

Scottish Bridge Union



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Congress News January 2016

Jack and I have been taking a well-earned rest from our congress duties since we saw you last; we spent Christmas and the New Year in Tenerife on a Bridge Overseas bridge holiday and since returning have tried to escape from all things congress related – all to no avail by the way, escape is impossible in this job.

Now the New Year is well under way, I hope that you all enjoyed the festivities of the holiday season with friends and family and are now in the mood for considering how many Scottish National congresses you will be attending in 2016!

I know that you have been eagerly awaiting my report on our last congress in December so here goes.....

The Winter Congress at Peebles was extremely successful on all fronts (did I hear a loud hurrah?). Although I did receive one negative letter regarding the quality of the food, that was the only one and so for that I am delighted. However, that's not to say that we have to rest on our laurels as there is still much to be done. There is no doubt that the recent poor performance of the hotel has had a negative effect on our patronage but I do hope that you will give the hotel another chance as it has really been trying to address its failings and has rectified many if not most of the issues that were spoiling your congress experience as a whole. For instance, I know that you appreciated the return of the table cloths and "proper" wine glasses for the evening meal in the dining room. The dining room service was so much improved and was as it should be for a hotel of its calibre. The comfortable new bedding has proved to be a winner in my book too; all we need now is for the décor to be up-dated and I know that that is already happening. Many of you, although frustrated with the problems you have experienced due to the out-dated workings of plumbing and such-like have generously confirmed that you will not allow these things to prevent you from continuing to support our congresses at Peebles. This would be my position too, had I still been a participant rather than a convener, as I love all things Peebles and would be thrilled to witness the hotel's return to its glory days.

As is usually the case at our congresses, the bridge was run seemingly effortlessly by our team of directors, headed by Ian Ross. Sadly, December was Ian's last congress for the SBU and we are so very sorry about that. Although Ian had only taken on the role of director in charge two years ago, he had directed for many years beforehand and had around fifty Peebles congresses under his belt. His successor, Horst Kopleck, will have a hard act to follow but, knowing how capable and unflappable he is, I am confident that he will prevail!

The December Master Class was delivered by Brian Short who presented an excellent lesson on how we can improve our defence. Our grateful thanks to Brian for all his hard work in putting together this presentation for our benefit, although he did ask that we try to forget about his helpful hints when playing against him!

And so to 2016: Our next congress will be the Overseas Spring Congress in Mlini, Croatia, in May; I will attach the brochure with this e-mail but there is also a copy on the SBU website together with my inspection report. All bookings should be made through Bridge Overseas and not to me. This year's congresses at Peebles Hydro will be 8th – 10th July, 21st – 23rd October and 9th – 11th December so please put these dates in your diary now. In July and October there will be a Bronze Congress in addition to the main congress. The brochures for the Summer congresses will be sent out electronically soon. It has been decided that the practice of posting hard copies of the brochures to our patronage is no longer cost effective, mainly due to the prohibitive cost of the postage. I will, of course, still send a postal copy to those of you who specifically request one. Also the congress fees for everyone will be increased this year for the first time in over ten years, still excellent value for a national event at £50 for residents and £65 for non-residents.

I am delighted to announce that the Master Class in July will be taken by Brian Senior, author and professional bridge player of some repute and a 'weel kent face' at our national congresses in Peebles. Rather than confining himself to the one topic, Brian has suggested that he presides over a question and answer session during which any number of bridge topics may be explored. In that way Brian's vast knowledge and expertise can be fully utilised by our thirsty-for-knowledge bridge audience. As the audience will determine the topics to be discussed on the day, it's not too early to start thinking! I know I've said this before, but I'll say it again anyway: we really are indebted to Brian and all those experts who have gone before for selflessly giving of their very valuable time to share their expertise with us. Each and every time I have been amazed at their professionalism and knowledge and think myself fortunate to be part of that.

Joan Lees – January 2016