

Happy New Year to you all (only half of you will receive this email as we are STILL working on compiling a list of members, with help from the clubs – mad!).

There have been some ups and downs with congresses not going well - a loss making East Wales and cancelled events at Porthcawl. However, numbers are slowly increasing in clubs, and people are returning to F2F bridge. Some clubs have even increased their membership - the Lisvane Club in Cardiff is up by 50%. I have also been told that Knighton is going really well – it sounds lovely as people take food along so it is a real social event.

It was most heart-warming to hear about Roy Holmes, who plays regularly at the Monty Bridge club. I am sure we all wish him well for his 100th birthday on April 3rd. Happy Birthday Roy!

We called a Special Meeting in November – not enough people were interested enough to make a quorum, BUT 2nd time lucky and over 50 people attended and approved the motion which will allow us to increase the subscriptions for this year. During Covid, we all had a free year, then a reduced fee of £10 (had I been president then I would have opposed that!) so now it needs to go back to just £1 more than it was before Covid. Sadly, some people think that it is not worth the money (28p per week!) as the WBU doesn't do anything. Humph. That is so untrue and here is why.... How much do people pay for Golf clubs and other hobbies? - whereas the WBU is a mere £15 – not per month but for a whole year. (EBU charge £34). If we can make it a charity, it will be possible to gain, by leaving the WBU something in your will (10% to charity reduces Inheritance tax from 40% to 36% so worth considering – you didn't realise I was a financial advisor haha). Just leave something anyway....

So what does the WBU do?

For all players - without a National body we would have no teachers, no training, no support and development of the game. The WBU runs competitions especially for social players with restricted systems etc. There are free teaching materials, discounted Insurance policies for clubs, equipment grants, a website, newsletters (and this newspage, how could you live without it....) free publicity and contact details for all clubs (whether they are members or not – how kind is that?). Most important is that we do try to encourage, fund, and train Juniors otherwise there will be nobody to even play against in years to come. Do you? Try and introduce youngsters to cards at least.

For more competitive players - there are master points and a national ranking scheme, a programme of events, a website, administration of online platforms such as Stepbridge and BBO for club use. We should all have pride in our National and International teams for Open, Women, Seniors and Juniors. These events need funding and administration; competitive players contribute the most to the WBU, paying an average of £20 per day for playing in competitions and mainly self-funding to represent our country. The Management Committee meet monthly and there is a selection committee who arrange national trials, a laws and ethics committee, and a new IT committee. We are members of Bridge Great Britain, the European Bridge League, and the World Bridge Federation. There have been free online bridge seminars and club seminars and it is a wonderful bridge community where you not only compete but make friends for life. Please encourage your clubs to re-affiliate if they are not, and to stay in if they are. Believe me, everyone would notice a huge loss and change in the game without the WBU.

I have come across a few strange anomalies. If you want to play football for Wales you just need a Welsh grandparent. To get an Irish passport – an Irish grandparent. To play for the Welsh bridge teams – a Welsh parent!. I was trying to introduce Suzy Lawson into the mix, as we desperately need more talented younger players, but suddenly realised she wasn't eligible. The Perry & Spickett are even worse – you can play for Wales forever if you ever represented Wales, but would not be eligible for the Perry or Spickett as again you have to have a Welsh parent or live here. Not to worry, we will create a new competition journal soon and make representations to the relevant bodies.

More madness to be dealt with 😊 In the meantime - enjoy your bridge, enter our competitions, play in our clubs and online platforms - and support the WBU.

Gilly Clench – WBU President

