

## **TRIBUTE TO PAUL PORTEOUS**

**Joe Moran, President Emeritus, CBAI**

You may have heard that the CBAI is about to lose the services of a man who has done more than most – maybe more than anyone – to develop the Association and to promote bridge in Ireland. It is a bit of a cliché to say that an organisation would not be in the shape it is in without the efforts of some individual or other ... but in the case of Paul Porteous's influence on the CBAI, it is undoubtedly true.

I have had the pleasure of working closely with Paul on bridge matters for more than thirty years, and I am delighted to pen this short tribute to him on his retirement.

Paul was the first full-time employee of the CBAI, and was appointed General Secretary (later to be Chief Executive) in 1992. Newer members of the Association will be surprised to learn that, until the CBAI offices in Templeogue were opened in 1999, Paul ran the Association from his home in Clonskeagh. He recalls long treks in the rain carting bridge tables down to his car from the basement of Joe Murray's house, which was our storage depot at the time, and people calling to his house at seven o'clock on Christmas Eve to buy last-minute gifts for their bridge friends. The annual masterpoint records were printed in an overnight run on an old dot-matrix printer in the garage. Apparently Paul could sleep through the ping-pong noise when the printer needed new paper, but his wife Maureen was not so fortunate. No doubt she was even more pleased than Paul when he moved over to the comforts of Templeogue. And of course Paul has been the driving force behind a significant modernisation of the Association since then, which continues to this day.

In 2012, when Greece withdrew as hosts of the European Championships at late notice due to the fallout of their financial crisis, the CBAI stepped up and delivered a fantastic event in Citywest. Paul was at the very heart of all the planning, preparation, and delivery of an event that is remembered fondly by all who took part in it, and by all the Irish bridge players who travelled out to watch the experts or take part in the side events. Paul made sure that we showed our visitors that the Irish reputation for hospitality is fully justified. He tells me that at European bridge meetings, he regularly meets a pair from Cyprus who continue to be in touch with the landlady of the B&B near Naas in which they stayed for the duration of the event.

These organisational abilities, and the calm determination that underlies them, did not go unnoticed, and within a few years Paul had been elected to the Council of the European Bridge League, ultimately serving as its Secretary, the only Irish person to date to reach such high office within the EBL.

Paul has always been a people person with a fantastic memory for personal details – invaluable attributes in a role such as his. The CBAI office staff will tell you that it was as if he knew every bridge club officer in the country, and indeed every bridge club member, personally. Nothing was ever too much trouble for him, and bridge players in every parish in Ireland will have reason to remember Paul’s help and generosity in the cause of local bridge.

I’m sure there was also the odd crisis along the way over the thirty years, but no-one remembers them now, because Paul was always able to defuse them in his calm and unflappable way.

In addition, Paul was able to build a fantastic relationship with our friends in the NIBU, which was warmly reciprocated, and has made the confederation of our two bodies, the Irish Bridge Union, work more harmoniously and more effectively than ever before.

And of course Paul was, and continues to be, an excellent player who has represented Ireland at junior level and in mixed events, and has won several national titles. And there might well have been more ... it is probably fair to say that his career in bridge administration meant that his playing career took a back seat for quite a while.

On behalf of all the members of the Association over the past thirty years, I thank Paul most sincerely for all he has done for Irish bridge, and wish him and Maureen a very long, happy, and healthy retirement together. He tells me that they plan to do some travelling, but I am sure that we will continue to meet him at the bridge table, and that he will make his counsel available to us generously whenever we need it.

Paul, “go raibh míle míle maith agat.”