

Online bridge clubs narrow the gap between young and old

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Bridge has increased in popularity among young people, especially online

It is, in many people's minds, the game their grandparents play, but bridge has attracted a younger audience during the pandemic.

People in their twenties and thirties have started learning through online lessons, while others have turned to bridge apps. Many of them have never held a real deck of cards, as they play only online.

Chris Mower, 64, a bridge teacher from Poole, Dorset, moved his lessons onto Zoom in March, and has seen an influx of younger players. Previously, no one under the age of 35 turned up to his classes at the West Hants Bridge School.

He said: “It’s a game very much for all ages. Because it is so involved, it’s often people who are retired or people who have time to devote to it that play. But this image that it’s an old person’s game is completely wrong.”

His daughter, Ellie, 27, lives in London and had played bridge only once before the pandemic. Now she joins her father’s classes and they meet virtually for a game regularly.

Ellie, a television producer, said: “I play with him most days. He sends a text saying: ‘Do you want to take on the world?’. We log on and have an hour or so together.”

The English Bridge Union now has 300 clubs running sessions online, and has noticed new members joining since play went virtual.

Dominic Price, 25, is completing a PhD in maths at Durham University and has played since the age of 17. During lockdown, he offered to teach friends online, to “keep the game going” and to provide them with an alternative to their Xboxes.

He said: “You only have to go to a bridge club to see that the average age is about triple mine at the moment.

“There is something about sitting-around-the-table kind of games, which you don’t get as much any more — especially a sitting-around-a-table game that doesn’t involve necking pints of beer every two seconds.”