

GCBA President's Report 2023/24

A year of progress on several fronts.

Our higher level games continue to be well attended and our representative teams success continues, coming top of the Midland County's League in division 1 and 3 and also winning the Pachabo national competition.

Events that had been sadly missing for a while made a welcome come back, including our two joint Green Pointed congresses, the Blue Pointed Newent Bowl and the Cotswold Cup. The Cheltenham Congress was notable not just for the fine efforts of Ro Kaye and her team but the outstanding attendance at the 9-high section with 18 tables. I know of other county congresses where this type of section was cancelled due to insufficient entries.

GCBA held meetings with a cluster of clubs around Stroud and also around Tewkesbury. The idea is to encourage and facilitate mostly smaller clubs to work together, pool ideas/resources and focus what support GCBA could give. For example the clubs of Tewkesbury, Twyning, Bredon and Eckington got together to do joint teaching which has added to club players and a separate "relaxed" game. GCBA gave some support to this but the achievement is the clubs. Alan Stanfield of GCBA organised a get together of our counties bridge teachers and it was great to have over 20 attendees. Teaching restarted at some clubs such as Newent and Churchdown. New club The Forest of Dean BC commenced their first teaching, supported by GCBA. Patrick Shields ran GCBA higher level teaching sessions. The North Cotswolds beginners from last year came back for more and raised further funds for a local charity. Our main charity event was again for Sue Ryder. Enjoying bridge and raising money for great causes is a wonderful combination: major opportunities for this will come in September of course with our "Festival of Bridge - it's a big deal".

GCBA committee member Jan Bailey has kept us regularly updated and has been a driver of the progress on Youth Bridge. The team (Alisons N & P, Ro, Mark et al) are to be congratulated that we now have schools bridge at schools in Cheltenham, Stroud and Woodmancote with other schools about to join in. Gloucestershire children attended bridge Youth Camps and GCBA offered financial support where needed. Children's bridge has been held at CBC on Saturday afternoons and Wednesdays during the holidays. Our initiatives here made it on to both BBC Gloucestershire local radio and the BBC website. Talking of publicity, have you seen our Facebook page?

We have data for the overall amount of bridge played in our EBU affiliated games each year from 2010. This clearly shows the recovery since Covid with us on track to roughly equal the highest previous record of 42,000 individual player games.

My thanks to all the GCBA committee members and our Chief TD Patrick. Indeed my thanks to all the many volunteers that contribute so much to the pleasure of others. This is my final President's report as I stand down after 3 years as per our constitution. What I wanted to see at the beginning was to find ways to further support the grassroots while maintaining the strong high level game. The pandemic got in the way a bit but in spite of that there has been pleasing progress in areas such as Youth, Teaching and the strong recovery in overall playing.

Ian Sidgwick