

MC Meeting - August 16th 2024 at 11.30am by Zoom

Present: Ceri Pierce, Andrea Knox, Alan Screen, Jean Cufley, Mia Deschepper, Gilly Clench, Paddy Murphy

Apologies: Steve Webb, Simon Gottschalk, Steve Jarvis, Sooz Neeson

1. Junior Report

Sooz sent her apologies for not being able to attend the meeting. The importance of accommodating Sooz's schedule was discussed, as she plays a key role with the juniors. It was agreed to try to arrange another meeting that she can attend.

Sooz had provided a written update on the junior training program, including plans for the student fair and follow-up lessons (to be delivered by Sooz) at Cardiff Bridge Club. The Freshers' Fair is underway with James W, the President of the Cardiff University Bridge Society, taking the lead. The aim is to only have students on the stand and to give out packs of cards, pens and mini-bridge rules. Simon G has cards and pens, but the packs will need to be made up. Andrea will post out minibridge packs to James (these are different to the ones to be used in the minibridge for grand/parents and children's sessions).

The plan for the follow-up lessons is to use the "Learn Bridge in 24 Hours" book.

The juniors are continuing to train online every Thursday with Mark R. We may have another starter from Carmarthen. Ceri to ask what help Sooz she needs to facilitate this.

2. Minibridge

Minibridge with parents to go ahead in October instead of August. Gilly pointed out that there would have been enough tables for an August session, but not everyone had registered with the organisers, so they were unaware of them.

3. Teaching Bridge in Schools

The meeting discussed efforts to promote bridge in schools, including reaching out to teachers who have expressed interest in running minibridge clubs etc. It is difficult at the moment to organise anything with the schools during the summer holidays. Potential teachers have been provided with a Minibridge kit.

4. Lottery Application

Ceri provided an overview of a lottery application that has been submitted to fund a "bridge in a weekend" program, based on a successful pilot in Somerset. The program aims to quickly teach new players and then integrate them into local bridge clubs. The meeting discussed the logistics of the program, including training the trainers, providing financial support, and ensuring a smooth handover to the local clubs.

It was noted that the support of local clubs is key to this initiative. It is anticipated that 2 clubs will run this program in the first year and then following a review another 2 clubs in the 2nd year. If the application for funding is successful, then a project manager and 2 clubs for the first tranche will need to be identified. The proposal covers:

Training the trainers who will deliver both the initial course and the follow up lessons

Provision of a 'Bridge in a Weekend' or equivalent course

Providing training materials for follow up lessons in clubs

Much of this will be down to the project manager to determine – for example, it may be better to engage a professional to deliver the weekend training than use our own trainers. More discussion will be needed if the application is successful. If we are successful then the project will be advertised openly for someone to run it.

5. WBU Nearly Overseas Congress

Andrea presented a proposal to hold an annual Welsh Bridge Union Congress in Brighton, in partnership with Oliver Cowen – the WBU Nearly Overseas Congress which will be held on 13-15 June. The event would be a green-pointed weekend that aims to attract players from England, as well as provide an opportunity to promote other Welsh bridge activities. The meeting discussed the logistics, timing, and potential impact of this new event. The proposal was agreed.

Potential scheduling conflicts between the proposed Welsh Bridge Union Congress and other existing bridge events, such as the Teams of Eight and Champion of Champions were identified. They agreed to further coordinate the calendar to avoid clashes and ensure all events can be successful. Ceri will put together a calendar for 2025-6 in conjunction with the NTO.

Following the Tournament Group meeting Simon G is also putting together a new event which will be aimed at average club players / social players who do not want to play in an intimidating environment. It will be held in Mid Wales. This will be a completely different type of event to the one in Brighton.

6. BGB Home Internationals

Ceri reported that there is meeting on Monday with Bridge Great Britain to discuss the future of the Home Internationals because of all the issues that have arisen this year. Any changes will commence in 2026. A paper from Liz McGowan's was circulated and the meeting's views were sought.

Agreed that the face to face and social aspect was very important. Changes thought to be feasible were – the 1st Camrose weekend on-line, combining the Camrose and the Junior Camrose.

It was agreed that the views of the players should also be sought and taken into account.

Any changes would be recommended to be on a trial basis for one year only.

7. Storage of equipment in Porthcawl

The Lockup in Porthcawl is being demolished. The tables and equipment have been moved to a player's garage in Bridgend, for which we thank him. There are many bidding boxes there. There are no packs of cards. Ceri has approached Bridge Overseas to see if they would sponsor a bulk purchase of 5,000 packs and is awaiting a reply.

8. Women's Report

Mia presented an update on Women Bridge: The last women's session was poorly attended with only two tables, but that had to do with a lot of people being on holiday.

Mia has set up a women's league starting in September and at the moment there are **18 teams** entered.

The Irish and Scottish have been approached to see whether they would organize something similar eventually then playing off the two top teams of each country against each other in one weekend. However they have declined this for now, but something similar may be set up in the future.

The league will run over 10 months with one match a month that people have to organise themselves. Ceri will set up the matches on RealBridge and the possibility of having a set default day for the matches to be played (wherever possible) will be considered.

Entry money to be paid by BACs to the WBU.

9. Finance Report

This was circulated in advance. As at 14 August 2024 bank balances were:

WBU	£21,146.34
StepBridge	£4,186.85
Monmouth BS	£68,228.06

10. NTO Repot

This was circulated in advance.

There are 4 entries for the Premier League to date with several more expected.

Entries are trickling in for the Porthcawl Congress (see WWBA report). Despite

A list of WBU Events 2023-2024 was published in the recent excellent WBU Newsletter.

We have had recent problems with downtime on the VIRMACH server however these appear to be caused by our use of the server rather than VIRMACH.

Steve W, Paul C and Simon G met in an IT subgroup to look at creating a Masterpoint Promotion Notification system and it is hoped that this software will be available later this year.

A new Club Tickets system that bridge clubs (F2F and Online) can use to book and pay for bridge sessions is being trialled at Cardiff Bridge club with a view to going live in September.

BESS (Congress & Tournament Entry System) now has the ability to take hotel bookings with many different payment options.

All WBU members now have a handicap viewable on the "CLUB" section of the Ranking lists. This will make it easy for clubs to run handicap events if they want to. Another proposed innovation is the integration with the EBU so those Welsh players who register their Masterpoints with the WBU will be included in the WBU ranking lists.

A new event proposal was identified in a meeting of a subgroup formed to look at reviving the bridge calendar. At present we are looking at holding this event in mid-Wales sometime next year

11. Masterpoints and Membership Report

This was circulated in advance.

Membership

Mold Bridge Club has now registered 30 members (with a promise of more to follow) and as such, they are now an affiliated club.

Please note that it is the responsibility of each member to renew their memberships. If anyone is in doubt of their availability, to play in Area or National events or to represent Wales, they should contact the Masterpoints and Membership Secretary as soon as possible

Membership now stands at 1196.

Masterpoints

With Cardiff clearing their backlog, July was a record month for the production of Masterpoints. Over £4,200 has been invoiced for, in the first 6 months of this year.

Following an intense period of training via Zoom, Mold are uploading masterpoints for the first time since lockdown.

12. Area Reports

West Wales

Perry Spickett and Presidents Cup

There were 70 participants in a lovely setting, but parking was an issue.

Total costs were £2348, not including player subsidies.

TOTAL Income this year was £340 less losses on F to F tournaments. Luckily the West has significant reserves but this is clearly not sustainable.

It was noted that all areas have this problem and the prospect of charging players to play was discussed. To be determined at a future date.

Porthcawl

Bookings are OK, with 34 rooms booked so far. There is a meeting this week to review. Everyone is urged to enter the Bridge, and those who have booked rooms to pay the balance (due by 1 September, reminders will be sent).

Next event

The next event is the Swiss Teams on 15th September in Llanarthne. Tumble has become problematic as there is only have the upstairs room available, with a maximum 10 tables and all toilet facilities are on the ground floor. Alternative venues are being sought.

The Porthcawl Congress has the various areas, including West Wales, North Wales, and East Wales. They discussed the costs and profitability of running regional events, as well as the need to balance providing a positive experience for players with maintaining financial sustainability.

Everyone was urged to encourage people to enter the Porthcawl congress to ensure its success.

Mid Wales

Funding the Perry and Spickett is a major expense for the areas and will need to be reviewed. The Mid are planning to hold this in May in 2026.

13. AOB - Possible North Wales Venue

Andrea presented some photos of a venue in N Wales offered by a player that could be considered for future events.

14. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 18 September at 1pm.