tables to 7+ tables

over the course of the year. Our average on the Monday evening for online bridge is 5 tables and three sessions had to be cancelled because of shortage of players.

We introduced the Swiss Teams event in June 2023 where we had 10 tables and In June 2024, we managed to get 12 tables which will be our maximum for the future. This event takes a lot of planning and testing out as it is a complex scoring system, and the afternoon tea also takes a lot of organising. We are especially grateful to Simon who so ably manages the complexities of the IT equipment and Mary who organises the food. It is a popular and fun event and this year we managed to raise £300.00 for Cancer Research linking it to the EBU's initiative Bridge Festival – Bridge It's a Big Deal.

Our competition for the Knockout Plate continued which was won by Carol Stephens and Averil Bemment as did the Random Pairs Trophy won by Mary Danaher and Neil Stokes. Two new playing experiences were introduced – a team's event with Market Bosworth which was won by Market Bosworth and a Simultaneous Pairs won by Phillip Price and Robert Missenden at our club and who came 4<sup>th</sup> overall nationally. A new competition for the most Improved Player is being introduced for 2023-4 onwards which the trophy winner who will be announced at the AGM. George has done a lot of the planning work for the competitions and thanks also go to Steve Fieldhouse who organised several of them.

A visit to a purpose-built bridge club, Stamford Bridge Club took place in April. This was a new experience for the 28 people who came on the coach for the morning in Stamford and the afternoon at their Friday duplicated session with some 15 tables. Belinda Chantler and Isabel Stanley were the winning N/S pair. We must have been well behaved, probably stunned by the ever-changing scoring screen and side tables to place drinks and boards, because they have invited us back again. Clearly this is going to become an annual event and special thanks to Mary Weeks who negotiated a good deal with Roberts Coaches!

No mention of our bridge playing cannot include the hard work which Carol cheerfully does throughout the year as Director. There are not many director calls but the setting up takes some time especially when people are standing chatting as partnerships are arranged which can be quite challenging! Carol also directs all our competitions and organises the party bridge at Christmas and supports Shelagh and Andy who also assist. The SIMs pairs presented her with several issues to resolve but we shall all know better for next year! Thank you, Carol.

We introduced our 70% club four years ago whereby those players achieving 70% or more at a duplicate session are rewarded with a 'free week'. This year we have had a record number of 9 partnerships achieving this, including 16 separate players.

Sitting quietly at home is Roger Horsgood with the dealing machine to make our bridge sessions work! It takes some time to do the deals for a month and this year has been particularly difficult with the introduction of the SIMs pairs deals and dealing 6 sets of boards for the Swiss Teams. Special thanks to Roger who makes the system work so well with our ever-changing bridge.

### **Teaching and Learning.**

We have held three programmes this year. The first was an 8-week Improvers Programme which attracted 11 people, all of whom attended regularly. This was led by Shelagh and Carol. In

November Carol led a four-week supervised play programme ably assisted by Neil which managed to get three tables. Then in January, we had enough to run a beginner 18-week programme after which these players integrated into the Monday morning supervised play sessions which are ongoing. It is currently attracting three tables. For the first time Shelagh and Carol have used a joint WhatsApp call to comment on the beginners' play on BBO which takes place on a Saturday morning. Great fun and general chaos are had by all!

Membership of the EBU teachers' forum helps to provide teaching resources, training and brings in new learners via the teacher registration scheme. Shelagh and Carol teach the ACOL system following the EBU's books although some of Andrew Robsons videos and those of Bernard Magee have also been used in lessons. We encourage our members to take up learning opportunities at other clubs or on bridge holidays.

## **Marketing and Publicity**

As a club within a growing village with a growing young population we are very dependent on marketing, networking, and publicity to bring in new members. Our grant application to the Hinckley and Bosworth Rural Communities Forum was successful and we used this funding to set up a marketing strategy with an accompanying logo which can be used in various formats. This would have cost a considerable sum, but we were lucky enough to it being subsidised by a Leicester company as part of their community responsibility. We have now been able to get business cards, a general leaflet and pens/ screen pens developed. Watch out for the coasters and the sweatshirts! We also attend the voluntary sector forum to promote the club and have managed to get an advertisement in the online pre-retirement programme for public sector employees in the County and Hinckley and Bosworth. We have developed both a welcome pack for new members and a Face Book group which our members can join. We are looking forward to Mandy Bearne continuing this area of work in the future, but she needs help from us all as we make the public face of the Bagworth bridge group.

## **Venue :**

The committee have maintained links with the Bagworth Community Centre and this year it's been open all year. We have continued playing every Thursday except over Christmas where we took a two-week break but still managed to offer 51 sessions with thanks to Carol who managed 90% of them. We are trying to maintain our use of the meeting room on a Monday as this makes a good teaching space and potentially a new opportunity for another duplicate session. Storage has much improved and good liaison with the new administrative assistant, Dominique, cleaning staff and the café tends to give positive results.

## **Finance : Treasurers Comments**

The financial Statement is attached as a separate file for your information. From this you will see that we are settling down in terms of income and expenditure since establishing the club six years ago and after covid. As such our membership fees, table fees and raffle monies are growing in line with group expansion. We have a healthy bank balance, better than ever before and yet we have kept pace with the purchase of equipment in line with our increasing membership and strive to have some spare capacity for contingencies. To this end we have purchased 4 additional tables

and two further tablets. This means that we are fully equipped to accommodate 12 playing tables. We have also bought additional tablecloths for refreshments which give a more cohesive feel to our special events. These events help us to make a wider charity contribution as noted by our chair. The Council grant of £500.00 has also given our promotional work a kick start and we have invested in some screen pens, business cards and promotional leaflets. The area where we have had little growth is in the shared initiative with Market Bosworth for RealBridge on Monday evenings. This is not surprising as fewer people are engaging in online bridge since the covid restrictions eased but we would like to re-energise this in 2024/5. Our teaching has brought us in a profit of £364.00 and whilst a beginner's programme was not planned, Shelagh and Carol felt it better not to keep people waiting and ran a 12-week programme at home as there were insufficient numbers to justify room hire costs. The real value of our teaching is to bring in new bridge players and to improve standards throughout the club. We have licences for our bridgewebs website and for our teaching as well as insurance and pricing for our insurance. These have remained quite static.

Bank charges continue at approximately £5.00 per month and the invoicing system continues to work well. Four individual training sessions have been held for Derek to step into the role of treasurer who will continue to work with the existing arrangements for finance and invoicing. I am grateful to Richard Chantler, our auditor who attends to our auditing process so speedily and efficiently. Richard was happy with all our work.

As a final comment from a retiring treasurer, the situation of having just short of £3000.00 in the bank and having purchased good quality resources is an amazing achievement within six years. I am proud of what we together have achieved both for the club and the wider community and thank our members for their unfailing support and contribution.

### **Assets 2023**                      **for insurance purposes**

10No. Tables £143.40 each	£1,435.00
Flip Chart on Wheels	£115.00
12No. Lenovo Tablets	£1,266.00
1No. Computer	£429.00
Duplimate dealing machine	£2,673.08
55No. Bidding boxes	£650.00
Coat rail and hangers	£54.48
6No. Bags for boards	£216.00
6No. Sets of boards @ £61.90 each	£371.40
Table cloths                      approx £8.00 each x 12	£96.00
12No. Pens for tablets £1.00 each	£12.00
Lenovo tablet cases @ £8.99 each x 12	£107.88

Cards	£1.41 per pack x 200	£292.66
Projector	15.5.23	£468.00
16 Orange Boards donated by Roger Horsgood	by Roger Horsgood 19.5.23	

## 23/24

### New Assets

7.8.23	Notice Board	£50.00
5.9.23	2 New Tables	£287.98
24.11.23	13 Table Cloths	£66.00
9.1.24	1 large T. Cloth Dunelm	£12.00
10.4.24	2no. Lenovo Tablets	£178.00
30.4.24	2no. Lenovo Cases	£18.78
		<b>£8,799.26</b>

## Bagworth Whistlestop Bridge Group Mission

*Our mission is to share and spread the game of bridge to local people for their enjoyment, health and well-being in a friendly, safe and comfortable environment.*

### Principles / Aims

- ❑ To establish a local bridge group playing duplicate bridge for members' health and well-being and their enjoyment.
- ❑ To create a setting for social but challenging bridge and with a friendly and convivial atmosphere.
- ❑ To work alongside and with other clubs for their enhancement and not to their detriment to broaden the range of bridge playing opportunities available.
- ❑ To build resources to enable an excellent as well as a self-sufficient playing environment
- ❑ To promote the group to other clubs and the wider bridge playing and non-bridge playing community.
- ❑ To draw in grants to build resources for the club.

### Performance in Relation to Planning Proposals 2023 -24

1. To maintain our current membership cohort by providing good bridge playing opportunities, a convivial atmosphere and support where needed.  
*Membership has increased to 55 and most members are very active. Thanks is given to all for making Bagworth a happy place to be and their support of new players.*
2. To improve standards in bridge by providing a regular improvers programme.

*Improvers programme, supervised play and beginners' programmes have taken place throughout the year, see section on training.*

3. To maintain our inter-club bridge connections through further social bridge events, club visits and online bridge.

*Several members are also members of 2,3 or 4 bridge clubs and so develop a good network. The visit to Stamford bridge club took place and is likely to be an annual event. In the Swiss teams event we were joined by members from Ashby and Market Bosworth and a joint teams event took place with Market Bosworth. The club has also gained a place on the Leicestershire Contract Bridge Association Committee.*

4. To secure additional equipment as need arises.

*New tablets and new tables have been purchased so that we have sufficient capacity with some spares for contingency so that we can support 12 tables.*

5. To expand the committee to train people up for specific roles e.g. Web support, administration, treasurer.

*The committee was expanded to include 3 club members to incorporate new responsibilities, this was to incorporate Derek Lambourne as trainee treasurer. The role of web master was taken over by Neil Stokes and that of membership secretary but are not currently committee roles.*

6. To maintain our current competitions and encourage full membership participation.

*The standing competition for club trophies are the Knock out plate and Random Pairs trophy were maintained and a new one introduced for the most Improved Player. In addition, a Charity SIMs pairs took place and a team event with Market Bosworth as new initiatives and the annual Swiss teams was maintained.*

7. To profile the club with an expanded publicity, promotional material.
8. To maintain a healthy financial profile.
9. To engage more members in the running of the club eg in teaching, setting up the sessions
10. To engage more players in interclub online competitions
11. To participate in training opportunities provided by the LCBA or EBU



### **Planning Proposals 2024-5**

1. To maintain our current membership cohort by providing good bridge playing opportunities, a convivial atmosphere and support where needed.
2. To improve standards in bridge by providing a regular improvers programme and developing a self-managed resource base and by developing a hand of the week analysis.

3. To maintain our inter-club bridge connections through further social bridge events, club visits and expand our online bridge.
4. To secure additional equipment as need arises.
5. To support club members who take on specific roles in the running of the club.
6. To maintain our current competitions and encourage full membership participation.
7. To profile the club with an expanded publicity, promotional material and press releases.
8. To maintain a healthy financial profile and to support the new treasurer in this work.
9. To engage more players into our provision on RealBridge by organising a Swiss pairs competition.
10. To maintain our contribution to charitable causes at competitions and events
11. To participate in training opportunities provided by the LCBA or EBU and to encourage members to take these up at adjacent clubs.

The logo for 'Vote' features a stylized red checkmark above the word 'Vote' in a blue, sans-serif font.