



**Notes from the EBU County Chairmen's Meeting
held at the Young Chelsea Bridge Club, London,
at 13:00, on Wednesday 15th May 2019**

Present:

Jeremy Dhondy	Chairman	Ian Payn	Vice Chairman
Jerry Cope	Treasurer	Gordon Rainsford	Chief Executive
Graham Smith	Board Member	Tim Anderson	Membership Development Officer
Bev Purvis	Club Liaison Officer	Sam Kelly	Note Taker & Communications Officer
Kay Carter	Reception	Andy Margetts	EBED Chairman

Chairman or designated substitute		Chairman or designated substitute	
Present	Apologies	Present	Apologies
Avon	Peter Shelley	Lincolnshire	Reg Loosley
Bedfordshire	Colin O'Hara	London	Christine Duckworth
Berks & Bucks	Dick Davey	Manchester	Irene Davies
Cambs & Hunts	Peter Grice	Mersey/Cheshire	Christopher Raymond
Channel Islands	Pat Panter	Middlesex	Peter Hasenson
Cornwall	Liz Perry	Norfolk	Graham Hardman
Cumbria	Trevor Ward	Northamptonshire	Chris Wormleighton
Cumbria	Christine Ward	North East	Liz Muir
Derbyshire	Alastair McCance	Nottinghamshire	Toni Smith
Devon	Geoff Clements	Oxfordshire	Kathy Talbot
Dorset	Tim Dunsby	Somerset	Tony Russ
Essex	Paul Mollison	Staffs & Shrops	Pamela Booth-Jones
Gloucestershire	Patrick Shields	Suffolk	Jeff Orton
Hants & IoW	Andy Hughes	Surrey	Trevor Hobson
Herefordshire	Christine Barnes	Sussex	Peter Clinch
Hertfordshire	Gary Conrad	Warwickshire	Myra Scott
Hertfordshire	Alan Woof	Westmorland	John Ellwood
Isle of Man	John Large	Wiltshire	Richard Gwyer
Kent	Malcolm Lewis	Worcestershire	Barbara Griffiths
Kent	Norman Inniss	Yorkshire	Nick Woolven
Lancashire	Bill Aston	Yorkshire	David Guild
Leicestershire	David Pollard		

Apologies from: Heather Dhondy (Board Member), Gillian Fawcett (Board Member), Anthony Golding (Board Member), Rob Lawy (Board Member), Ron Millett (Board Member)

Opening comments

Jeremy Dhondy (JD), Chairman, opened the meeting by welcoming all those present.

EBED

Andy Margetts (AM) gave an introduction and update from EBED. He started by saying that he has an evolutionary role with EBED, not a revolutionary role. EBED are also aware of a historic lack of bridge knowledge within the team, which they are tackling, having recently appointed a number of new recruits. Lorna Watson is the new EBTA manager, she is an active bridge teacher, and able to handle any teaching queries. There are also three new trustees; Terry Hewitt, Douglas Wright and

Mary Sharp. There have been changes in the youth department, Giles Ip is the new Youth Co-Ordinator and will help create youth programmes across the counties.

EBED are also looking to refresh their teaching materials, starting with the books and content available.

AM mentioned the Teachers Conference that is taking place 14th – 16th June where a few places are still available.

EBED's 2019 programme of teaching courses is more widely available geographically than any previous years, with the hope to expand further in 2020. In September 2019 there are also TD and Advanced TD courses available.

EBED are going to pilot a new Fast Track course, AM asked for ideas from the counties regarding the Fast Track approach. The aim is to run the courses in regions where there is currently no other option, so as not to run in competition with current courses.

AM ended by opening to questions from the floor

Kathy Talbot (Oxfordshire) asked how long the Fast Track courses are. AM confirmed that the courses are 2 weekends of accelerated learning, but can be delivered in other ways e.g. weekly.

Bev Purvis stated that the Fast Track course was of limited value when taken as a one off course and needs to be available with other systems such as supervised play in clubs to be of most benefit. She noted that Somerset have a good set up with this model.

David Guild (Yorkshire) spoke of his own experience running Fast Track courses, and that there is a need to have novice sessions in clubs, as learning bridge is 70% practice and 30% teaching/learning.

Patrick Shields (Gloucestershire) asked for clarification of the counties role in teaching quality. AM confirmed that EBED are looking at quality and evaluating the meaning and structure of learning to fit the end user.

Peter Clinch (Sussex) asked how EBED are focusing the curriculum towards younger people. AM stated that the Fast Track courses were designed for younger people, they have been trialled at the University of Warwick.

Note: Andy Margetts left after this agenda item.

Membership

JD introduced the topic of membership by noting that the average age of bridge players is rising. He handed over to David Guild (DG) (Yorkshire).

David Guild (Yorkshire)

DG introduced the topic of membership with a good news story from his own Ilkley bridge club, where they have increased their members by 100 over the course of a year. He talked through his report (see appendix 1) before taking questions.

The report started with a statistics breakdown of the difference between the total number of club members and the number active club members. In Yorkshire the number of active players is 70%, DG encouraged all counties to look at their own active member statistics to identify and help the highest risk clubs.

The average of members in Yorkshire in 2018 was 66.5 years. DG stated that while bridge is seen as a retirement activity, part of the problem with this is that the retirement age is getting higher, new members are now likely to be in their late 60's. This has an impact on teaching and the quality of bridge being played. Also to note, is that in the age of austerity, college teaching courses are being axed, which affects the number of people learning bridge.

All clubs should be trying to recruit more members, and larger clubs should be looking to recruit beyond their membership sustainability figures. DG then went on to talk about the problems compounded by the average age of a club going up, for example the older people start playing bridge, the lower the level of NGS you achieve. Even taking into account intellect and commitment, it takes quite a few years to gain proficiency in the game. Due to the changing landscape of the game, it will become more of a social game. There is currently a plateauing of players at grade 6 or 7. Elite players do not attract new players to the club as they once did. With the grading system not absolute, this will change the standard of bridge over time. It is the higher grade players that play in tournaments, Yorkshire are introducing lower level tournaments to encourage the average grade player to play. Sussex have also started organising a tournament for players of grade 5 and below. Dorset also have a similar tournament.

Tim Anderson (Membership Development Officer)

Following DG's talk, Tim Anderson (TA) talked about his role as Membership Development Officer and an update.

TA started on a positive note, confirming that there has been a ready take-up of people eager to learn bridge wherever it is taught and marketed.

He made clear the distinction that the model piloted in Yorkshire for the membership campaign would not necessarily work in other regions. He outlined the different work going on in different regions across the country, as well as the difficulties some have had.

Some points that can help a membership campaign:

- Continuous gentle marketing, including social media marketing e.g. Facebook or a dedicated website
- A hosting system at each club
- Using technology for quick results, discussion of hands etc.
- A friendly atmosphere for players of all standards

TA re-stated the need for all clubs to focus on recruitment and development of new members. He noted that un-affiliated clubs should not be our target for affiliation, although we should maintain good relationships with them as many of their members also play in EBU clubs. TA proposed that the EBU should be looking to make EBU affiliation a more compelling proposition, especially for clubs which are more social and less competitive in character. With this in mind, TA asked for feedback on his EBU Assured proposal. Things we might be able to accomplish with this include helping clubs where necessary to adapt their culture to the current demands and for us to do a better job of helping newcomers to find a club via an improved EBU web directory that is more compelling and informative than just a list of names and web links. This would be rolled out in conjunction with a new bridge web directory, facilities and marketing of clubs. The EBU would provide assistance to all clubs wanting to improve their offering.

Following TA's presentation there was a discussion from the floor around how best to promote the EBU to both new members and non-affiliated clubs.

Irene Davis (Manchester) talked of the difficulty of changing a mind-set, especially from committees that have very conservative views regarding membership campaigns. She also noted that often clubs

are hampered financially by not owning their own premises, meaning they have a financial burden when renting rooms for beginner sessions. It was noted that people can feel beleaguered.

DG stated that one way to combat this feeling of lack of energy in volunteers, is to try to involve all members of a club, and have a bottom up approach to a campaign.

Barbara Griffiths (Worcestershire) stated that Worcestershire have not signed up to the membership campaign as they are currently doing well with their own membership drive. She noted that two clubs have been getting good results from holding café bridge sessions to get new players interested.

Patrick Shields (Gloucestershire) said that the counties exist for the promotion of bridge as a whole, not just the EBU clubs.

Peter Clinch (Sussex) said that the Sussex county constitution has a note not to promote unaffiliated clubs, so this will be looked into. He also stated that non-affiliated clubs tend to use Bridgewebs for their own clubs. We need to promote NGS to them.

TA agreed that NGS is important and the EBU should promote ourselves as the governing national body.

DG stated that larger clubs generally have financial reserves, and that the fear of getting into membership is often more of a hindrance. He noted that for smaller clubs, there are grants available from EBED.

Malcolm Lewis (Kent) noted that most members do not appreciate the amount of UMS and table money that the EBU takes. He also asked if the EBU could do more to help clubs with marketing, for example the University of Kent did not allow the bridge club to have a stand at their open day. TA replied that this may be an EBED matter and he would make them aware of this.

DG suggested clubs should also try “retirement marketing” for example councils and large companies often have open days for local community groups to promote themselves to their employees.

Richard Gwyer (Wiltshire) asked how to find the membership campaign website. TA confirmed the details. He also advised that it is often a good idea for clubs and counties to have their own dedicated website, Yorkshire have a template that they are willing to let other clubs and counties use.

Geoff Clements (Devon) commented that the EBU should be both a social and a competitive game. The perception of the EBU is that it is for top end players, the EBU should have an organised structure to follow for all clubs. Gordon Rainsford (GR) (EBU Chief Executive) replied that all clubs must follow the Laws of Duplicate Bridge, but that there are also regulatory options for clubs to choose from, including a range provided by the EBU in the Blue Book. He also stated that the matter of calling a director should not be perceived as a bad thing in clubs, the director is there to help players with problems in a fair and friendly manner. He asked all clubs to promote calling for the director as a good thing.

There was discussion about the context of calling a director and the impact it could have on novice players versus more advanced players. It was agreed that a director should be called but they would need to use their judgement and sense of context, as if a direct call is not handled properly it could put people off playing.

Patrick Shields (Gloucestershire) spoke of his experience of U3A sessions. He said that they had a good response to afternoon sessions and the EBU clubs may benefit from similar afternoon or morning sessions.

Nick Woolven (NW) (Yorkshire) presented the paper produced by Ron Millet (RM), (see appendix). He advised that RM's views are not cut and dry, but that the EBU approach to membership should be focused on the 55-70 age group of potential new players, rather than attracting unaffiliated clubs. NW asked for feedback for RM's paper so that he can update the board at their meeting in June (12th).

Note: Graham Smith left after this agenda item.

Financial Strategy

Jerry Cope (JC) (Treasurer)

EBU financial model was previously centred around competitions, the Bridge Warehouse and UM. However, due to competitions not performing as well as in the past and the Bridge Warehouse profits falling, there needs to be a change. It was noted that the competitions at present do not make a loss, however, neither do they make a profit. The warehouse market is now much more competitive, and while sales are steady, the margins are being squeezed, resulting in lower profits.

JC stated that the original response to this issue was to improve productivity, with changes to staffing, making processes more efficient and cutting rebates for players with the highest number of games. There are now no more areas to improve.

If nothing is changed in the budget, then JC predicts a loss of £100k over the span of four years, this is not acceptable.

The EBU needs high level radical change, this will either be an increase in income or a reduction in expenditure or both. To increase income, the EBU would look at increasing UM. For every 1p increase in UM, this is worth £18kpa, UM does not currently match inflation. The other option would be to reduce our services or investment. A reduction in investment would mean an impact on modernising the EBU website and the membership campaign. A reduction in service would impact current benefits for example making the EBU diary opt in, rather than opt out, or removing some 50% UM payments.

JC asked the floor to consider the following options:

- Reduce number of magazine issues each year
- Reduce EBED investment
- Eliminate equipment grant
- Reduce the cost of Masterpoints
- Reduce further the support for internationals (this has already been substantially reduced)

JC also asked, how should the EBU decide? Has anything been missed?

Following a discussion around the pros and cons of different options, there was general agreement that the room would be happy with JC to propose a package for the AGM which included an increase in UM over the next four years, starting with a 2p increase in 2020 (year 1 – 2p, year 2 – 2p, year 3 – 1p, year 4 – 1p), and also some matching cuts in expenditure. It was noted that spending on internationals was for a very small set of players.

JD thanked everyone for attending. The meeting finished at 4pm.

Summary - Chairmen's Presentation May 2019 – Yorkshire Bridge Clubs

Slide 1 Title Page - This is a work in progress presentation on a paper on EBU Stats and Impacts being worked up by Ron Millet and David Guild – To be published in June.

Slide 2 – Yorkshire Player Stats – Active club members only 71% of total. Deadwood distorts true trends. Use Active players only for Club Player trends. A Club Chairman can drill down to see how many members of any club are active players.

Slide 3 Active Players Trend – Shows stats for Yorkshire active membership are fairly stable – But structural problems as follow:

Slide 4 – Median Active Club Player Age 73 years and getting older.

Slide 5 – Average Club entry Age 66.5 years now and later official retirement will drive up to late 60's.

Slide 6 – Performance by Age of Entrant – Older entry will make it difficult to reach higher grades.

Teaching – Need to get to pre-retired as first priority . Evening & weekend courses essential. Also, more compact courses (Fast Track). More in Club teaching – Novice sessions, guided play etc.

Slide 7 – Clubs becoming more social play. Leads to more daytime play and lower standards. Clubs need to structure for this.

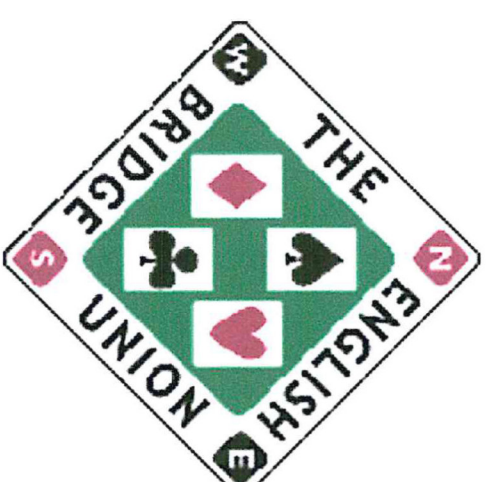
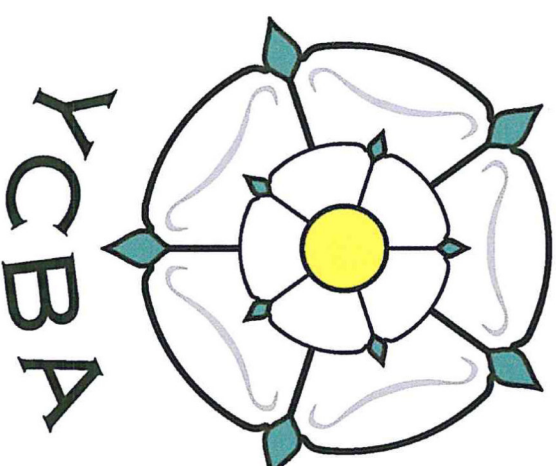
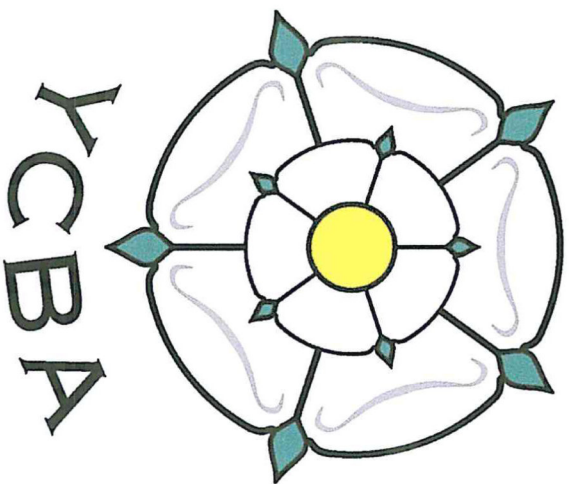
Slide 8 Active Player Grades Clubs Standards are dumbing down as consequence. 87% club players Grade 10 and below.

Slide 9 – 2018 Congresses - Tournaments – The feeder from clubs will reduce. Main room tournaments will be adversely impacted and high master/ grand master levels will deplete.

Trying to establish lower level section for Tournaments but a clone of main room. Need a different model for Club Standard competitions. This is a major opportunity.

The EBU is a main activity “tournament play” organisation. It will be impacted by changes to Club play mix and the age effect upon tournaments. The EBU needs to come closer to the social player benefit needs to retain central role.

End



Yorkshire Bridge Clubs

May 2019

Yorkshire Players' Stats - May 2019

<u>%</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Plays/Year</u>	<u>Juniors</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Direct</u>	<u>Club</u>	Club
							2018
15	UM0	None	19	83	17	475	513
		Less than					
14	UM1	12	4	7	3	548	488
71	UM2	12 or more	3	20	1	2749	2615
100		Totals	26	110	21	3772	
						3929	
		2018	25	89	21	3616	3751

EBU - Active Club Players Trend (@ Year End March)

	<u>000's</u>	<u>%of 2014</u>	<u>% Yony</u>
2011	33.8	94.4	
2012	35.6	99.4	+5.0
2013	35.4	98.9	-0.6
2014	35.8	100.0	+1.1
2015	35.3	98.6	-1.4
2016	35.0	97.8	-0.8
2017	34.6	96.6	-1.1
2018	34.6	96.6	-0.1

Yorkshire - Active Club Members (UM2)

%	2.4	6.1	16.6	20.1	21.6	15.1	9.2	3.9	2.2	1.3	1.5
Age	90+	89	80-84	75-79	70-74	65-69	60-64	55-59	50-54	45-49	< 45

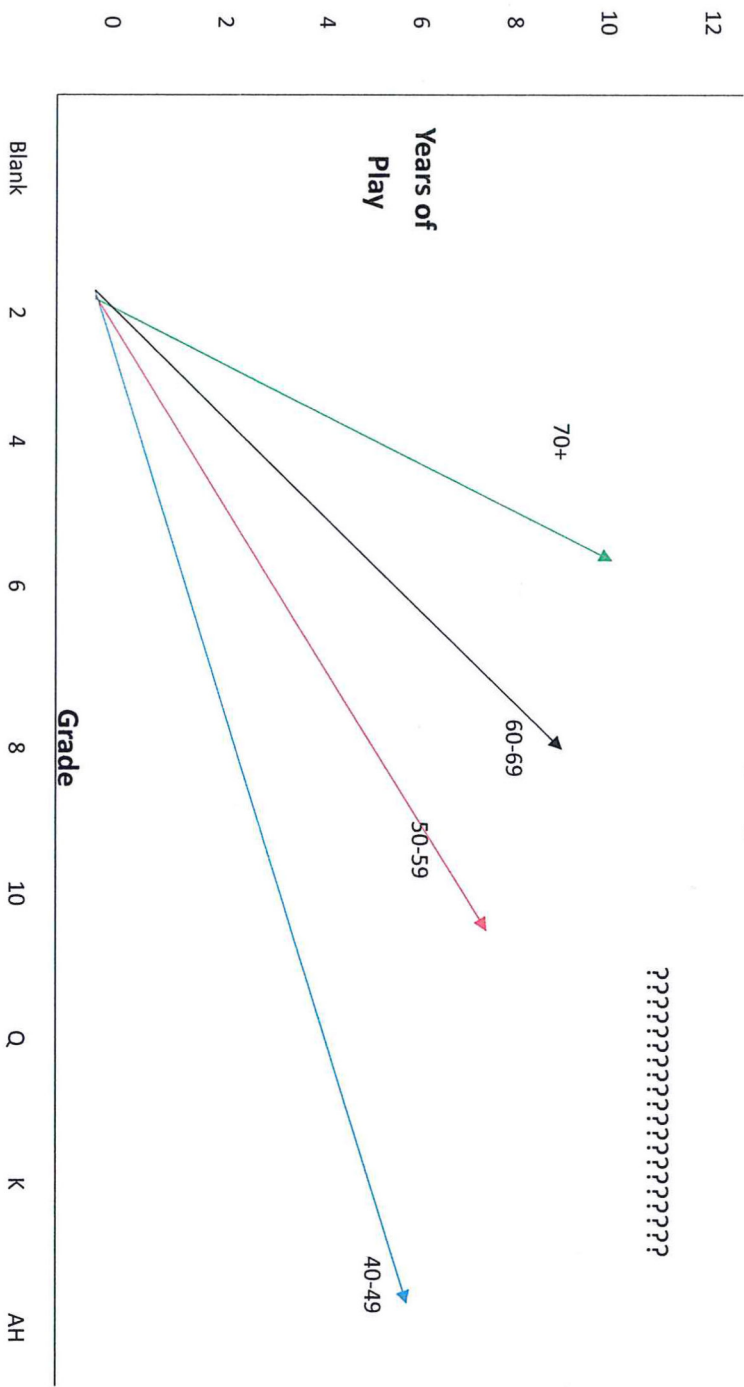
Average 72.3 Years

Median 73 Years

Yorkshire Clubs Entry Age In 2018

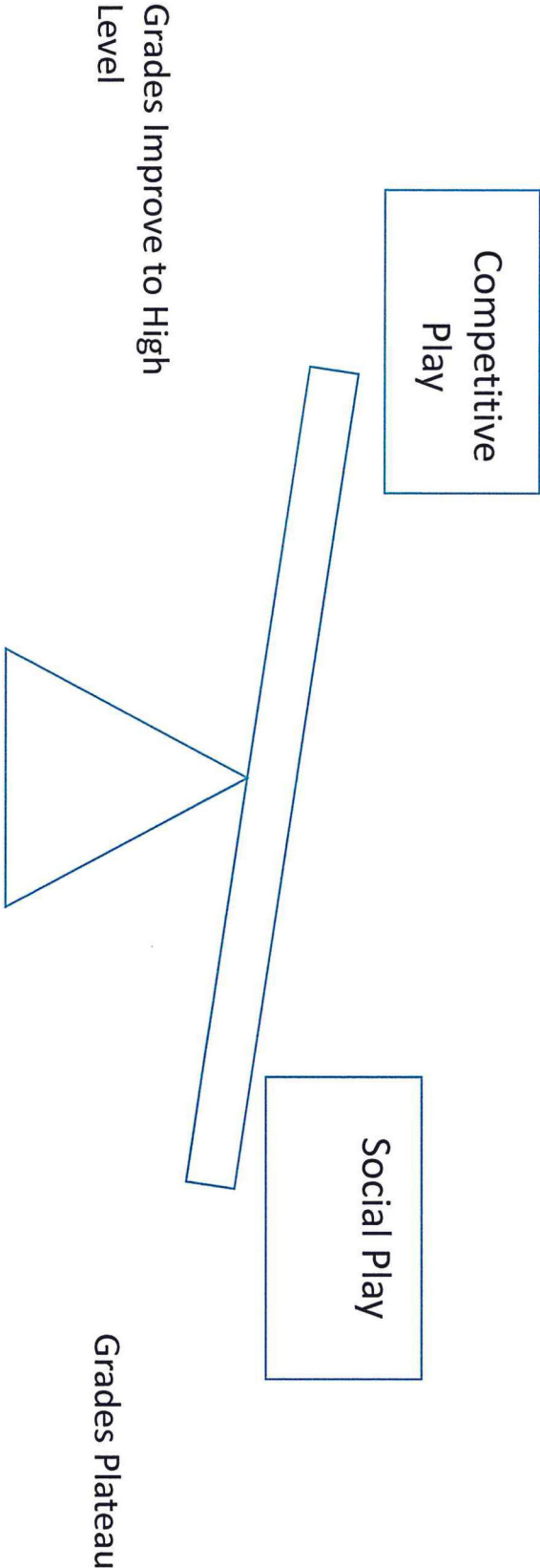
Average 66.5 Years

Performance By Age of Club Entrant?



????????????????

The Changing Mix Of Club Play



Yorkshire - Club Active Player Grades

Grade	Blank	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	J	Q	K	A	
Members	231	183	142	214	286	264	295	318	239	214	163	100	57	43	2749
%	8.4	6.7	5.2	7.8	10.4	9.6	10.7	11.6	8.7	7.8	5.9	3.6	2.1	1.6	100.0
% Cumul	8	15	20	28	38	48	59	70	79	87	93	96	98	100	

25% Quartile - Grade 4

Median - Grade 7

75% Quartile - Grade 9

Yorkshire 2018 – Spring, Easter & Summer Congresses

	No		Ex-						
Grades	5 to 9	10	Jack	Queen	King	Ace	grade	Yorks	Totals
Players	35	25	30	32	26	32	17	235	432
Compts	62	51	66	56	62	101	34	541	973
Av Plays	1.8	2.0	2.2	1.8	2.4	3.2	2.0	2.3	
% Players	6.4	5.2	6.8	5.8	6.4	10.4	3.5	55.6	100

That's All Folks!