

The Peebles Congress

***Marking the end of an era and saying goodbye in style.***

The first Scottish Bridge Union National congress took place in 1935 in Dunblane Hydro. The event was discontinued during the Second World War, then returned to Dunblane till 1948, when it moved to Gleneagles. This was a great venue that eventually priced itself out of the market. In 1973 the Congress moved to Peebles Hydro, where it has remained.

The Congress was a great social event which at times used to be nearly 100 tables strong. Evening dress was compulsory, as was the intake of alcohol. The Hydro was full, and late entrants had to find accommodation elsewhere in town, or travel from home. The hotel quickly learned to cater for the needs of bridge players: the dining room staff knew that after a hectic couple of hours between 6 and 8 pm they would have the rest of the evening off.

In 1998 there was a special Congress to celebrate the 25 year anniversary. In 2003 a tree was planted in memory of Bill Mitchell, the Congress Convenor whose name became synonymous with the event.

The venue was so successful that Anna Gudge, Secretary of the British Bridge League, organised a couple of British Congresses there, one in July and one in December. When the BBL was disbanded the SBU fell heir to these. A big feature of the Winter Congress was the Gold Cup Final. Players who travelled from England were divided between annoyance at the travel involved, and the sheer pleasure of the atmosphere, with an abundance of spectators and a formal presentation of the trophies before a large audience.

Times change. The Hydro had acquired an air of faded Victorian gentility, and new owners started to invest significantly to upgrade the premises. As such prices have risen and on balance the SBU has taken a difficult decision not to try and compete with the rates for summer weddings and Christmas parties, but instead to seek pastures new for their SBU congress from 2020.

Peebles has been a fantastic and recurring feature in the bridge calendar of players up and down this country and it would not be right to see an end to Peebles without giving you the chance to say goodbye.

To that end there will be a ***final Peebles Congress 6-8 December 2019*** and while the format is still being reviewed by the Management team we are aiming to host a very special occasion around the following core principles:

- We will host a special Friday afternoon teams entitled "Play through the ages" which will use hands from the past and be accompanied by a booklet of hand analysis.
- We will start formally on Friday evening at the usual time of 19:45, allowing people to travel up on Friday.
- The core sessions of December Peebles will be unchanged in format, we will aim to have three sessions of Swiss teams over Friday evening and all day Sunday. There will be two sessions of Swiss pairs on the Saturday.
- We would like to host a special Gala dinner on Saturday night, with short but highly entertaining speeches. There will be an option to join this as a non resident.
- We will bring back the evening dress code, as the last Peebles we will be asking everyone to wear black tie, or equivalent. This is a principle which you may be surprised to hear is supported heavily by those regular attendees in the under 40 bracket.
- We will aim to have a "discuss the boards with the experts seminar". Martin is optimistic he may even persuade the one of the current Lederer trophy winners involved. This gives us an excellent opportunity to sample Peebles new gin lounge bar – a downstairs refurbishment that will be ready by December and feature the hotel's home made gin.

- We aim to have an additional speedball session following the Gala Dinner on Saturday night. It's a normal session of bridge, but with less time on the clock each round. Designed as a fun event with the benefit that you can feel less guilty about that second glass of wine with dinner, safe in the knowledge the pairs trophy is already in the bag after finishing earlier that day.

We ask everyone who has loved and enjoyed this congress to support the SBU and the Management team by saving the date between the 06-08 December and make a special effort to come and help us raise the Phoenix at Peebles in 2019.

Note we have received a huge amount of positive support for this initiative and places are limited, residency in the hotel will secure the place in the congress and then all other entries will be on a first come first serve basis.

The flyers, detailed schedule and online booking form is available alongside this article on the SBU website. Please support us in our advertising campaign by using the flyer and bookmark in your local clubs and congresses.

Email queries can go to: [sbucongressdesk@gmail.com](mailto:sbucongressdesk@gmail.com)

We encourage all of you to advertise this special event at your local bridge clubs, please use the flyer online or contact the congress desk.

Wishing you well,

The SBU and the Peebles Management Team