

This history document is work in progress which we intend to update to take account of comments and contributions from anyone with recollections of Deva's history – if you have information or know of any errors or omissions please get in touch – davidalansmith@onetel.com

# The History of Deva Bridge Club

## 1 The Inaugural Meeting and getting started

An inaugural meeting was held on Wednesday 10 August 1949, in the evening at The Stanley Palace in Watergate Street Chester. 22 people attended and the club records include the signed attendance list.

The earliest item in the club archives is a letter dated 31 March 1949 to the secretary of the Cheshire and North Wales Branch of the English Speaking Union whose office at the time was Stanley Palace. The letter refers to successful bridge evenings having been organised by the Chester Bowl Bridge Committee and held in the Stanley Palace. There was a desire for regular weekly events throughout the year. At that time there was no regular duplicate bridge sessions in Chester while the (duplicate) game was becoming very popular elsewhere. The letter asked to hire a room every Wednesday evening starting in September to play duplicate bridge in. Although numbers were uncertain it was thought they might get 40 to 50 players. It was in due course agreed that the new club could hire the "Long Gallery and downstairs room" for a fee of one guinea each Wednesday evening.

The North Western Contract Bridge Association was contacted in advance of the inaugural meeting. They were divided into 6 areas and suggested the new club could be part of either the Liverpool or Manchester area and left it to the new club to decide.

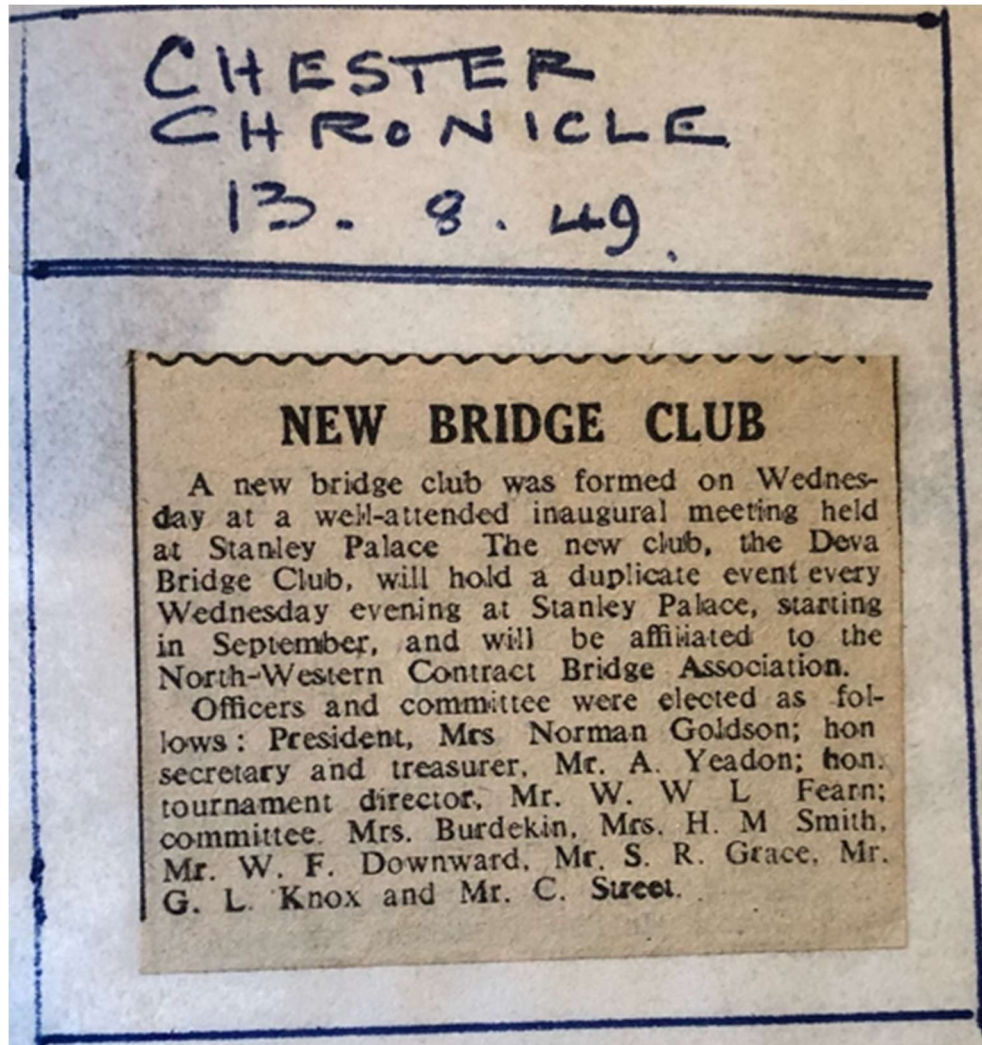
It was decided at the inaugural meeting that there was sufficient interest to start a club and that the club would meet Wednesday evenings at Stanley Palace starting on 7<sup>th</sup> September. Other decisions reach at the meeting included:

- The club would be known as the Deva Bridge Club, Chester.
- The main objective of the club was to be the promotion of duplicate bridge, although occasional rubber bridge sessions, teams of four competitions and individual events were envisaged as well.
- A membership entry fee was set at 10 shillings and six pence, with an annual subscription of 25 shillings and members table money of one shilling.
- The club would affiliate to NWCBA and join the Liverpool area.
- The financial year was set at 1 September to 31 August which aligned it with the NWCBA's financial year.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> officers of the club were elected:
  - President – Mrs [Norman] Goldson
  - Secretary & Treasurer – Mr Albert Yeadon
  - Tournament Director – Mr Wilf Fern
  - Committee Members – Mrs Marjorie Smith, Mrs MG Burdekin, Mr WF Downward, Mr SR Grace, Mr GL Knox, Mr JC Street
  - Auditors – Mr EG Dutton, Mr E Mabbs

Three of those elected to positions were not at the meeting (Mrs N Goldson, SR Grace and GL Knox), which we might presume meant that consideration had been given prior to the meeting as to who would carry out particular roles. Further, correspondence with NWCBA indicates that Albert Yeadon and Wilf Fearn were already familiar with NWCBA and EBU and so presumably

already played in duplicate events outside Chester. Others may well have done the same and so the motivation of establishing a new club was to be able to play the game nearer to home. Prior to playing at Stanley Palace a group of players rented a room above a grocery shop in Godstall Lane Chester near the [shop] of Mr & Mrs Dutton (two founding members and both to be future Presidents of the club). [Source – email from Pippa Anderson, daughter of Roy and Daphne Lowe and granddaughter of two other founding members Marjorie and Harry Smith.]

After the inaugural meeting a notice of the decisions made was sent to 35 people who were not at the meeting, and the notice below was put in the Chester Chronicle:



A 24/09/1949 hand written letter from the club secretary to NWCBA confirmed that 3 sessions had taken place by then, each with 5 tables, and that the club had 32 members. At the end of 1950, the club's membership record showed 52 members in total.

## 2 The first 15 years

It seems that the club did not stay at the Stanley Palace for very long. We understand from the artwork of past Deva Premises (currently in the Christleton club house) that Deva moved to 12 Dee Hills Park sometime in 1950. This address was included in a membership list from December 1950 from which we can see it was the home of a founder member, Ron Grace. The following year the club moved to the Tudor Cafe in Eastgate Street where it stayed for about 10 years.

We have little information about the period from 1950 to 1957, but by 1957 we know there were 4 regular bridge sessions a week (all evenings):

- Monday (rubber)
- Wednesday (duplicate)
- Friday (rubber)
- Saturday (mainly competitions – otherwise cut-in-rubber)

and that towards the end of 1958, rubber bridge on non-competition Saturday evenings switched to duplicate sessions.

Committee meeting minutes in 1963 indicate that bridge classes started in November 1963, and that Eric Dutton and Wilf Fearn were the first teachers. The original idea was that there would be two separate classes, one aimed at improving bridge skills to average club standard, and one for more advanced rubber players wanting to learn duplicate bridge. In the event, the improvers' course was oversubscribed while there were no takers for the duplicate course. It was therefore decided to run 2 improvers courses, one on Monday nights taken by Wilf Fearn and the other on Tuesdays taken by Eric Dutton. How long two separate courses lasted we don't know, although we have heard that at some stage Messrs Dutton and Fearn used to take lessons alternately every other week. The classes were advertised in the Chester Chronicle and the Cheshire Observer. We have managed to trackdown the advert in the Observer from the The British Newspaper Archive:



The bridge classes were held at Watergate House in (Lower) Watergate Street which the club moved to in 1963. Further information on club premises are included in a later section.

### 3 Competitions then and now

The 1<sup>st</sup> competition Deva had was the Chester Bowl, which as indicated in chapter 1, started before the inaugural meeting. The cup was donated by Mrs Goldson (the 1<sup>st</sup> president) and the 1<sup>st</sup> winners in 1949 were Mr & Mrs Yeadon, two founding members. Up until 1961 the competition consisted of 6 heats and a final. In 1962 it switched to a two session event on a Sunday in October (which is how we still run it today) to attract players from further afield. The 1962 competition was held at the Blossoms Hotel in Chester and had 52 pairs which was more than the club room could hold.

The Fearn Cup started in 1951 and the first winner was Mrs Dunn, one of the founder members. The Cup was donated by Mr & Mrs Fearn, both founder members. The first reference we found to this competition was in 1958 when the competition consisted of 6 heats from October to March

with the final in April 1959. We still had the same format up to 2020 (although because of Covid the final was held online). Currently (2024) we have 15 heats and a final. The competition is for Deva members only.

The next competition was the Latham Knox Trophy, a teams competition which is now part of our Chester Congress. Although the 1<sup>st</sup> engravings on the trophy were the 1965 winners (R Semp, S Zychlinsky, P Haigh and L Myers) we know from old correspondence files that the competition was held in May 1956. The competition that year was open to non-members and was held at the Blossoms Hotel in Chester because there were too many entries to hold it in the club. The entry form for the 1957 competition refers to the trophy being a Silver Rose Bowl rather than the cup we have today. Whether 1956 was the first year of this competition we do not know, nor do we know what happened to the Silver Rose Bowl.

The 1958 Latham Knox Trophy was played on a Sunday and a new two-session pairs competition was held the day before. Mr Capel (who was later Deva President in 1960-63) donated two cups and the pairs competition and cups are named after him. The 1<sup>st</sup> engravings on the Capel Cups were the 1958 winners William Gibson and Charles Hunter. The two events together were called the Chester Congress with 1958 being the first occurrence of the congress. We still hold the Chester Congress today, still with pairs on Saturday and teams on Sunday, although we now hold it in January rather than May.

The first occurrences of our Championship Pairs and Championship Teams competitions took place in 1965 and 1966 respectively. These competitions are for Deva members only, like the Fearn Cup. The first winners of these two tournaments were (respectively) Mr & Mrs Dutton (both founder members) and Mr & Mrs Downward and Mr & Mrs Fearn (again, all founder members). The pairs competition trophy is a shield shaped display board on which plaques are added each year with winners' names. We are now onto our 2<sup>nd</sup> shield and have started repositioning names from the front to the back so that new winners' names can be added to the front of the shield. The teams competition trophy is a cup but, unlike the other cups, the winners' names aren't engraved on it. The names are though engraved on the Teams board in the club. We also have boards for winners of the Fearn Cup and Championship Pairs competitions.

We aren't sure exactly when other competitions started. Committee meeting minutes in the late 1950s indicate a President's Prize competition was running by 1958. It was by invitation only and we presume has evolved into the President's Day competition we currently have (which is open to all members). 1960 minutes refer to an annual Ladies verses Gentlemen teams competition. This tournament stopped at some point (it has been suggested because the ladies always won it!) and was reinstated in 2011 in memory of Glyn Ellis. He was Principal TD for 20 years, the trophy was donated by his wife Ann who was also a member of the club and has her name on the championship boards.

Again, committee meeting minutes tell us the club held a simultaneous pairs event in June 1961 and had 16 pairs for it. We don't though know when the club first joined such events or how regular they were.

[To source when Ladies/Men Pairs and Mixed Pairs started - & Deva Teams].

It is interesting to note from the above that most of the competitions and events in our programme to day have been running since the 1950s and 1960s.

## 4 Key Individuals

There were 22 attending the inaugural meeting and notes for the meeting were sent to a further 35 people not at the meeting. Those are too numerous to mention all here. This section mentions some key individuals from the start and over the years. Apologies if we have missed any.

### Mrs Goldson

The first President of the club (1949-1950) who donated the Chester Bowl trophy.

[any recollections?]

### Wilf & Julie Fearn

Both were involved with the club from the start. Wilf was the first tournament Director and both of them had spells on and off the committee. They collectively donated the Fearn Cup for the club's Individual Championship. Wilf was President for 1954-57 and was involved with the County organisation and EBU. As well as being the first Tournament Director, he had a second spell in that role after Jim Harrison retired from the role [in ]. Several members still remember both of them [add recollections] and one member remembers that Wilf was an optician [might that have been at 5Bridge St?]. They both have several mentions on the championship boards. Wilf also helped start bridge classes in 1963. The EBU website records Wilf died in 1988 and says the following about him: "He held the posts of Chairman, Treasurer and Auditor of the NWCBA and was a Vice-President of the NWCBA and M&CBA. He was responsible for starting the Deva Bridge Club in 1949 and, as a player, he reached the quarter-finals of the Gold Cup and the semi-finals of the Hubert Phillips Bowl. He was an EBU 'A' Director for many years and received the Dimmie Fleming Award in 1986".

### Latham Knox

He was the second President (1950-51) and donated the Latham Knox Trophy for a teams competition and which is now part of our Congress.

[any recollections?]

### Mr W P Capel

He was President 1960-63 and donated the two Capel Cups as trophies for the pairs competition we now play as part of the Chester Congress.

[any recollections?]

### Eric and Dorothy Dutton



Both were stalwarts on the committee and both served as President (she 1967-69, he 1974-76). Eric started bridge classes in 1963 with Wilf Fearn and we understand worked for the TSB Bank. He taught bridge at Deva for 20 years and died in 1994 and Dorothy died in 2011. Although Eric and Dorothy shared the same surname as the George and Neale Dutton who were landlords of the Tudor Cafe where Deva played for 10 years in the 1950s, they were two unrelated families. That made researching Deva's history a bit more challenging until this was realised. Paul (Eric and Dorothy's son) put us right on this point. He (Paul) played bridge at Deva in the 1960s and remembers there were Monday afternoon and a few evening sessions at that time.

### Marjorie and Harry Smith



Both were involved with the club from the start and [involved on the committee]. Marjorie played in all of the club's venues including the current building in Christleton. She used to get the bus from Hough Green into town 3 days a week to do her shopping and to play bridge, and we understand kept a note of her winnings. She died unexpectedly aged 98 having played bridge the day before. The artwork in the club showing the various premises Deva used was commissioned and donated by the family in her memory. She also embroidered the names of (some) founder members' signatures on a white linen cloth, which the family recently gave to Deva and now hangs in the club.

### Roy and Daphne Lowe



Daphne Lowe was a daughter of Marjorie and Harry Smith and married Roy whose family ran the Browns Jewellers shop on Eastgate Row. They were both involved running the club over many years. She was President 1984-86 and also club treasurer and he was one of the club's trustees who signed the first lease on the Christleton building. Their daughter has said the club's finances improved when Daphne was

treasurer. They both started playing at Deva in the 1960s on return from a spell in Canada and played avidly until the 1990s. Roy is still alive today and has contributed to this history document. When we learned that Roy helped run the family jewellers shop in Chester we naturally assumed the shop was Lowe & Sons Jewellers in Bridge St. However, it was Brown Jewellers at 2 Eastgate Row, Brown being Daphne's family name!

### Charles Greenwood

He was President in 1978-80 and joined Deva in 1951/52. In 2011 he wrote up his reminiscences of 60 years at Deva which forms Appendix B to this history of Deva document.

### Jim Harrison

Was Principal Tournament Director [early?] 1950s to [between 1962 and 1965].

### Peter & Shirley Webster

Peter was Principal Tournament Director from 1971/2 to 1979. Shirley served on the committee for many years. Both names appear on the championship boards (interestingly Shirley's name appeared more frequently – perhaps because being PTD is a distraction).

### Glyn and Ann Ellis



Glyn Ellis was Principal Tournament Director from 1980 to [some time in 2000s]. His wife Ann, who was also a member of the club and has her name on the championship boards, donated the trophy for the annual Ladies vs Men Teams match. On his retirement as T.D., he was made an honorary life member in recognition for all his services to the club.

## John Dawe

John was Principal Tournament Director from [in or before 2007] to 2014. Charles Greenwood attributed him (with assistance of Fred Dixon) with setting the club up with a comprehensive range of computer hardware and software and computerisation of bridge scoring. They were instrumental in establishing the Deva web site and John was the author of most of its contents which he updated almost on a daily basis. Added to his other duties as T.D., this amounts to an awful lot of work and he was made an honorary life member in [2014?] in recognition.

## Fred Dixon

As well as being involved with John Dawe with computerisation of the scoring process and setting up the website, Fred led the project that set the club up as a company limited by guarantee. He was made an honorary life member in [2015?].

## 5 Club Premises

The artwork in the current club with paintings of the various premises Deva has used over the years was presented to the club in memory of Mrs Marjorie Smith, a founder member who is said to have played in them all. The paintings are dated 2000 and signed by [Neale Evans ... any information on him / to confirm the Smith/Lowe family commissioned the work].

The artwork shows 6 premises, including the current Christleton premises. However, in his reminiscences of 60 years at Deva (dated July 2011) Charles Greenwood (who was President 1978-1980) mentioned that at some time around 1951/52 the club played duplicate sessions “in two rooms on the third floor of an old house in Lower Bridge Street”. [Notes from Marjorie Smith’s granddaughter Pippa refers to Marjorie catching a bus and walking to Lower Bridge Street to play bridge there several days a week.] One might suppose that use of the Lower Bridge Street premises would have been before moving to the Tudor Cafe and surmise it was, like 12 Dee Hills Park Road, another members home (conjecture). Why that premises isn’t included in the artwork we don’t know.

[Also, Deva headed paper gives a contact address for WWL Fearn the then TD as 5 Bridge Street Chester – the back of the paper has handwritten notes dated 1956 – a letter from Chester Cine Society asks about using the Bridge Street Premises. A 1948 press cutting about the (first?) Chester Bowl competition gave the same address to send entries to. ]

### 5.1 Stanley Palace (Lower Watergate Street)



The first Chester Bowl competition was held in 1949 and played at Stanley Palace in (Lower) Watergate Street before Deva's inaugural meeting. Regular bridge sessions started in September 1949 which were played in the downstairs Long Gallery, the club also had use of another downstairs room. The Long Gallery was said to be large enough for 40 to 50 people to play bridge in. We know that the first few sessions had 5 tables and so didn't achieve that number, and that the club moved to new premises in 1950, but not whether those two factors were related.

## 5.2 12 Dee Hills Park



The artwork indicates the club moved to 12 Dee Hills Park in 1950. We haven't found any papers describing the premises. We know from the 1950 member list that the house was the address of founding member Ron Grace. We have also found a letter dated 20 December 1950 from the club treasurer to Deva members about the club purchasing the bridge tables used at Dee Hills Park, and needing to collect subscriptions for the following year in advance in order to pay for them. We can presume this was in preparation for the move to the next club premises, The Tudor Café in Eastgate Street.

## 5.3 Tudor Café Eastgate Street





Deva moved to The Tudor Café in Eastgate Street in 1951. The building was just opposite the main Debenhams entrance on Eastgate Street. The premises was on the [1<sup>st</sup> floor] reached by steps up to Eastgate Row which then continue into Godstall Lane which runs from Eastgate Street to St Werburgh Street by the cathedral. The Tudor Cafe was owned by the George Dutton and Son Ltd (not the Dutton family associated with Deva). Today, there is still a restaurant and cocktail bar named Duttons in Godstall Lane (part of the JW Lees chain). Back in the 1950s there was The Sigarro Stores (tobacco store) as well as The Tudor Café, and we understand there was also a green grocers [in Bridge Street?] called Duttons. [Description of the premises ..... There were 2 flats above the bridge playing room. Was the playing room the 1<sup>st</sup> floor (i.e. Row level) or 2<sup>nd</sup> floor? There are 5 floors from the ground floor on Eastgate Street to the top.]

We have on file some correspondence with Neale Dutton from the Tudor Cafe in 1958-1960 complaining of fire risk from smokers and cigarette ends being stubbed out on the carpet [and from a fire in a waste paper bin]. Deva moved to new premises early in 1961 and papers to the AGM in October that year mentioned the year being busy “with finding and furnishing the new Club premises, into which we moved on 1st February 1961, before the Club was quite ready, owing to the fact that the old Club was being pulled down, literally, in front of us”.

#### 5.4 46 Upper Watergate Street



Deva moved into 46 Upper Watergate Street on 1 February 1961 and held an official opening on Sunday 26 February (a bridge and tea session). Committee meeting minutes refer to stairs being carpeted, which given that wouldn't be for the stairs from the street to first floor (which are still today in stone and freely accessible from the street), implies the club playing room was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The playing room was at the front of the building, with Deva contributing half the cost of removing a dividing room between two front rooms that existed previously. There was also a back card room, kitchen and bar.

The club's alcohol license was suspended in July 1962 following new licensing laws and, on reapplying, the club was required to put in a satisfactory fire escape. Committee meeting minutes for 1962 & 1963 show that this proved problematic due to the cost and positioning of an external escape route and an internal escape route requiring permission from another tenant. In the end the club found someone else to take over the lease on 46 Upper Watergate Street and took a lease on and moved into rooms in Watergate House.

## 5.5 Watergate House



Deva moved to Watergate House in (Lower) Watergate Street in September 1963 and stayed there until moving to Christleton in 1988. The building is next to the Stanley Palace where Deva held its inaugural meeting and with the club staying there for 25 years the new rooms were obviously a good place for the club. Initially the club had a 7 year lease on [2 rooms on the ground floor with a passage between which was used as a kitchen (approximately 650 sq ft). The lease was extended more than once and at some point Deva took on an adjacent 3<sup>rd</sup> room on the ground floor.

In 1979 there was an Extraordinary General Meeting to consider alternative premises. The proposal was that the club purchase 24 Liverpool Road as its own building and club house. The total cost of purchase and fitting the building out as a bridge club was said to be £35,000. It was intended that this would be funded by members taking out 350 £100 bonds. We don't have minutes from the meeting but we know the building wasn't used by the club and so the proposal presumably was not passed.

Towards the end of the years at Watergate House the building was put up for sale and sold. The new landlord started to be a bit awkward, increasing the service charges (excessively in Deva's view) and threatening to increase the rent at the next opportunity. That started Deva again looking for alternative premises. The club looked at the Little Chef in Littleton on the Tarvin Road, and also considered purchasing 34 Newry Park Chester for £68,000 before settling on the current premises in Christleton.

## 5.6 WI Institute Christleton



The building had been empty for 2 years before Deva moved into the building. Deva was initially offered the building at a peppercorn rent on a long lease providing it took on responsibility for maintaining the building. It was known that the premises were not in good order and that there

would be a considerable cost to making it suitable. With Deva wanting to vacate Watergate House because of excessive service fees, it was agreed that Deva could move to the Christleton building “on licence” without payment until the Charity Commission provided formal consent on the lease terms. In the event the Charity Commission did not provide consent and the terms then had to be modified. After negotiation Deva, was given the building on a 25 year lease from November 1989, rent free for 10 years with Deva carrying out remedial work. Whilst the modified terms seem to have been mostly agreed in 1989 the lease was not completed until December 1992. Deva’s 1993 accounts show that £36.5k was then spent on building improvements (general building work, central heating, rewiring, ventilation system, ceilings and kitchen fixtures) and £6.5k on furnishings together representing the remedial work required under the lease. The original lease document includes a schedule of remedial work and a plan of the building itemising the work to be carried out.

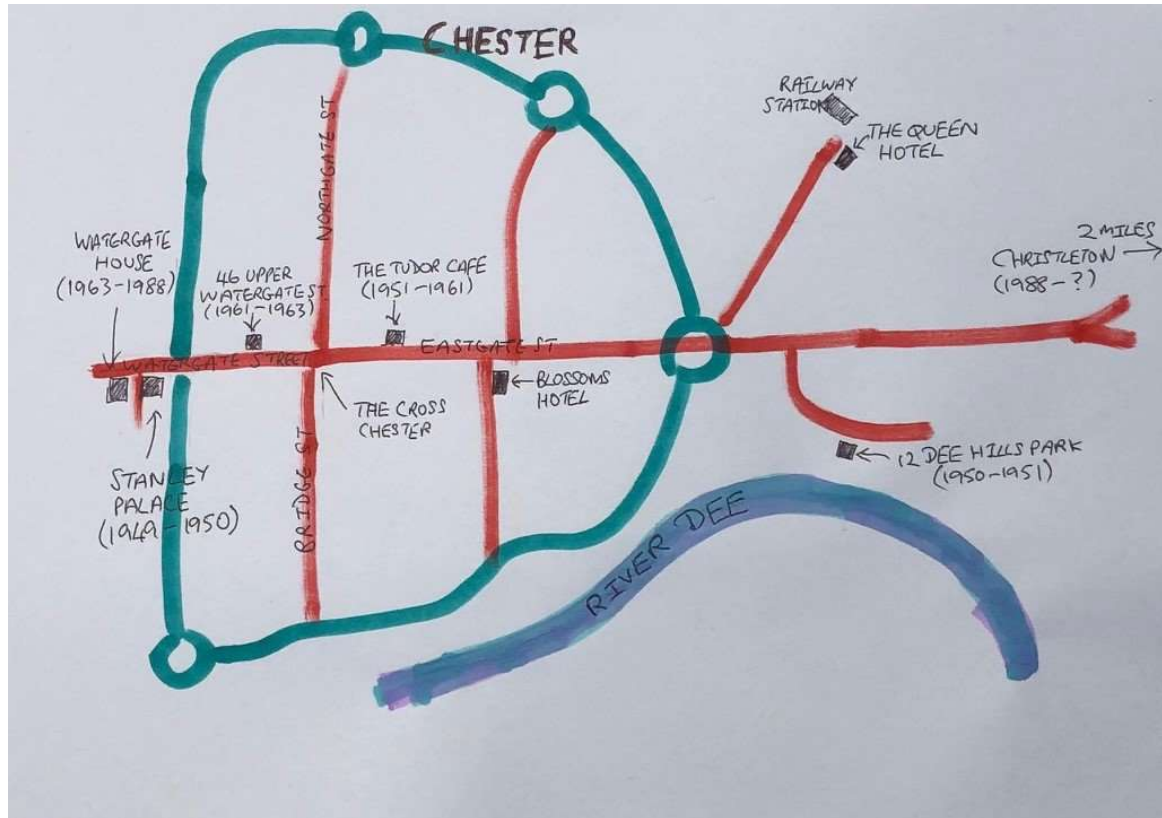
[To clarify the photos of an event in the Christleton Club (which the mayor attended?) showing no door in the SE corner of the room – and source information about the extended porch into the building and new door in the SE corner (and disabled toilet) etc...]

### 5.7 Historic venues for Chester Congress & Chester Bowl

In the late 1950s and early 1960s the Chester Congress was held at the Blossoms Hotel in St John Street. The hotel still exists today and is now in the MacDonalld hotel group. Sometime in the 1960s/1970s these events moved to the Queen Hotel by the station in City Street as it could accommodate more tables. This hotel also still exists and is now in the Best Western hotel group. The two hotels are shown below.



The map below shows the locations of the premises mentioned in this section.



## 6 Conversion to a company limited by guarantee

Prior to 2013, the club operated as an unincorporated association and, not having legal identity, could not enter into contracts in its own name with other parties. At the time Deva took on the original lease on the Christleton building, the club had three members that were appointed trustees of the club and they signed the lease in their own name. The arrangement involved a risk that the trustees could potentially be personally liable for any possible legal, or illegal, action by club members [and non-members?] and because of that the committee investigated alternative legal arrangements before the lease was due for renewal in 2014.

Legal advice was sought and it was decided to set up a Company Limited by Guarantee which would reduce such members' potential liability and create the legal entity which can contract with other parties. A company limited by guarantee does not have any shares or shareholders (like the more common limited company structure) but is owned by guarantors who agree to pay a set amount of money towards company debts. As set up for Deva, the guarantors are club members who agree to contribute up to £1 to the assets of the Company in the event of it being wound up in debt. This is explained to prospective new members on the application form, and we remind members of the ongoing guarantee [as part of the annual subscription and AGM processes].

To become a company limited by guarantee, the club submitted an application to the Registrar of Companies for England and Wales setting out the name of the company (Deva Bridge Club), the company address, who the guarantors are (all current members, and ex-members for one year after ceasing to be a member), the guaranteed amounts (£1 for each member and ex-member) and the company's Articles of Association (rules and regulations for the internal management and administration of the company). Whilst limited companies usually include Limited or Ltd or something similar in their name, Deva was allowed an exemption applicable to private only

companies where the Articles include certain provisions (e.g. no dividend or return of capital to members, including on windup). Accordingly, our official name is just “Deva Bridge Club”. The Articles of Association were drafted by Deva’s legal advisor, based on standard model articles modified to take account of the club’s constitution at that time.

Prior to submitting the application, the club committee approved the proposal of becoming a company limited by guarantee and an EGM was held to gain members’ agreement. The EGM was held on 28 May 2013. Sixty-nine members attended and the resolution was passed unanimously. The application documents were then finalised and submitted on 1 August 2013. Eight days later, on the 9 August 2013, The Registrar of Companies for England and Wales certified that Deva Bridge Club was incorporated as a private company limited by guarantee and gave us the Company Number 8645380. There then followed the technical transfer of club assets from the trustees to the new company completing the new corporate structure well in time for the lease renewal which took place in 2014. (For those interested the Articles of Association can be found on Deva’s website and also on the Companies House website.)

Other options were considered instead of a company limited by guarantee. These included becoming a Registered Charity, and a combination of that and a company limited by guarantee. The charity option would have imposed additional conditions on the club, these including club membership being open to all members of the public (no proposer or seconder or consideration by the committee) and the management of the club including an aim of public benefit rather than just the good of the private club/company.

## 7 Anything Else?

[Suggestions?]

[He has a photo of a celebration with his mother including Shirley Webster, Frank Salt and others - to obtain a copy.]

## Appendix A: Information sources

- Deva files (rather patchy?)
- Pippa Anderson (granddaughter of founder members Harry & Marjorie Smith and daughter of Roy and Daphne Lowe)
- Paul Dutton (son of Eric and Dorothy Dutton)
- Peter Ellis (son of Glyn and Ann Ellis)

## Appendix B: Press cuttings

### 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary (1970)



CHESTER COURANT, TUESDAY, 8th SEPTEMBER, 1970—7

The president of the Deva Bridge Club, Mrs. E. M. Earley, pictured with officials and committee members, at the Club's 21st Anniversary, on Wednesday.

### 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (1989)



THE CHRONICLE, FRIDAY, AUGUST 18, 1989 (Gp 12) CR 27

## Card players gather around to celebrate anniversary

FIFTY keen card-players gathered at the former Women's Institute in Christleton for a party to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Deva Bridge Club.

Mr Eric Dutton and his wife Dorothy, of 40 Curzon Park South, are founder members. He said the beginnings of the club were not so grand.

'When we first started, 40 years ago, we had to restrict our members to 60 people only because of accommodation, but now we have about 250 members.'

He reassured me that it was not a case of old ladies who play bridge.

**By Lynwen Hughes**

Mrs Dutton played against the multi-millionaire actor, Omar Sharif, in Stratford 10 years ago.

'We drew the game we played with him. He is a good player,' said Mrs Dutton with a smile.

#### World Cup

The club has produced many winners over its history, with one past member playing in the Bridge World Cup.

#### Addictive

'Bridge is a very addictive game, with the attraction that once you start playing, you never stop learning. I've been playing for many years and I'm still learning.'

Mrs Dorothy Dutton, said: 'We seem to have a lot of law students in our club, so that shows you the age of some members. In fact some students have failed their exams because their so keen at playing.'

The club's oldest member, Mrs Joyce Harrison, is 92 and also one of the founder members.

Bridge is an internationally popular game, which attracts people from all walks of life.

'Your age and your bank balance don't matter at the bridge table. All that matters, is if you can play the game,' explained Mr Dutton.

This even applied when Mr and

The Deva Bridge Club meets four nights a week, plus two afternoons a week at the former Women's Institute in Christleton. Membership is £12 a year, plus a table fee of 75p.

And the results for this anniversary week are:

Tuesday — North/South: 1, J. Etell and P. Holt; 2, H. Roberts.



P. Swingler. East/West: equal 1, G. Ellis and I. Kirk, B. Boothroyd and T. Hornsby.

Wednesday — N/S: 1, Mr and Mrs Kenyon; 2, R. Lowe and J. Arrowsmith. E/W: 1, R. Graham and A. Prothero; 2, F. Salt and R. Edwards.

Thursday — N/S: 1, M. Taylor and B. Pritchard; 2, C. Murless and W. Walster. E/W: 1, M. Hinge and J. Long; 2, H. Pues and B. Pinnington.

Pictured above Eric and Dorothy Dutton, founder members of the Deva Bridge Club. (0496K7A)

Pictured left Club president John Scott, cutting the celebration cake. (0496K8A)



# Tiaras and medals for game Royal flush of pride for bridge club

BRIDGE players donned tiaras and medals for a jubilee party and played their favourite game with a special pack of cards.

Daphne Lowe and Angie Pinnington, both of the Chester area, cooked a royal feast for fellow members of the Deva Bridge Club on Sunday.

More than 60 members attended the party at the Old WI Hall, Village Street, Christleton, ate jubilee beef and coronation chicken and played bridge with new packs of cards carrying a crown motif and the date.

Mrs Lowe said all the guests thoroughly enjoyed themselves. 'The next day the phone didn't stop ringing', she added.

'There was no strict theme although lots of people were dressed in red white and blue. The invitations said tiaras and medals and those who didn't have them, made them. We played 50s music before the card games started.'



**HAT TRICK:** Clare Blake showed off her fancy headgear. 27HV5125



**REGAL HEADGEAR:** Joyce Wagner, Margeret Taylor and Elsie Artist had a feast fit for Queens at the Deva Bridge Club Jubilee party. 27HV5121



**GAME FOR A LAUGH:** Dorothy Dutton, Charles Greenwood, Frank Salt and Shirley Webster settle down for a celebratory game of bridge. 27HV5122



## Dutton Pairs Successes (1968/1966/1965)

### BRIDGE CLUB CHAMPIONS FOR THE THIRD TIME

The Deva Bridge Club Pairs Championship has been won for the third time in four years by Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Dutton. J. H. Entwisle and Mrs. Grunert were second and H. Pues and T. Lowe third.

Mr. and Mrs. Dutton enjoyed a further success at the weekend when, with Mr. and Mrs. W. W. L. Fearn, they won their fifth-round tie in the British Bridge League Gold Cup, the teams-of-four championship of Great Britain. This puts them into the last eight and the quarter-finals, semi-finals and final will be played over a long weekend next month at Harrogate. The Chester team, who have Mr. F. J. Dean as a reserve, expect to be joined there by five of the strongest English teams and two from Scotland.

This is the first time an all-Chester team has gone so far in the Gold Cup, though two years ago the same four reached the semi-final of the Hubert Phillips Cup, the mixed teams-of-four championship of the English Bridge Union.

The leading scores in the pairs contest at the Deva Bridge Club on Wednesday were: north-south: 1, Mrs. E. McGarva and Mrs. W. Garner 60.54 per cent; 2, Mr. and Mrs. Jeffery 58.90; 3 (equal), Mr. and Mrs. Figgis and D. Stevenson and P. Carr 55.58; east-west: 1, Mrs. Dutton and J. Entwisle 64.96; 2, J. Ireland and R. Atherton 59.28; 3, Mrs. Fearn and G. Henshaw 57.01. The leading pairs on Tuesday were: north-south: 1, Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood; 2, Mrs. Phillips and Mr. Humphries; east-west: 1, Mrs. Burdekin and Mrs. E. F. Dutton; 2, Mr. and Mrs. Beaumont.



Mrs. Dorothy Dutton, of Curzon Park, Chester, pictured with bridge trophies she has won, partnered by her husband, Mr. Eric Dutton, or Mrs. D. Grunert, during the past year. Among the trophies won are the Waterworth Cup for Merseyside and Deeside Pairs, the Medical Cup, Chester Bowl, North-West Ladies' Pairs, and the Capel Cups. Mr. and Mrs. Dutton, who have been playing competitive bridge for 17 years, were founder-members of the Deva Bridge Club.

## First Chester Bowl competition (1948)

### CONTRACT BRIDGE

Bridge players in Chester and district will be interested to learn that a duplicate pairs competition is to be played during the winter at the Stanley Palace. A silver rose bowl, to be known as the Chester Bowl, and given by Mrs. Norman Goldson, Great Saughall—herself a bridge player of some repute—will be held for twelve months by the winning pair. The proceeds will be devoted to the Cheshire Regiment War Memorial Appeal.

Entries close on October 30th. Entry forms with full details may be obtained from Mr. W. W. L. Fearn, 5, Bridge-street, The Cross, Chester (Phone 1636). The first round of the competition will be played on Saturday, Nov. 13th, at 6.30 p.m.

## Appendix C: 60 Years at the Deva Bridge Club

- Some Reminiscences by Charles Greenwood (President 1978-80)

- Dated July 2011

Ken Bostock and I joined the Deva Bridge Club in 1951/1952. The club then had a total membership of about 30 and used to play Duplicate in two rooms on the third floor of an old house in Lower Bridge Street. This venue would really delight some of today's Health and Safety officials. For one thing, the only means of escape in the event of fire was a rope ladder which would be thrown out of a third floor sash window, and which was found during a test to end about eight feet above the ground. Fortunately, as far as I know, there was never an occasion to use it.

Ken was a men's hairdresser in Chester at this time and in the course of his business, met Jim Harrison who was then Tournament Director at the Deva Bridge Club. Inevitably at some point in their conversation, the subject of Bridge came up, with Jim of course saying "Why don't you join our Bridge club?"

To describe our knowledge of Bridge at that time as rudimentary would be stretching things a bit. Ken and I had spent a couple of years playing with, and generally beating our less than enthusiastic wives, whom we cajoled into making a reluctant "four" on Saturday evenings. Having mastered the ability to finesse an ace/queen, we confidently decided that we were now qualified to join a club. And so we joined the Deva.

On introducing us to the club members at our debut, Jim Harrison, amongst his various quips was heard to say, "You want to watch this lot, they'll rook you rotten." Ken and I played a "system" which I had picked up piecemeal in Nissen huts and sergeants' messes during the war, and which we called "Culbertson" (Our apologies to Ely Culbertson). This produced some puzzlement and head shaking when announced at the club.

Our very first board was the subject of much comment. Our opponents were a very able and experienced couple. They bought the contract on the first board and I led the ace of clubs from AKxx. The declarer then asked my partner "Does your partner lead ace from ace,king?" Ken, with Jim Harrison's "warning" fresh in his mind, looked out from under his eyebrows and growled "Well, that'd be telling, would't it?." Declarer's partner, a lady well known in national Bridge circles of the day, tried to suppress a half smothered giggle whilst declarer, a similarly qualified but somewhat humourless Polish gentleman looked non-plussed and ended up shrugging his shoulders. Later that evening, as E/W we subsequently moved to a table in the second room where we were faced by two very scary ladies. One was very overweight, overlapping her chair on both sides (never in a million years would she have been able to use the "fire escape"). She waited imperiously, a whiskey at her elbow, while her partner, of even more intimidating aspect, held a pint of beer in one hand and was smoking a cigar. However, notwithstanding their intimidating presence, they were really quite kind to us, if a little patronising. On the final board however, they managed to get all tangled up in their complicated bidding system and went 1100 down in a doubled slam. Ken and I moved on in a glow of self congratulation and, in ignorance of the mechanics of match point scoring, nursing a fond hope that this big score might win the night for us.

In subsequent weeks, we learned that most of the club members played a system called "Acol", although a number of the "better" players were using a new fangled system they called "Nottingham Club". At the suggestion of various club members, we soon became immersed in Reese's "The Acol System Today" and Ben Cohen and Rhoda Barrow's "Acol Without Tears", so that gradually we became accepted as passable Bridge players, joined the E.B.U., treasured our master points and later proudly progressed through the ranks of Club Master, County Master and Master. After adding a couple of stars, it eventually dawned on us that further progress up the master rankings would be possible only if we were prepared to travel the country in search of the precious "green" points. We did in fact make a couple of forays into this field. I seem to remember a round of the Gold Cup in Liverpool and some other event in S.Wales, but I found the atmosphere in such events a bit too tense, and I also felt that the behaviour of some players at some tables was less than courteous. These experiences only confirmed my feelings that I was not really interested in

the wider competitive world of Bridge, and like quite a few club members, all I wanted was a good game of bridge once or twice a week, at a reasonable standard and in pleasant company, all of which the "Deva" provides with just the right degree of competition to provide a comfortable level of ego massaging.

There was a somewhat more relaxed atmosphere in the club in those early days. Only the grosser examples of ethical misbehaviour were really punished, and a number of fairly extreme cases were simply regarded as funny in what seems in retrospect to be perhaps a greater tolerance for "Characters". For example, there was one lady who, whenever she was finessed through, invariably hesitated significantly when she did not hold the honour being finessed, and always followed promptly whenever she held the card. The club members all knew all about this, and whenever they held a two way finesse, would first play through her, and if she played without hesitation they would finesse, but if she hesitated, they would go up with the master card and finesse back the other way. It never failed and she never caught on.

While on the subject of "characters" there comes to mind a certain lady of advanced age and dominating character who was noted for her fiery temperament and short fuse. I played against this lady and her partner on one occasion when I was playing the Blue Club System. On the first board, I opened 1C, alerted and explained by partner as 17 or more points. Partner responded 1S, alerted and explained by me as at least one ace and one king. After exploring for a slam, we ended up in 5S. On this deal I think I had 8 spades to the AKQ and, on playing the hand, declarer showed out on the first round of trumps. All Hell broke loose! "How could declarer in a trump contract be void in trumps etc. etc." This lady didn't believe in tournament directors, she preferred to bully her opponents herself. We eventually got through the board more or less intact, but with our nerves a bit ragged.

We then bought the contract on the second board, again after a further session of very conventional bidding, and in due course were subjected to another nerve shattering tirade about phony bids etc. On the final board, the lady herself became declarer and at one stage during the play she led from the wrong hand (to her advantage as it happens) and neither of us had the courage to tell her!!

There is one further example I feel is worth the telling. At one point in an evening when a move was called, there was a considerable delay because some pairs, including Ken and I, were somewhat late finishing the last hand. As we were finally sitting down at the next table, the director suddenly shouted "hold everything" and then proceeded to correct his earlier instruction "E/W move up one table" to "E/W move up two tables". When we all sat down at our new tables, the lady on my left opened 1D which was passed out. After the hand had been played, she said "we'd have been better in hearts partner". Her partner said "but you didn't bid hearts", to which she replied "I did the first time".

Though I have said things were more relaxed, that is not to say there was no discipline. The tournament directors of those days were all powerful and had much more freedom of action in the interpretation of the rules and in their judgement of what was a fair ruling. Wilf Fearn was our tournament director for many years and his rule was at times almost draconian. For example, there was a time under Wilf's rule when you had to be in attendance 15 minutes before the start of play or you would be locked out.

In due course, the club changed its premises to Watergate House where we got a room which would accommodate 8 tables, then after about a year we managed to get an additional large room so that we could then play about 20 tables. The club then advertised Bridge lessons and the result was an avalanche of pupils. Lessons were held on two days a week with Wilf Fearn and Eric Dutton as tutors. A fair proportion of the pupils eventually joined the club and within about a year, club membership topped 200 and has never looked back.

I know it is axiomatic that as one gets older, remembered things get rosier, and this is probably true as I look back on "the old days" when the social aspects of the club prevailed over its competitive functions. I remember with pleasure the friendly matches we used to have with neighbouring clubs like Rossett and Wrexham. These were much more of a social occasion than are most Bridge events of today. I remember also the Chester Congresses when we used to hire the Blossoms Hotel for events of 50 or more tables. These congresses were always held in the summer and players would come from all over the North West,

often booking into a hotel for the week-end. We even used to run a well attended pre-Congress pairs event on the preceding Friday night. All that sort of thing gradually faded over the years as players became fixated on "green" points which were not available at such events, but were becoming more available at E.B.U. green point events which were gradually proliferating throughout the country. The ethos of club bridge changed so that players would generally prefer to spend their playing time in a quest for green points in these events rather than as previously, in a pleasant Bridge weekend in Chester.

One noticeable (and possibly laudable) difference between club Bridge then and now as I remember it, is the relatively rare occurrence nowadays of "psyches". In the 50s and 60s psyching was very much in vogue. You could not play a session with some players without knowing that at some time during the session, he/she would psyche. Let it be said that even in those days, attempting to "field" a psyche was considered a heinous offence and was heavily penalised. Eventually an attempt was made to bring psyching under control by adopting the E.B.U.'s advice and instituting a "Psyche Book". If you committed a psyche, your name and your partner's name would go down in "the book" so that if you psyched too often, you would get a warning from the tournament director. In practice however, very few club members ever bothered to report a psyche so entries in the Deva psyche book were pretty sparse. This brings to my mind a member of the club whose antipathy to psyching bordered on the pathological. She would declaim loudly and frequently against psyches and psychers. She was a regular partner to my wife who on one occasion, in a sudden inexplicable passing fit of summer madness, uncharacteristically decided to psyche against of all people, the tournament director. The upshot of it all was that the name of "Edna-" the dedicated crusader against psyches, was included amongst the very few names anyone had bothered to have entered in the psyche book.

There was a number of players who achieved notoriety as habitual psychers, and for whom psyching seemed to be an almost irresistible temptation. Such was Paul Griffiths. It is necessary for this tale that I mention his name, and I'm sure, wherever he is, he won't mind. For some reason, a fairly good natured "thing" seems to have developed between Paul and myself whereby he would psyche against me on every possible occasion, while I would habitually ignore his bids and try to carry on regardless. There came one night when, a bit fed up with all this, I decided to bite the biter and I psyched against Paul. As it turned out, this proved to be very effective in getting them into the wrong contract and when Paul's hand went down as dummy, his partner, a chap called Jeff Warren made his famous declaration, - "We've been done. We've been out-Griffithed".

For good or bad, so far as the Deva is concerned, the psyching habit seems largely to have died out with a new generation of players.

Another very noticeable difference between the club now and as it used to be is in the number of married couples constituting partnerships in the club events. I can remember a time when over 70% of the places at the tables were occupied by married couples. Today, that proportion has fallen to the extent that the club flitch has been abandoned for lack of participants. Nostalgically, I do miss the sound of marital warfare which was once a feature of club life.

At the time I joined the Deva, there was no official alerting. From almost universal usage however, a response of 2C to an opening of 1NT was accepted as Stayman, 4NT was ace asking and double, if partner had not bid was for takeout up to the three level. Some time round about the late 50s or early 60s, alerting was introduced, a good move and timely because artificial conventions were proliferating well beyond the generally accepted conventions indicated above. This alerting took the form that the partner of a bidder was required to tap the table whenever his partner made a bid which had a conventional meaning. This basically remained the procedure until the introduction of bidding boxes, (another good innovation) when the "Alert" card replaced the tap.

In more recent years however, there have been from time to time, periodic rashes of prohibitions and alerting modifications etc. emanating from the E.B.U. and culminating in the "Orange Book" with its multifarious rules and regulations, many of which are unknown to most ordinary players, but provide good

hunting for the cardroom lawyers. I must say I do find some difficulty getting my head round some of the fairly recent and to me more illogical innovations such as that lower level "doubles" must be alerted only when they actually mean "double", and that three card minor openings and conventional bids of four or more must not be alerted. Maybe it is just the cussedness of age, or my looking back to a more carefree and less complicated time zone. Or maybe it is just an ingrained predilection for logic.

Sometime around 1990, Watergate House was put up for sale and our new landlords, who I suspect were not keen Bridge enthusiasts, proposed to put up our rent many times over, making it impossible for us to stay. So, after a lot of good work and negotiation by certain club members, we came to our present premises.

Shortly after this, we took our first steps in the computerisation of scoring and events by the adoption of some home produced programmes using a Commodore computer which was soon replaced and the programmes re-written to run on a P.C. This was a great step forward in reducing the time taken in the matchpointing, totalling and collating of results and events, but was eventually replaced by the all embracing revolution in the computerisation of Bridge events which became available commercially and which in effect, does pretty well everything for you. This is the up to date process with which the current membership is familiar.

A few of our present club members will remember the times when all matchpointing and scoring was done "by hand." It was the practice at the Deva to try to do all this at the end of play on the night. Consequently, when play had ended, you would see the tournament director and a small group of volunteers all busily matchpointing the individual score slips, recording the match points on the recap sheets, totalling them, then checking the totals and finally the grand total. Occasionally the grand total would not check, so the matchpointing on every score slip and the totals for each pair had to be rechecked until the error was found. On occasion, an error would be so deeply hidden, the director would have to call a halt and take it all home to study and correct at his leisure. This would also be the case when some irregularity necessitated creating percentages in order to arrive at the correct rankings. It would be interesting to know how many of our present club members could readily matchpoint a score slip. Also, how long today would it take to score up an event "by hand".

For Bridge enthusiasts, the invention of "Duplicate" was perfect in meeting the competitive instinct which lies in all of us, and the conception of the Master Point system was a stroke of genius which went straight to the heart of the human ego. Duplicate has this great attraction. That for any event, any pair playing in a club, more or less regardless of their place in the club's hierarchy, if the gods favour them and they don't drop too many clangers, they can win on the night. However, players also know that skilful play on their part can greatly enhance their chances of winning. So while you don't necessarily have to be the best players to win, yet at the same time you know that to play well may be decisive in getting you a win. Luck is a factor on the night whose dominance varies according to the make up of the field and to some extent the nature of the hands and can, especially in club bridge, play a significant and sometimes dominant role in deciding who wins on the night.

Theoretically, the best players should always win at Duplicate, and probably would if the scoring was over a very large number of boards. However, in a typical night's Bridge at a club with only about 24 boards in the session, the statistical and distributional quirks of the deals over such a small field, together with the wide variations in the playing skills of the competitors can have a decisive influence on the results. Nevertheless, the knowledge that on many occasions, skilful play can often prevail, is a sufficient prompt to the ego. In the end however, although the odds certainly favour the stronger players, the fact is that if luck is with us, we are all in with a chance. Generally speaking, the more often you play, the more often you will get the satisfaction of a win, and the more often you win, the more often you will collect those master points, if that is your aim. Such is the appeal of Duplicate.

Finally a word about our chief Tournament Directors. The character and running of a Bridge Club is greatly influenced by its chief Tournament Directors and during my span of membership, the Deva has had five:-

Jim Harrison, Wilf Fearn, Peter Webster, Glyn Ellis and currently John Dawe. Jim Harrison retired as T.D. shortly after my induction, so all I can say of him is that he was a very agreeable and likeable character. Wilf Fearn who succeeded Jim seems in retrospect to tower as a director. Not prepared to suffer fools (or anyone else for that matter), he was nevertheless a knowledgeable and very effective Tournament Director. Having played as his partner in the Championship Pairs event for several years, I can say that although a formidable director, he was always most courteous and understanding as a partner. When Wilf retired from directing, the reins were taken up by Peter Webster who filled the role until he had to give it up due to outside pressure of work. My outstanding memory of Peter in those days before computers, is the skill with which he could manipulate figures, but mostly I think I remember him for an occasion when a fairly celebrated visitor was "slumming" at the club one night and was heard to make a derogatory and rather insulting remark about the directing. Peter won my admiration by immediately ordering this revered player out of the club, and he had to leave forthwith taking the equally celebrated visitor he had brought with him.

Peter Webster was succeeded by Glyn Ellis, who did a prodigious amount of work for many, many years, including the early moves to computerise the club's scoring and records. On his retirement as T.D., he was made an honorary life member in recognition for all his services to the club. Our director at the time of writing is John W Dawe. John is the man who, with the assistance and guidance of Fred Dixon, really pitched us into the I.T. age. Largely on his initiative, the comprehensive range of equipment and software for the complete computerisation of the club was instituted. They were instrumental in establishing the Deva web site and John is the author of most of its contents which he updates almost on a daily basis. Added to his other duties as T.D., this amounts to an awful lot of work. It is to be hoped the club can find someone willing and able to take this on when John eventually decides to retire as T.D.

John Dawe shares with Peter Webster the unwelcome distinction of having to expel a player from the club. In John's case the offender was a former club president who had upset a lady by his use of very inappropriate language. After several times refusing to apologise, past president or not, he was asked to leave.

I have seen the Deva Bridge Club grow and mature over the last 60 years, and it is with some satisfaction I have seen it develop and gain recognition in the world of Bridge. At the same time, as I look back, I cannot deny just a little bit of nostalgic regret that as the natural result of its growth and development, "The Club" has to a degree become fragmented, and in part is slanted away from its social function and more towards its function for competitive achievement. But that is the inevitable price of development. That is how it is and time cannot be turned back.

Charles R Greenwood

July 2011