

YORKSHIRE'S GOLDEN YEARS

(A search into the origins of the Y.C.B.A.)

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As early as 1901, Archibald Dunn Jnr., in his book *Bridge and How to Play It*, expressed the opinion that:-

"The origin of Bridge, like that of a good many other popular games, is enveloped in mystery.

In point of fact, nothing definite is known about it. The record of the place where it originated, and the names of the players who first declared "no trumps," must be relegated to a page of History which will forever remain unwritten."

Yorkshire's history is not quite as uncertain, but it is true to say that much of the necessary information has been obscured by the mists of time. However, the essential fact, being the formation of the Yorkshire Contract Bridge Association in September 1935, is well documented, so we can celebrate our Golden Jubilee with absolute conviction.

Mind you, for anyone looking back at the written record, in magazines, newspapers, etc., some confusion still exists, because Yorkshire events were held well before September 1935, therefore let us firstly cover the period prior to that date and consider the environment in which the Y.C.B.A. was conceived and born.

Bridge had grown enormously in popularity in the wake of the famous Butler-Culbertson match of 1930, leading to the formation of the British Bridge League in May 1931; although autocritically run by A. E. Manning-Foster, the then editor of *Bridge Magazine*, this at least took the form of a national organisation, which helped to encourage competitive duplicate bridge at all levels.

On the other side of the coin, though, there were sections of the public dead set against all types of card games, including bridge, especially if any semblance of gambling existed. This attitude was highlighted when the B.B.L. tried to stage the first ever Yorkshire Congress, as per the following extract from the Yorkshire Evening Post in March 1934:-

"On the grounds that bridge is a game of chance the police have banned a bridge congress which some 1,500 players were to have taken part in at the Grand Hotel, Harrogate, later this month."

The B.B.L. had to accept that, but its dissatisfaction was voiced by Hubert Phillips in his editorial in *British Bridge World* April 1934:-

"We very much regret that we have had to abandon our projected Congress at Harrogate The Congress would undoubtedly have made bridge history, as did its predecessor at Bechill. But we learn—at the eleventh hour, and when it is too late to make alternative arrangements—that the majesty of the law is in danger of being offended. Playing Bridge on licensed premises is "gaming" within the meaning of the Licensing Acts, and the rigorous interpretation of these Acts, upon which, we understand, Harrogate prides itself, is held to be inconsistent with even so innocuous a project as our Congress."

Progress was made subsequently, because the Yorkshire Congress was allowed to go ahead at Harrogate the following year, and, even though it was held after the Y.C.B.A. had been formed, it was organised and run by the B.B.L. The background to this was explained by Manning-Foster in *Bridge Magazine* November 1935:-

"Following the successful Congress at Harrogate, I have received no less than four invitations from important towns suggesting that they would like to have a Congress The organisation of these Congresses imposes a severe strain on the staff at the B.B.L. The League has no desire to curb or hinder the formation of local leagues and welcome the latest addition named the YORKSHIRE CONTRACT BRIDGE ASSOCIATION under the chairmanship of Mr. George Nelson."

So the Y.C.B.A. gained its first mention and thereafter went on to organise and run its own annual congress. By creating its own association, Yorkshire also helped to erode the power of the B.B.L., and this was just one of the many changes which were to take place in the 1935-36 season.

George Nelson also received a mention there, as he had done 3 years earlier in the May 1932 issue:-

"Colonel E. C. H. Kennard, of 1 Cardigan Place, Headingley, Leeds, is the new local Hon. Secretary for Leeds. There is to be an active branch of the League in this city. A meeting has been called and a strong Committee formed with Mr. George Nelson as Chairman."

Then, in the December 1932 magazine:-

"LEEDS—The Yorkshire Contract Bridge Pairs Championship has been arranged for Friday, December 9th. This Tournament is in aid of the "Boots for Bairns" fund and is supported by the Yorkshire Evening Post."

That was the start of our Yorkshire Pairs, which was held annually until the Y.C.B.A. was formed and it has been going strong ever since.

Leeds was not the first Yorkshire local area to formally join the B.B.L., because *Bridge Magazine* April 1932 included this note in the B.B.L. section:-

"SHEFFIELD—As an outcome of the visit by the Chief Hon. Secretary to Messrs. Cole Bros. Ltd., a new branch has been formed. Miss Joy Coombe, Ashleigh, Trolley Brook, is the Local Hon. Secretary."

Other Yorkshire names had appeared earlier in the magazine's list of local honorary secretaries. In October 1931:-

"HALIFAX—M. M. Sayer, Esq., 10 The Gardens, Well Head. YORKSHIRE (EAST)—Miss B. M. Burnett, Wortley House, Hornsea."

Then, in February 1932:-

"HULL—Mrs. K. M. Barnes, 9 Burton Road, Hornsea."

To be followed later, in November 1932, by:-

"HARROGATE—Mrs. B. Thackwell, 7 Victoria Avenue. YORKSHIRE (EAST)—Miss F. E. M. Badeley, Park Lea Garden Flat, Ramshill Road, Scarborough."

The above local secretaries represent the start of formalised local area organisation in Yorkshire, and one wonders whether their names and addresses will kindle someone's memory, so that further information can be obtained about those early Yorkshire days.

We know that Hull played matches against Harrogate and Leeds in 1932, then subsequently against Sheffield in annual encounters, and one can say that these were the forerunners of our inter-city matches. The Hull team was known as Clifton House, and we had some difficulty tracing the origin of this

club, until we came across the following change of address in the March 1932 list of B.B.L. local secretaries:-

"HULL—Mrs. K. M. Barnes, Clifton House, 263 Beverley Road."

Leeds and the B.B.L. also co-operated in starting the Yorkshire Teams of Four championship in the 1934-35 season, so one can see that competitive bridge had gradually increased in Yorkshire during the first half of the Thirties and was part of the evolution process which led to the formation of the Y.C.B.A.

Our County Association's first publication was the brochure for the Yorkshire Congress, at Harrogate, May 8th to 11th 1936; one page was set aside to publicise the constituent make-up of the Y.C.B.A., and, in addition to the officers, it listed our first ever Council as:-

"Dr. L. BATHURST (Leeds), P. C. BINNS (Leeds), A. CLIFTON (Leeds), J. F. DEARDEN (Heckmondwike), E. HOLMES (Hull), Mrs. L. HADFIELD (Sheffield), J. MORRISON (Harrogate), E. B. PARKER (Leeds), Dr. I. TAYLOR (Leeds), J. H. TAYLOR (Bradford), V. WATSON (Leeds), Mrs. R. D. WHIPPLE (Leeds)."

SOME MEMBERS OF AN EARLY YORKSHIRE COMMITTEE



STANDING BACK ROW

1. F. W. A. Breare (Harrogate)
2. M. Friedman (Leeds)
3. J. H. Taylor (Bradford)
4. H. Kendrew (Harrogate)
5. ?

SITTING

1. F. R. Chippendale (Harrogate)
2. G. Butler (B.B.L.)
3. G. Nelson (Leeds)
4. J. Morrison (Harrogate)
5. ?
6. Dr. L. Bathurst (Leeds)
7. C. C. Murgatroyd (Leeds)
8. G. D. Johnstone (Leeds)

It also stated that the Y.C.B.A. was "affiliated to the British Bridge League," although that was not to last for long, because, in August of that year, the Y.C.B.A. withdrew its affiliation due to what it considered to be the insulting manner in which the B.B.L. had heavy-handedly by-passed the Y.C.B.A. to invite two Yorkshire teams to the Autumn Congress at Buxton. In turn, the B.B.L. accused the Y.C.B.A. of interfering "with the legitimate functions of the B.B.L." and Manning-Foster wrote that it was a form of "tyranny" for the Y.C.B.A. to stop the two teams from accepting the invitations. As it transpired, the arguments were of no real consequence, because the English Bridge Union had just been formed, so one can assume that Yorkshire's allegiance would have changed anyway.

At first, there were only 8 area associations in the E.B.U., with 25 delegates in total; Yorkshire was one of those area associations and had three delegates, which was later to be increased to our present entitlement of four.

We have previously seen *Bridge Magazine's* first mention of the Y.C.B.A. in November 1935, and there was a quick follow-up in the December issue:-

"The Yorkshire Contract Bridge Association is growing rapidly. Playing leagues are now being formed in Leeds, Harrogate, Bradford, Hull, Sheffield and Spen Valley. No fewer than twenty seven teams entered the league in Leeds, which has necessitated the formation of three divisions.

Play in the leagues started in November, and it is anticipated that league fixtures will be completed by early spring, when the leaders in each league will meet in a Patton Schedule Final.

Messrs. John Waddington Ltd. have presented a Challenge Shield for each league."

That is the origin of our Waddington Cup competition.

Sheffield's teams of four championship is still known as the Waddington Shield League, consequently this year also sees its fiftieth anniversary, and the original shield presented to Sheffield by John Waddington Ltd. is still in existence, as is the one presented to Bradford. We would be very interested to hear of the whereabouts of the other four shields.

It might appear from the above extract that local associations had been formed in those six local areas in 1935, but that was not the case, as partly explained by Geoffrey Fry in his bridge column in the *Huddersfield Examiner* 12th January 1937 on the subject of Yorkshire competitions:-

"The management of these duplicate events in Yorkshire has in the past year been vested in the Yorkshire Contract Bridge Association. Owing, however, to the large increase in membership, it has been found necessary to divide this into sections. Although Huddersfield has not been in the forefront with regard to assistance in the administration side, a Huddersfield section has been formed."

That confirms the origin of the Huddersfield association in December 1936, but how and when some of the other local associations were formed is one of the most hazy aspects of those early Yorkshire days. Each of our local associations has produced its own potted history; however, as an example of the contradictory information, Harrogate has given 1968 as the start of both their existing club and association, with the additional news that the previous club had been in existence for 19 years, putting the year of origin at around 1949, so what do we make of the following item in *Bridge Magazine* November 1936?

"HARROGATE it was decided to form a branch of the Y.C.B.A."

There is further evidence, in that the Y.C.B.A. competition brochure for the 1937-38 season, sent out in the summer of 1937, outlined the position at

that time:-

"The management of the Association is now vested in a President, Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer, and a Council Representative of all districts of the County in which Members can conveniently be grouped together. The Officers and Council are elected directly by the votes of members by postal ballot and a thoroughly democratic government is thus assured. District Management is in the hands of district boards, each with their own local Secretaries. These are:-

Bradford Mrs. H. Brooke, "Netherfields," Greencroft Avenue, Baildon.

Harrogate J. Morrison, 19 Kent Road, Harrogate.

Huddersfield C. Vickerman, 56 Thornhill Avenue, Huddersfield.

Hull Mrs. F. B. Bailey, 163 Newlands Park, Hull.

Leeds G. D. Johnstone, Moorfield House, Woodsley Road, Leeds 2.

Sheffield Mrs. L. Hadfield, 134 Millhouses Lane, Sheffield.

Scarborough R. H. Atkinson, 17 Alexandra Park, Scarborough."

The above list of district boards represents, in effect, our seven founder members, and it brings out another anomaly, in that, according to Scarborough, their present association did not join the Y.C.B.A. until after 1946, yet a Scarborough association definitely existed in 1937 up until the start of the Second World War, as did a Harrogate one, therefore it is clear that the disruptive effect of the war years causes most of the confusion when looking back.

In his notes on Sheffield's bridge history, the late David Brown gave a lovely example of the bridge gap created by the war. In 1939, the *Daily Mail* ran a national pairs event in which the first prize was a car each; it was won by Parker and Hartley, from Sheffield, but the war intervened, so it was 1946 before they were able to collect their cars! Fortunately, the paper money value had risen by 500%

One can see the same 1939-46 gap in the Y.C.B.A. minute book. The last pre-war council meeting was recorded as 31st July 1939, when the programme for the 1939-40 season was agreed, but no other council minutes appear thereafter until those covering the first post-war meeting on 22nd February 1946. These latter minutes refer to 14 entries having been received for the Waddington Shield competition, so competitive bridge was returning to Yorkshire during the 1945-46 season, which ties in with the information we will see later about the E.B.U.

Returning to the subject of our local area associations, the most definite way to plot their origins is to show when each one first appeared in the annual Yorkshire competition brochure. We have already seen our seven founder pre-war members in the lists published between 1937 and 1939, while the first post-war brochure was in 1947, so the following list takes us from there for our 24 existing area associations:-

1947 Bradford, Dewsbury, Halifax, Harrogate, Huddersfield, Hull, Leeds, Sheffield and York. 1949 Scarborough. 1950 Ilkley. 1951 Barnsley. 1954 Wakefield. 1960 Doncaster. 1964 Keighley. 1967 Malton. 1971 Bridlington. 1975 Airedale. 1977 Stocksbridge and Deepcar. 1980 Garforth. 1981 Shelley and South Ryedale. 1982 Wetherby.

In addition to the above list, three local area associations have come and gone, with their first and last appearances in the competition brochures being:-

Goole 1949-1977, Selby 1959-1968, and Menwith Hill 1979-1980.

Each competition brochure was sent out in the summer of the year shown above, so that, generally, each association had been accepted into the Y.C.B.A. during the season leading up to those dates.

Looking at the pre-war period, the Harrogate association originated in October 1936, Huddersfield in December 1936, and we know from an old Leeds Congress brochure that the Leeds Board was formed in May 1937. Ben Cohen, our one-time Chairman, writing in the *Sheffield Star* on 19th May 1936, stated that:-

"At a meeting convened last night by Mrs. Hadfield, secretary of the Sheffield section of the Y.C.B.A., it was decided to form a Sheffield Contract Bridge Board to govern local activities."

Which establishes the origin of the Sheffield association in May 1936, the earliest one we have found in the written evidence available to us. Of our seven pre-war members, that still leaves Bradford, Hull and Scarborough unaccounted for, and we would welcome any documentary proof regarding their original starting dates.

That extract from the *Sheffield Star* also confirms that the Y.C.B.A. had local secretaries before the District Boards were formed, reaffirming the previously seen piece of information from Geoffrey Fry that, initially, all local management had been vested in the Y.C.B.A.

One of the other confusing factors, when looking back at those pre-war years, is that articles of association for the district boards were not introduced until 1939, giving the impression that the associations were not formed until then. However, that late introduction ties in with what happened at national and county level.

For instance, the original Y.C.B.A. articles of association were not finally agreed and adopted until 21st March 1939, when the first meeting took place of the board of directors of Yorkshire Contract Bridge Association Limited. The minutes of that meeting list our original board members as Dr. L. Bathurst (Leeds), W. E. Dorman (Sheffield), C. B. Hollis (Hornsea), G. D. Johnstone (Leeds), J. H. Taylor (Bradford), G. K. Fry (Huddersfield), H. Kendrew (Harrogate) and G. Nelson (Leeds). Amazingly, John Taylor was still in attendance at this year's board meeting, so he has already established a formidable record as the longest serving director of Yorkshire, or maybe any other association, to add to the fact that he was also one of our founder Council members.

Those original articles of association remained unaltered until amendments were made on 31st October 1979, following an extraordinary general meeting of the Council. Our limited company was formed in 1939, and still exists, in order to comply with legal requirements, but it is there purely as a safeguard, because the Y.C.B.A. Council is our one and only decision-making body.

Going onto the re-emergence of the Y.C.B.A. after the war, the Council reconvened in February 1946, but the first competition brochure did not appear until the summer of 1947, most likely because of the immediate post-war need to conserve paper. The first bridge magazine to come out in England after the war was, we understand, the *Contract Bridge Journal*, which was the new official publication of the English Bridge Union, and its first issue was in September 1946. It referred to the fact that the previous season's events were drawing to a close, including the Pachabo Cup inter-county championship, so the E.B.U. had run competitions in the latter half of the 1945-46 season.

That first issue of the *Contract Bridge Journal* also included a "Yorkshire" page, written by Nancy Bedford, who started by saying:-

"When the Yorkshire Contract Bridge Association was first formed in 1935, under the chairmanship of Mr. George Nelson, amongst its

active supporters were Mrs. F. B. Bailey (Hull), Mrs. L. Hadfield (Sheffield), Mrs. E. M. Turner (Halifax), Dr. L. Bathurst (Leeds), Major G. Fell, O.B.E. (Leeds), Mr. J. Morrison (Harrogate), and Mr. J. H. Taylor (Bradford). It is good to see these members on the post-war Council, along with Mrs. M. Cartwright (Dewsbury), Mrs. L. Dixon (Leeds), Mrs. M. S. Rankin (Sheffield), Mrs. E. A. West (Bradford), Messrs. W. Barker (Hull), F. Bray (Dewsbury), L. M. Bodelender (Harrogate), R. C. Hartley (Sheffield), R. Niman (Leeds), F. Sleightholme (Leeds), A. R. Steele (Huddersfield), L. Taylor (Mytholmroyd) and R. Vincent (Leeds). This strong and representative Council is under the active chairmanship of Mr. Ben Cohen, who is successor to Dr. L. Bathurst."

Making her first appearance on that post-war Council was Margery Cartwright, who was later to become the longest serving officer of the Y.C.B.A., as honorary secretary for 28 years, 18 of which were as joint secretary with her husband, Alick. During that time, she saw Yorkshire membership climb higher than any other county association, and her name became synonymous with Yorkshire bridge.

Margery started as secretary in the same year as Reg Corwen began his long and valued tenure as Chairman, which was in 1952. By the time he had relinquished his chairmanship, in 1976, our membership had grown from 700 to almost 2,000, and has since gone higher, although the Surrey association recently overtook us within the E.B.U.

Our first ever chairman, George Nelson, was known once as the "Father of Yorkshire bridge," having been the main participant in the formation of the Y.C.B.A. in 1935. I wonder if he then realised how big his child would grow?

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OFFICERS OF THE Y.C.B.A. (1935-1985)

PRESIDENTS

1935 Lord Moyrithan
1938 G. Nelson
1977 R. F. Corwen

VICE-PRESIDENTS

1947 Dr. L. Bathurst
1952 R. Vincent
1968 Major G. Fell
1975 J. H. Taylor
1980 Mr. and Mrs. A. Cartwright

CHAIRMEN

1935-37 G. Nelson
1937-46 Dr. L. Bathurst
1946-47 B. Cohen
1947-52 R. Vincent
1952-76 R. F. Corwen
1976- H. Castle

HON. SECRETARIES

1935-37 Mrs. L. L. Bedford
1937-39 C. C. Murgatroyd
1946-47 Mrs. N. Bedford
1947-49 R. C. Hartley
1949-52 R. H. Chope
1952-62 Mrs. A. Cartwright
1962-80 Mr. and Mrs. A. Cartwright
1980- E. H. Pudsey

OFFICERS OF THE Y.C.B.A. (1985-6)



Standing: Mrs. A. CARTWRIGHT, J. H. TAYLOR,
Vice-President (Bridlington) Vice-President (Bradford)

Seated: A. CARTWRIGHT, H. CASTLE, E. H. PUDSEY,
Vice-President (Bridlington) Chairman (Huddersfield) Hon. Secretary (Hull)