



**NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY CHAIR'S MEETING
HELD VIA ZOOM
ON THURSDAY 23RD MAY 2022**

1. Attendance EBU representatives

Board Members		Board Members			
Ian Payn	Chair	Tony Russ	Patrick Shields	Sam Kelly	EBU Communications
Gordon Rainsford	Chief Executive			Tim Anderson	EBU Membership Development
				Lee Guy	EBED Chair
				Giorgio Provenza	EBED Chief Executive

County Attendance

County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
Bedfordshire	Colin O'Hara	Leicestershire	Dean Benton	Surrey	Shirley Pritchard
Berks and Bucks	Michael Green	London	James Smith	Sussex	Peter Clinch
Cornwall	Elizabeth Perry	Manchester	Irene Davies	Sussex	John McEvoy
Cumbria	Chris Ward	Merseyside & Cheshire	Paul Roberts	Warwickshire	Myra Scott
Devon	Doug Dunn	Middlesex	Peter Hasenson	Wiltshire	Lucy Cross
Dorset	Mark Hooper	NEBA	Dick Davies	Worcestershire	Eddy Blackburn
Gloucestershire	Ian Sidgwick	Norfolk	Robert Smith	Worcestershire	Mike Willoughby
Hants & IOW	Mike Kinsey	Northamptonshire	Trevor Thrower	NEBA	Sue Davies
Hertfordshire	Gary Conrad	Nottinghamshire	Mark Goddard	Suffolk	Richard Evans
Kent	Norman Inniss	Oxfordshire	Kathy Talbot		

Apologies

Board Members					
Adrian Darnell	Cath Fox				
County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
Channel Islands	Norman Le Cocq	Hertfordshire	Paul Littlewood	Surrey	Tim Warren
Devon	Geoff Clements	Lincolnshire	Paul Wokes	Warwickshire	Darren Evetts

Absence – no apologies

Isle of Man	John Large	Yorkshire	Nick Woolven		
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2 Welcome and Introduction

Ian Payn (IP) opened the meeting and welcomed all County Chairs or their representatives. IP acknowledged the change in format of these meetings to online and moved from having the Board set the agenda to having various counties set the agenda. This setting facilitates greater communication between counties. IP encouraged counties to continue to discussions outside of the meeting. We have also introduced the “buddy system” whereby each county has contact details with a member of the Board. IP welcomed the new County Chairs. IP passed the meeting over to Ian Sidgwick (IS) (Gloucestershire) who acted as Chair for the meeting.

Members were asked to add names and counties into their zoom profile and mute if not speaking to avoid unnecessary distractions.

3 Apologies

See above.

4 Presentation; Gloom; Optimism; Success

IS and PC gave a detailed presentation, the full details of which can be seen below Appendix B.

IS started the presentation by talking about the decline in attendance in all bridge sessions and competitions, coupled with an aging bridge playing population. He noted that many clubs do not offer teaching, and where there is teaching the retention rates are currently only 20% on average.

IS then moved on to the matters that insight optimism. Bridge is a great game, the benefits of which are a mix of intellectual and social. The game looks attractive to older people, and within in the population as a whole there are a lot of people getting older. There are now multiple tools for teaching, online and face-to-face. The bridge community is stacked with experts in various fields. Bridge is a low-cost activity.

IS finally talked about success stories from clubs, he cited a larger club (Cheltenham) and a smaller club (Northleach). Cheltenham BC has the benefit of many members and hosts a large number of sessions per week, aimed at different levels of play. Northleach BC is a smaller club but has managed to increase engagement with their old and new membership with relaxed duplicate sessions.

IS handed the presentation over to Peter Clinch (PC) (Sussex). PC discussed the successes found in Sussex, noting that during the pandemic teaching bridge did not stop it just moved online. Sussex have seen encouraging numbers of new players progressing to duplicate bridge. PC added that online bridge can help new players feel more comfortable joining club sessions.

PC talked about some positive ways to help encourage members back to face-to-face bridge. Examples included: “Duplicake” an 18-board session complimented by cake; “Non-Swiss Pairs” with three matches against two pairs of a similar level and one match against a higher or lower-level pair; Afternoon sessions rather than evening sessions; mentor/buddy programmes to encourage engagement between players of all levels. PC noted that Communication with clubs and members is key and asked for counties to supplement these communications to members. Counties should also encourage clubs to have strong committees, leading by example with models to help.

5 Open Discussion on What CBAs Have Done and Could Do

IS and PC then invited further discussion from the county chairs present.

Richard Evans (RE) (Suffolk) talked about a success story, Suffolk libraries have allowed teaching of bridge to take place in their premises for free. This has proved very popular with a number of courses taking place. RE noted that effort should be made to make bridge sessions more sociable events, with bridge golf days, bridge lunches, wine & nibbles some of the suggestions mentioned.

Dean Benton (DB) (Leicestershire) stated that the county has “learn bridge in a weekend” teaching programs as well as lessons from England international Ben Norton. He added that social bridge sessions could help some clubs integrate their experienced and newer players. There is a need to encourage new players to continue playing at the club once they have finished their initial lessons.

Norman Inniss (NI) (Kent) noted that it is important to have more than one person teaching to avoid teacher burn-out. Some clubs that do not own their own premises have difficulties finding spaces to teach, he suggested clubs share teaching and materials such as duplimat machines.

Sue Davies (SD) (NEBA) stated that an important aspect of bringing people back to clubs is to focus on the joy of playing bridge and making friends, which can only happen at face-to-face play.

Mike Kinsey (MK) (Hampshire) asked for the EBU to have a better selling proposition for new members. TR asked for any additional ideas to be sent to him. It was recognised that there are a lot of benefits for clubs to join the EBU and the UMS fees are still less than 50p after being introduced ten years ago, while table money at most clubs has increased.

Doug Dunn (DD) (Devon) asked if results for events could be shown weighted by NGS to help encourage lower ranked players and keep them engaged in playing. Patrick Shields (PS) (EBU Board) advised this is simple to do for club sessions and asked anyone interested to contact him for assistance with how to implement this. GR also mentioned the National Handicap Championship Pairs due to take place later this year and asked for counties and clubs help in promoting and hosting the competition by running heats.

Gary Conrad (GC) (Hertfordshire) noted that the county had trialled free entry for some competitions as a way to improve numbers but that this did not work. He stated that counties may be reluctant to hold a face-to-face event when numbers of entries are in doubt. He mentioned that we need to find a way to hold both online and face-to-face events without conflict.

6. *Giorgio Provenza (EBED) Input on the above, plus a request on Youth Bridge*

GP noted that most details planned to be covered by EBED have been mentioned previously in the meeting. GP invited Lee Guy (LG) to expand on EBED's current work. LG thanked the Chairs for allowing EBED to participate in the discussion. He noted that we all have the same goal of expanding the number of bridge players in England. He talked about how we can help each other.

LG talked about tennis as an analogy for learning bridge, they have similar learning timescales and similar handicap systems. A long learning timescale is not an attractive proposition for most people, they want to learn and start playing at the table quicker. EBED have two projects that aim to make the learning process quicker and more fun for students. The first is SmartBridge, a self-learning tool, which aims to get students to the club within twelve weeks of starting. SmartBridge is currently being trialed in Kent and will soon be rolled out across the country. The second is running low rated stratified games for students to play online.

EBED are running fewer courses for teachers now than before Covid. These courses are two-days and involve lots of materials for teachers and post course help. However, currently there are a lack of candidate teachers and some courses have been cancelled due to lack of candidates. He asked for Counties help in encouraging people to learn to teach bridge. EBU affiliated clubs receive a free teacher training course every two years. EBED also have a free transition program for all clubs that is available online.

GP confirmed that youth bridge had a difficult year in 2020, as schools were closed so were school clubs. In 2021 youth bridge moved online with a successful inter-school's cup. The winners of the cup will be visiting the House of Lords on 29th June to be presented with their trophy that has been donated from the House of Lords. The next inter-schools cup will start again in September and GP asked for all counties to aim to have at least one team in the league. If local schools don't yet have a bridge club, they still have plenty of time to get set up and start play before the start of the next league.

7. *Board presentation on Marketing Materials*

TR (EBU Board) gave a brief presentation, the full details of which can be seen below Appendix C. He started by detailing that EBU membership has decreased by a quarter in the last two years. He then talked about the positive actions that can be taken by counties to help increase our numbers once more. He mentioned the marketing materials that have been produced by the EBU to help clubs and counties promote their events but cautioned that without action the marketing materials themselves will not help. They need to be distributed with energy and enthusiasm. He gave examples of how counties can use their marketing materials. Examples included: distributing the leaflets in tennis clubs and doctors' surgeries; putting up posters; using the postcards for celebrating achievements of current members. He then gave further examples of digital advertising on local social network websites such as Nextdoor and local Facebook groups to promote courses and events. Counties should also use their own websites to advertise upcoming events, these should be kept up to date with national, county and club events.

TR confirmed that all the marketing materials have white space available for counties or clubs to add their own details and a call to action from the public.

TR asked for the counties support in promoting the EBU Summer Meeting by adding an advert for the event on their own county websites. TR ended on a positive note stating that if we all work together we can again increase our membership and return to a thriving bridge playing community.

8. Date of the next meeting

TR asked for volunteers from counties to chair the next meeting to be sent to him via email. IS thanked all the contributors and chairs for attending. TR thanked everyone for attending and for all contributions. He also thanked IS, PC and Pamela Booth-Jones (PBJ) (Shropshire) for their hard work in setting it up, and all the EBU staff for their contributions and help with the meeting.

The date of the next meeting will be decided in the next week or so.

The meeting closed at 11.55am

Appendix A - Meeting Chat:

00:37:04 Paul Roberts Merseyside/Cheshire: Do Suffolk Libraries charge for the use of their premises?

00:47:22 Lucy Cross Wilts: I suspect that we will continue to have fluctuating numbers at clubs and online during the next few months as people take advantage of being able to go on holiday - something that was difficult during the last two and half years, so we may not see a full uptake until the autumn.

00:47:50 Paul Roberts Merseyside/Cheshire: I'm sure that's right

00:50:03 Paul Roberts Merseyside/Cheshire: The Autumn will tell

00:56:24 Paul Roberts Merseyside/Cheshire: I've no idea what the EBU offers Social bridge clubs?

00:57:07 Lucy Cross Wilts: But community centres will be putting up their prices soon - utility bills!

00:57:25 Gordon Rainsford - EBU: <https://www.ebu.co.uk/clubs/benefits-club-affiliation>

00:57:29 Tim Anderson (EBU IT and membership dev): We have some ideas on providing more value to social players, e.g. more resource for them on our web site

00:59:26 Tim Anderson (EBU IT and membership dev): More ideas would be welcome though!

01:05:08 Tim Anderson (EBU IT and membership dev): Yes, we want to offer emails to members noting when they have done well in NGS terms

01:05:18 Patrick Shields, EBU Board: handicap results easy to run, as me for how

01:05:41 Chris Ward - Cumbria: Doesn't stratification cover this?

01:06:26 Eddy Blackburn Worcs: Scorebridge offers NGS handicapping

01:06:45 Shirley Pritchard Surrey: Some clubs give a prize to players who have the highest percentage above their NGS at each session

01:11:02 Gordon Rainsford - EBU: <https://www.englandgolf.org/about-us/my-affiliation-fee/>

01:23:44 Paul Roberts Merseyside/Cheshire: How does the EBU know that'

01:24:35 Paul Roberts Merseyside/Cheshire: How does the EBU know its on-line events aren't affecting clubs' attendances?

01:26:29 Paul Roberts Merseyside/Cheshire: On line will always be cheaper than F2F because of the cost of travelling to a F2F event, unless your club is in walking distance.

01:27:21 Norman Inniss Kent: We struggle to get people to play on RB. The vast majority want to play on BBO.

01:29:32 Paul Roberts Merseyside/Cheshire: Some people like Real Bridge, some like BBO (I dislike both!)

01:31:52 Gary Conrad Herts: But isn't the restrictions on County online events doing exactly that?

01:33:23 Norman Inniss Kent: Chislehurst is the only local club to me that has remained solely on line. he runs 2 sections. It seems that the 'better' section is gradually declining but the 'lower' section has largely held up.

01:34:25 Gordon Rainsford - EBU: @ Gary The intention is to provide a balanced programme including some face-to-face ODGP games aimed at the counties' local regions, as is their remit, as well as some online games which necessarily end up having a wider range.

- 01:35:07 Chris Ward - Cumbria: restricting GP events online to one a year, doesn't help. Cumbria has publicised a BP event in its place this September. However, I am not holding my breath regarding entries when we are competing with Gp online events elsewhere.
- 01:36:00 Lucy Cross Wilts: I am both Chair of Wilts and Chair of Devizes, and scorer and duplimator and teacher - it is difficult to get volunteers
- 01:36:45 Sam Kelly (EBU Communications Officer): I will include the PowerPoint in the minutes
- 01:36:53 Norman Inniss Kent: The online GP entries seem to be declining. We held a joint GP teams at the weekend online with East Anglia. We only had 23 teams, 1 from East Anglia and 6 from Kent. Much reduced from 2020 and 2021
- 01:37:13 Shirley Pritchard Surrey: I'm sorry I have to leave the meeting now
- 01:41:25 Paul Roberts Merseyside/Cheshire: Is the EBU teacher training free?
- 01:42:20 Norman Inniss Kent: Every club gets a free course every 2 years. Essentially because of Covid, that is every club at the moment.
- 01:42:55 Norman Inniss Kent: Kent are offering to pay half the cost of an extra place for all of our clubs.
- 01:42:57 Lucy Cross Wilts: Most counties or clubs would probably be happy to pay for anyone who wishes to teach
- 01:48:05 Colin O'Hara Beds: What is the minimum number of trainee teachers required to make the running of a course viable?
- 01:49:24 Myra Scott (Warks): 6
- 01:50:07 Norman Inniss Kent: Most potential teachers will be quite a distance apart, is the future of teaching lie in online courses?
- 01:53:46 Tim Anderson (EBU IT and membership dev): At my own club online teaching has proved to be easier and more effective in many ways than face to face - I can enumerate the reasons but probably familiar to you already
- 01:54:25 Norman Inniss Kent: Sorry, I didn't word that well. I meant the teacher training courses.
- 01:54:51 Tim Anderson (EBU IT and membership dev): I think teacher training is difficult currently online because of difficulty replicating simulations
- 01:55:07 Tim Anderson (EBU IT and membership dev): it is something to look at for sure
- 01:56:41 Colin O'Hara Beds: In the inter schools event, are the players playing Bridge or MiniBridge?
- 01:57:08 Giorgio Provenza (EBED): Bridge but we are planning a minibridge league as well
- 01:57:08 Tim Anderson (EBU IT and membership dev): Bridge I believe
- 02:04:07 Paul Roberts Merseyside/Cheshire: Do these numbers include people playing 1:1 team matches online?
- 02:08:59 Sam Kelly (EBU Communications Officer): Please call or email me if you need help with the details on BridgeWebs (01296 317215 or sam@ebu.co.uk)

The Role of CBAs in Boosting Bridge

Discussions : Conclusions : Actions
County Chairs Meeting 26th May 2022



Gloom

- Overall club attendance has been in decline for years
- The pandemic has accelerated attendance decline, Feb 20 to Feb 22 = minus 24% of players
- Cards no longer hold children and the young as they once did.
- Youth Bridge initiatives where they exist are ok as a long term investment but our imperative is short and medium term.
- Demographics threaten: the average age of EBU members is over 70
- Many (most?) clubs do not offer teaching to beginners
- Where there is such teaching a typical format is Year 1, Year 2. Such a timescale is off putting to many
- Even where classes are completed the conversion rate is dismal, 20%?

Optimism

- We know that we fundamentally have a great thing to sell -BRIDGE!
- Benefits are a mix of intellectual and social; F2F alone fully offers both - huge advantage
- Demographics: are actually on our side. The game looks attractive to older people, their proportion of the population has been increasing and is forecast to carry on (65+ 1950-2022 x2)
- Multiple tools and programs are available for teaching online or f2f
- Our community is stacked with thousands of exceptionally able people with a pool of expertise in pretty much everything
- Bridge is inherently low cost
- Money is not a problem: many clubs and counties have greater reserves than they currently have a use for

Examples of Success

- Cheltenham (large club)
 - Strong heavily subscribed teaching 100+
 - Supervised play
 - Relaxed duplicate
 - Normal club sessions
 - 15 weekly sessions in all
- Northleach (small club)
 - Struggled for a number of years
 - Would have been finished by the pandemic but....
 - Prior to pandemic designated a regular session “Relaxed Duplicate” once a month with tea and biscuits and was able to entice rubber players to join

Characteristics of Successful Clubs in Sussex

- Teaching: encouraging progression to duplicate
- Targeted events: learners, casual but experienced, competitive
- 18 boards with cake
- Afternoons (live) and evenings (online)
- Communication with members
- Mentor/ Buddy program
- Strong active committees
- Inter-club (inter-county) competition
- All counties will have their own examples

Success Factors

- Largely known

Role of CBAs and Boosting Actions

- 1,
- 2,
- 3,

Discussions : Conclusions : Actions

Some scary numbers to start with

The number of player games in EBU clubs during April 2022 was 75% of those playing during the same month 2019. This year's figure includes both f2f and online games.

The number of unique players in EBU affiliated clubs during April 2022 is 76% of those playing during the same month 2019.

We have lost about a quarter of our players - not for ever maybe but certainly for now.



We All Need To Take Action



- To attract these 'lost' players back to the game
 - Marketing materials
 - Enthusiasm and Energy
- To teach more players
 - EBU and EBed



New Promotional Materials





A5 four-page leaflets. This leaflet has been designed to be distributed in a variety of locations including waiting rooms, libraries and sports clubs. The back page of the leaflet has a “white space” and it is essential that this white space is used to put the details of the local Bridge Club – or Bridge Teacher – or County – or indeed could have details of a course due to start in the area. A name and telephone number should always be included.



A3 and A4 Posters. In places where you are unable to leave leaflets, you could put up a poster instead. Again, there is a white space to fill in details of who to contact for those wanting to learn bridge, join a club or whatever you wish. You might also wish to put a poster up in a location where you are leaving a pile of leaflets – such as the dentist's waiting room or the local golf club.



Postcards. These are available for anyone to order and can be used to send to your members and we envisage this could be for a number of reasons. To say well done on a score of over 70%, well done on achieving their next masterpoint rank, to wish them a happy 60th birthday, to welcome them as new members to your club, well done on completing a beginner's course or perhaps invite them to a special event at the club or to a charity event.

Play Bridge
Bridge + Friendship + Fun = Happy Life + Healthy Brain



www.ebu.co.uk/playbridge

'Bridge is a game that never repeats itself, keeps you thinking and learning, can be played at all levels, with players of any age, from all walks of life - that's the excitement of Bridge!'
Rachel, Winchester

Join us -
Bridge is for everyone!

English Bridge Union,
Broadfields,
Bicester Road,
Aylesbury
HP19 8AZ

Telephone: 01296 317200
email: playbridge@ebu.co.uk



We have also taken delivery of some roller banners and large “flags” that will be able to be used by any County, Club or Teacher holding an event where they would be able to market the game that we all love.

We trust that members, clubs and counties will make maximum use of these new resources to promote the game as widely as possible, to publicise local clubs and to interest those wishing to learn bridge.

The Play Bridge 2022 drive has the goal of bringing more people into bridge and into its clubs. We would love for your club/county members to be part of this initiative by making as much use of these new materials as possible.

ENTHUSIASM



Here are some of our ideas of where to put the posters and leaflets:

- Sports clubs and associations including: Golf, Bowls, Tennis, Chess, Gyms, Swimming, Social and Community Clubs
- Public Noticeboards including Libraries, Schools, Village Halls and Parish noticeboards.
- Fairs, Fetes, Conferences e.g. Bath and West Show, Kent Show
- Charities where bridge could assist the charity in meetings its aims.
- Local social media groups including Facebook and Nextdoor.
- Waiting Rooms including Hairdressers, Doctors, Dentists and Hospitals.
- Your Bridge Club web sites
- National Trust

How do we get these materials?

- FREE (EXCEPT P&P) FROM THE EBU SHOP



2022 Marketing Drive

Search Nextdoor

T Tony



What's #happening nearby, @neighbour?



Tony Russ
Sherborne • Just now



Learn to play Bridge
[Horncastles Lane, Sherborne, GB-ENG](#)

Posted in **General** to **Anyone**

Be the first to react Like Comment Share



Add a comment...

Own a local business?

Create a business page to connect with neighbours, post updates in the feed, and gain new customers.

Create page

LOCAL FACEBOOK GROUPS



YEOVIL NOTICEBOARD



WHO: My name is Rhea and I want to raise some funds for my brother John

WHAT: Please sponsor me £5 or more to run half marathon 13.1 miles, I can currently only run 5miles at this point so this is a big stretch for me.

WHY: Charity starts at home, my brother has faced the toughest few years with physical & mental illness to only be knocked down again I want to raise money to repair his bike.

Go fund me – Regaining Freedom <https://gofund.me/07c9a441> or simply donate cash and I can make the deposit for you.

Speak to fiona at the bar

Use your own web site

BACK TO NORMAL

WANT TO PROMOTE YOUR CLUB?



During 2022 the EBU is launching a marketing drive involving national media coverage and a much enhanced social media presence. To support this a number of promotional items have been produced which will be available to all EBU members, clubs, counties and teachers free of charge except for the delivery cost. There are leaflets, posters and postcards which can be personalised for your club. You can see and order all the materials at the **The Bridge Warehouse**.

Last updated : 19th Apr 2022 16:46 BST

AGM

CALL TO ACTION

- What do we want people to do having seen a poster?



- THAT'S WHY THE WHITE SPACE IS THERE

ENTHUSIASM AND ENERGY



EBU Summer Meeting

The big bridge event of the summer will be the EBU Summer Meeting. We would request that all counties and clubs promote this event on their websites, [here is a link](#) to an advert that we have created that you can use. You can download the picture locally and then upload to your website. In order to create a clickable link on your website, you will need to include the following link when adding the picture <https://www.ebu.co.uk/competitions/summer-meeting>.

EBU Summer Meeting at Eastbourne

The EBU Summer Meeting at Eastbourne
- a festival of bridge for all

The background image shows a wide sandy beach with people, a blue sea, and a long pier extending into the water. Buildings are visible in the background under a clear sky. Overlaid on the left side of the image is the EBU logo, which is a diamond shape containing a stylized sailboat and the text 'THE ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION' with compass directions N, E, S, W.

Winter Gardens, Eastbourne, 11th - 14th August 2022
The Summer Meeting welcomes all club players
ebu.co.uk/competitions/summer-meeting

A square QR code located in the bottom right corner of the poster, which likely links to the event's website.

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Last updated : 13th May 2022 12:03 BST

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I think that all of our affiliated clubs are now back to face-to-face action but inevitably with reduced numbers of tables. There are certainly some lingering Covid worries but also, I think we have to accept the fact that the way we play bridge

Latest Results

EBU Summer Meeting at Eastbourne

The EBU Summer Meeting at Eastbourne
- a festival of bridge for all

Winter Gardens, Eastbourne, 11th - 14th August 2022
The Summer Meeting welcomes all club players
ebu.co.uk/competitions/summer-meeting

👍 👎 💬 [Comment](#)

EBU NEWS



Release 2.19q

BACK TO NORMAL

Realbridge Link

EBU News

Calendar

2022 West of England Congress

South West Regional Calendar

Calendar Month

Competition Details

