# Leamington Bridge Club

Chairman’s Report 2023

During the last year we have continued to meet once a week on a Monday and online on a Wednesday. Averaged over the year we have 5.12 tables on a Monday, the maximum being 7, a figure we last attained in February this year. Online we rarely exceed three tables now, and there have been several occasions when we had insufficient numbers to make the sessions viable (1.5 tables or less). It is unsurprising that in consequence we are making a loss; we really need 7 tables a week on a Monday in order to cover the costs of hiring the hall and paying for refreshments. The online sessions are profitable but with such low numbers the amount of profit is small.

I would like to put the reason for the decline in numbers into a local context. Kenilworth Bridge Club has an interesting graphic on its home page, showing that the numbers attending face to face sessions is significantly lower than before Covid, and even when you add in their online sessions the numbers are still lower overall. Kenilworth currently run only one evening session a week (on a Tuesday); this is certainly fewer than a few years ago. Interestingly, they are only attracting around five to six tables for their evening session, although their Tuesday morning sessions are now attracting 15 or 16 tables. Their online evening sessions on BBO seem to range from 6 to 9 tables.

At Coventry, where I play face to face on a Tuesday evening, sessions are similar to ours, attracting between 4 and 6 tables. They also run sessions on a Saturday morning which are a little more popular, attracting up to 8 tables. Their main online session is on a Wednesday evening (the same as us) but is much more popular, with 8.5 tables recently, although 6 tables is more common. Coventry has recently abandoned its Friday evening session through lack of support and now only offers the Tuesday evening session face to face.

So we are not alone in seeing a decline in numbers. Fortunately, this year,I do not have any deaths to report from the last twelve months\*, although there are some members whose health means that they can no longer attend to play face to face. We have manage to recruit some new members and I would like to welcome Fred Gamble and Chris Harrison.

The only practical suggestion that I can make relates to the online sessions; we could explore moving them to a different evening in the hope that we could thereby attract more players. We do not have the option of doing that for our face to face sessions here at St Marks where the hall is only available on a Monday.

One other development which we did discuss last year was the introduction of technology. There was little support last year for Bridgemates, which are used at Kenilworth and Coventry. There is however an alternative, which is used at Warwick and at Rugby, I understand. That is a program called Arcscorer, which uses tablets such as Kindles in place of our paper travellers. One advantage is that the tablet displays the names of the pairs due to arrive at the table, which would make life easier for those who find it difficult to remember who they are following in a Howell movement. It also minimizes the risk of mistakes on the travellers, and would enable the evening’s results to be available as soon as the last board was played. The cost of installing such a system would be around £1300, with an annual fee of £149 subsequently. For that price we would be supplied with all the equipment needed, except the laptop; but that would not normally be a problem, as I am prepared to bring my laptop with me, and I am sure that others would do so when I was not available. It is simply necessary to download the program on to the laptop. We would need to store the tablets and the router in the cupboard from week to week, which is a security risk, but we could cover them with blankets! I shall be interested to hear whether you think that is a good way for us to spend what is left of the club funds.

Almost finally, I have an apology: I promised last year to try and run both a handicap and an individual competition. Sadly, we haven’t managed to achieve this, but we did manage to run a teams of four competition recently and the other competitions are still on my radar. Perhaps the Christmas party will offer an opportunity to run an individual competition, although it depends on getting the right number of tables.

It only remains for me to thank the other members of the committee for their service over the year and to welcome Alan Robinson, who has agreed to take over the running of the online sessions from me. On a personal note, I should add that I am now undergoing training from the EBU as a club TD and will be directing for the first time at Coventry next month. This should help to lift the burden of directing from Jerome who has basically been doing it single-handed for far too long.

\* I unaccountably, and unforgivably, omitted to mention the sudden death of Pat Johnson in January this year. Pat was a long-serving member of both this club and the old Leamington club and continued to play online after she was unable to continue playing face to face.

**Trophies**

Autumn League 2022 (McDonald Cup) Ken Boutell and Mike Curley

Winter League 2023 (TD’s Trophy) Jerome Tucker and Margaret Young

Summer League 2023 (Albermarle Cup) Ken Boutell and Mike Curley