

Welcoming young people into Bridge

Thanks to Geoff Evans, who was instrumental in getting this idea off the ground, I duly went along to the Freshers' Fair at Cardiff University with the local Juniors Mel and Soozy. The intention was to entice young people into the game. Mieke, Simon, Geoff and Dennis all turned up to support this venture and it turned out to be a very successful day. We were very persuasive 😊

228 students signed up, stating their interest and I saw that emails circulated around the bridge world in a flurry of excitement. At one stage the Bridge population of Wales seemed to have doubled with 1180 students being involved. This was not the case sadly and I sent dire warnings that students sign up for everything on the day and not to get hopes too high. They were delighted to receive free playing cards, little folders of mini-bridge and rather posh pens, but this is par for the course at these events.

We organised two taster sessions using a doodle poll, (in case you don't know it is a great computer thing) which I discovered through one of my techie friends. It allows people to choose which sessions they are able to attend and at the end you can select the most popular. Excellent!

We were thrilled that 14 students said they wanted to come and so far they have turned up. One other upside of this is that a couple of older people on the stalls are joining the bridge club. Mel and Soozy were adamant that there should be young people fronting the whole thing (apart from me that is) so apologies to all those kind people who offered to help. The students are now all on a Whatsapp group and Facebook group, thanks to Mel, so I hope that it will be sociable for them.

As we don't want to lose anyone (and I doubt they will all take to it), we have had to organise two lesson times – with poor Sarah, who will have been teaching all day, doing one and me another, ably assisted by the Juniors. This needs to be sorted out, but it's early days. We may be able to create a club at the Uni, or get them to the stage where they can attend assisted play at the Club. We may also amalgamate our other school-age players so they can all practice together.

The taster session meant that they all left being able to play mini-bridge, having learned loads of the basics. Oh and they got scoring pretty quickly too. (Quite a lot of Maths students :) After the first lesson, I looked at the WBU material and realised that we were already on Lesson 6. They are so fast. I do feel a little apprehensive, as we need to devise a fast track teaching scheme. I know from my own experience that normal lessons can be too slow if you are quick and obsessed!

There was such a buzz at the club last week, as there were nine tables for our Winter league and several students wandered in to watch (but not for long – it's quite a boring spectator game unless you already know the rules...). Our Juniors have also been made so welcome in the local clubs – we all love to see people under the age of 50!

I hope we will continue to do this here and elsewhere in the future. If there is already a University club in place, then it would self-perpetuate I'm sure.

It is the life blood for the future and we should be doing much more or all the money in the clubs and WBU will be of no use, as there will be no one playing and in thirty odd years we'll all be dead!

Rather than finishing on that sombre note, thanks to EWBA and the Cardiff Club for their sponsorship – it was quite an expensive investment but we can build on it. I am looking for sponsors for next year's Women's event, so that no Junior will have to pay an entry fee. I know there are initiatives elsewhere, Lee's in West Wales for one, so please let Dennis Backer know if you know any young people playing, so that we can embrace them all.