**Chair’s Newsletter September 2023**

I hope everyone had a good Summer despite the weather and you are ready for the new bridge season which gets going in September.

**Manchester’s League and Cup Competitions**

We sent out a questionnaire to all our members in August asking for views about the formats of our League and Cup competitions. Thanks to all the players who have responded so far. Royce Alexander, our new League secretary will use the findings to shape the league and Cups this season.

These competitions are not just for high ranking players. We had 5 divisions in the league last year covering all levels of experience and ability. We had 20 teams in the Goldstone Trophy in which you can earn Green points for every victory. The Higson Cup competition is handicapped throughout, so any team can win it, any expert team can be toppled. Matches last year could be played on line, or Face to Face in team members’ houses or at clubs. Most clubs offer the facilities for matches to be played on their club nights.

Teams matches can be a really enjoyable social event as well as an evening of competition. If you haven’t played in the League or Cups before why not try it out this year? An experienced player from the County can be allocated to mentor you in how a teams match works and in the tactics to be used.

If you are new to teams and would like some advice contact Barbara Eastabrook who will be happy to have a chat - contact her initially at [**eastabrook1@btinternet.com**](mailto:eastabrook1@btinternet.com)

**Manchester Congress**

It’s back! Our Face-to-face Congress is back in January 2024 - please put the dates in your diary  Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th January at the Cresta Court Hotel in Altrincham. Saturday is a pairs event and Sunday is for  teams of four. Hopefully there will be a Jack High event too for the non experts among us. The event is being organised by Oliver Cowan who has overseen some excellent Congresses across the Country since COVID. (Sorry, I didn’t mean to mention it!). The hotel was used in 2023 for the Junior Home Internationals in Bridge and so they know what to expect. Parking is free, which was always a big drawback when we held the event in the V&A. The Altrincham tram, train and bus station is just a few minutes walk away as are the many excellent bars and restaurants for those who want to make it a great social occasion. It will be lovely to see friends we haven’t seen for quite a while.

**Do you know people who want to learn how to play bridge?**

Autumn is the time when clubs and teachers start their new courses for beginners. Bramhall & Cheadle Hulme, Manchester, Ashton and Trafford Bridge Clubs are all running courses starting in September for new bridge players.

Is there anyone you know that might want to start learning the great game? Details of the courses can be found on the Clubs’ websites. You will find all the clubs details on the County’s website:

[**http://www.manchesterbridge.org.uk/**](http://www.manchesterbridge.org.uk/)

As well as these courses for beginners many clubs organise supervised play sessions with experienced players as mentors present to give help and guidance. Check your local club website for details of these.

**Other events**

The National Handicap Pairs is an EBU event held in heats all around the country. Ashton Bridge Club are holding a heat on Sunday 10th September. This a very popular event nationally as it offers a level playing to field to all, as it’s handicapped according to the  National Grading Scheme. To enter contact the club on [**https://www.bridgewebs.com/ashtondistrict/**](https://www.bridgewebs.com/ashtondistrict/)

Ashton are also holding a Charity Event jointly with the County on Sunday 29th October. Profits will go to Willow Wood Hospice.

As well as these events within the Manchester County you may be interested in Congresses held in neighbouring counties. Details of these can be found on the Calendar page of the MCBA website <http://www.manchesterbridge.org.uk/calendar.html>

**Have you ever thought of being a director of bridge at your club?**

The County working with EBED have organised a Tournament Directors Training course.The venue is Trafford Bridge Club. The course consists of four Sunday sessions from late October to early December and is £72 per session. If you are interested please contact me at [irenedavies14@gmail.com](mailto:irenedavies14@gmail.com).

We hope that this newsletter will provide the relevant information to enable you to make the most of what’s on offer at your local clubs, through Manchester County, and the English Bridge Union. Please join us in our drive to bring enjoyable bridge at all levels of play to as many people as possible!

Irene Davies (Manchester County Chair)