

## ***Newcastle Bridge Clubs playing Bridge under and beyond Lockdown***

The last game of face to face bridge many of us played in the Newcastle Bridge Club, Mourne Bridge Club and Maghera Bridge club was during the week beginning 9th March 2020. Like many other bridge players around the world we thought it would be cancelled for a few months. We're now into the month of October 2020 and its very unlikely we will be playing bridge as we normally did, four individuals sitting together at a table and maybe 12 or 14 tables, on a charity night as many as 20 tables, Such is the legacy of the current pandemic! We all love our game of bridge, not just for the winning, although that is rewarding, but for the social contact, the new friends we make, the conversations before the game, the conversations in-between games, the post-mortems after the game, and more especially for the challenge of the game itself! So how have we managed without the face-to-ace Bridge nights? Like all good techies, we look to the Internet! We play bridge on-line. The majority of members from all three clubs have signed up to Bridge Base Online (BBO) and many have been playing throughout our lockdown, not just on a regular basis with friendly games and a Summer bridge tournament, but some enthusiastic players played on-line, morning, afternoon and night!! The more experienced players have been very successful in regional tournaments, organised by the Contract Bridge Association of Ireland (CBAI) and the Northern Ireland Bridge Union (NIBU). We started our winter Bridge season in the week beginning September 14 2020. Our three bridge clubs now play under the one banner of the Newcastle Bridge Club. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday night tournaments are directed, played and enjoyed by the bridge club members. One of our members at the age of over ninety plays on a regular basis and plays brilliantly, an excellent example for the beginners and novices new to the clubs. So Bridge playing continues, bridge lessons for beginners are managed, bridge directors are being trained, and most importantly playing bridge is being enjoyed on a weekly basis. So what are we missing? The face-to-face meetings with the Bridge community and the social activities involved with all three clubs, particularly our charity nights, when we have the opportunity to support our local and regional charities.

***Rose Murray***

