

President's Report

It has been a great privilege and honour to serve as President of the Northern Ireland Bridge Union for the past three years and I have enjoyed the experience immensely - well, most of the time! There were a number of moments when I did feel that I should be the recipient of a Nobel Prize because I was, quite literally, outstanding in my field, whilst on holiday, trying to get a signal for my computer to deal with some tricky diplomatic episodes but these were successfully resolved with minimal bloodshed.

My personal highlight has to be the visit to meet President Mary McAleese at the Aras An Uachtarain where she paid tribute to the bridge-building contributions of our great game and to the far-sighted individuals from North and South, who, despite their very different ideological standpoints, created the Irish Bridge Union in an earlier Good Friday agreement. The IBU is an excellent example of cross-border cooperation and illustrates what can be done with goodwill and generosity on both sides. It was therefore very gratifying to receive unsolicited and unstinting praise for the IBU's hosting of the European Championships last year from Yves Aubry, President of the European Bridge League, whom I met at the World University Bridge Championships in Reims and who had no idea I had any connection with Irish bridge. You will be pleased to know that he especially enjoyed meeting the volunteers from Ulster with whom he shared the final meal of the event.

The Union deservedly enjoys a high reputation for the quality of its hosting of international events and the positive and supportive response that we received after this year's Camrose match in Belfast echoed that of previous occasions such as the Lady Milne earlier. Congratulations to Brian McDowell and everyone involved in his team. On the playing front both our Camrose and Senior Camrose teams performed with great distinction this year and our Junior and Peggy Bayer players suggest that there is hope for the future, given proper encouragement and assistance.

Our new Constitution is now operational and will, I am sure, provide a robust framework for the continuing development of the Union but, of equal importance, is the need to encourage as many people as possible to play and enjoy bridge. In that respect I think there are a number of positive signs to which I would like to pay tribute. It is encouraging to see the rising numbers at our competitions and congresses, testimony to the sterling efforts of Anne

Hassan and John Murchan who also deserves thanks for all his encouragement of bridge in schools. The Union is now also running classes for improvers and the first signs suggest that this is something our members welcome.

I would like to thank all my fellow officers for their hard work and dedication to the Union, and everyone else who has contributed to making it possible for us to enjoy our games of bridge, particularly our long-suffering tournament directors and to Liz, our indefatigable secretary, for dealing so many hands .

Our splendid Chairman, Ciara, has bewitched, bothered and bewildered various individuals into undertaking tasks on behalf of the Union and attending competitions. Her energy and enthusiasm for developing bridge seem boundless and I look forward to the Union enjoying another successful year under her stewardship.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your President. I wish my successor, the Union and all its members every success for the future

Alan Sharp

29.5.13