



2 October 2010

Young Chelsea Bridge Club Member Survey – July 2010 - Findings

Why have we conducted this survey?

The Young Chelsea Bridge Club is at a major decision point having negotiated a new 3-year lease for the two lower floors of 32 BG. It is a perfect time for the Club to survey the opinions of the members about how it should meet their Bridge needs. Furthermore, the Club must have active help from its members to operate successfully – not just the efforts of the few – and the survey includes a section where members can offer their time and expertise.

The Club was founded in May 1968 by Warwick Pitch, with help from others. For almost 40 years he was responsible for assessing the nature of demand from the Club members and running the Club accordingly. For much of this time a members' committee helped Warwick with both these responsibilities.

When, in 2005, Warwick generously passed the Club on to the members, a Management Committee (MC) was formed to deal with the most pressing matter at that time – the refurbishment of the building and ensuring the Club operated on a sound financial footing. During this time MC (with the Bridge and Marketing subcommittees) informally sought member opinion to decide the changes needed to make the Club appealing to its members.

What are the main conclusions?

The 126 respondents offered a range of opinion on the Bridge operations, but were remarkably consistent in their priorities for the move to new premises (Zone 1/2, near tube, good bar, light snacks were top 4 priorities in that order).

The three top areas where the members want an increase are: more teams events, more weekend bridge, regular advanced coaching.

Top three “reasons why” were: standard of the bridge, good atmosphere, the people. The only consistent irritation was the behaviour of a few unpleasant people (16 people cited this).

Many members volunteered time or expertise to help run the Club and those who offered both time and expertise can certainly look forward to a call!

The rest of this report goes through the main findings in some more detail and suggests action that Management Committee (aided by members!) can take to implement changes.

This report summarises the main findings – there is a fuller report which includes proposals for Management Committee and identifies the many members who have volunteered to help with the operation of the Club.

Operation of the survey

The survey was commissioned by the Chairman, Ian Payn, and implemented by Mark Davies with help from Nicole Cook (survey design) and the Management Committee (MC). We sought the opinion of everyone on the Club database (c. 500 by email, c. 200 were sent the link by post). 126 responses were received including those of the MC – this is a high rate of response because of the tightly targeted audience, but this indicates that **a good proportion of the membership care enough about the Club** to take the time (rather than press delete, as most of us do when a survey request arrives).

Structure of the report

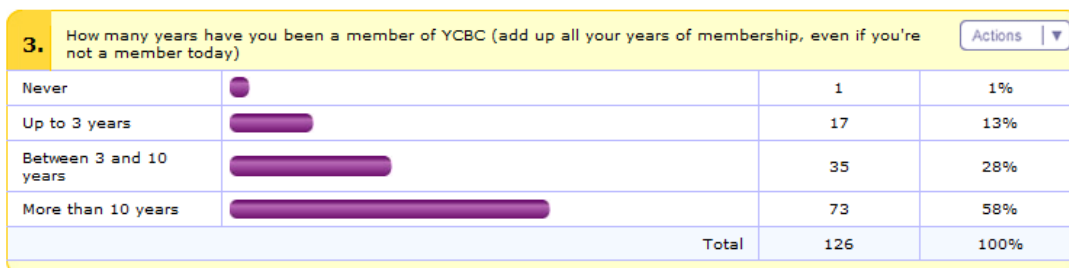
The report structure follows the survey structure:

1. about the respondents
2. meeting their bridge needs at YC (types of bridge, frequency, new ideas)
3. the new premises
4. how the Club is operated (committee role, member expertise, willingness to help)

Full report

A full version of the report, with proposals for MC and identification of volunteers, has been reviewed by MC. The full version is not being published on the Club website.

About the respondents



All but one of the respondents were members, with the majority being long-term members. So those who have invested a lot with the Club were the most willing to participate. On the other hand, many long-term members whose opinions we'd value are no longer regular players and did not respond to the survey.

Equally, we don't know what new members or those who are regular visitors think – and these are the people we want to be more active. We can only encourage these irregulars through direct communication but we mostly don't have their contact information.



20% of the respondents said they wanted to play Bridge more often in future. If they do, this would potentially deliver another 50 seats/month @ about nett £10/head based on data from the survey respondents alone. Extrapolate across all members, we have the potential to increase bottom line takings by £2000/month from the existing membership.

“Reasons why you enjoy YC” and “what would you change at YC”

reasons why	rank	mentions	"would change"	rank	mentions
standard	1	89	some unpleasant people	1	16
atmosphere	2	31	multi-floor	2	6
people	3	27	late start times	3	5
bar	4	23	not enough weekend events	3	5
location	5	21	bring back draft beer on tap	5	4
director	6	19	decor	5	4
regular games	7	9	more day-time games	5	4
roll up	8	8	small turnouts	8	3
strong events	9	3	table space crowded	8	3
int'l reputation	10	1	location	8	3
			need better food	8	3
			not very punctual	8	3
			too expensive	8	3

We can derive some clear mandates from the “reasons why” table but there were not enough mentions to take specific action from the “things I would change” apart from continued monitoring of unpleasant behaviour.

While we continue to take action (teaching, supervised play, etc) to bring in new players, it would clearly be damaging if the Club lost its reputation amongst serious players for the quality of our games. Equally, a reputation for high-quality Bridge can put off the newcomers. This points to a dual-branding approach (like Toyota does with Lexus).

Another interesting finding is that almost nobody mentioned the social aspects of belonging to a Club like YC – staying after the game to discuss, making new friends, having fun. These are the sort of things that some long-time members say was important to them, but the respondents here see their relationship with the Club as more transactional.

Contrast this transactional approach with the sort of experience that young players of today want – fun, social, challenging. We therefore need to consider how to develop that clubby feel again to attract and keep the new generation of players.

Meeting their Bridge needs

aspiration	rank	mentions	what can YC do for you	metions
Improve game	1	51	Continue as is	28
Keep going as I am	2	28	Match up partners	13
Play with several partners	3	20	Nothing	11
Find regular partner	4	13	Advanced coaching	9
More regular bridge	5	12	Get top-class players	7
Turn up find partner	6	7	Keep Club going	6
Against top-class oppo	7	6	Improve what YC has to offer	5
Have fun	8	4	Post-session discussion	4
Help others	9	2	Streaming	3
Representative bridge	9	2	Intermediate coaching	3
			Daytime bridge	2
			More teams	2

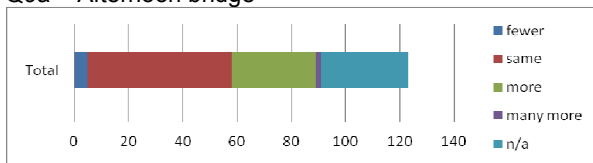
In the list of aspirations (Q7) 35% of the respondents mentioned that they want to improve their game and 20% are happy to keep going the way they are. Some were more specific and want to find a regular Bridge partner – others were clear that they want to play against the best opposition.

In Q8 (How can YC help you achieve aspiration?) 37% were happy with the package or just want us to stay in business (no argument there) with a further 12% saying the Club can't do anything to help them (!), but there were several helpful suggestions of which we should take note:

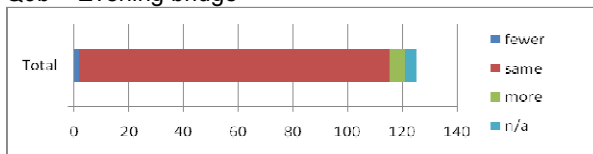
- 15% wanted help with finding partners – either a regular, compatible partner or a clearing mechanism for people who want to play with new partners from time to time (not just arranged on the night).
- There was good demand for improving the standard (getting more top-class people playing regularly) and a few votes for streaming (segregating strong players from weaker players).
- Lots of demand for coaching/advice (advanced, intermediate and post-session advice).
- Five people were clear that our offering is a bit unexciting, so needs a) brightening up and b) marketing better.

What kind of bridge activities should the Club increase/decrease?

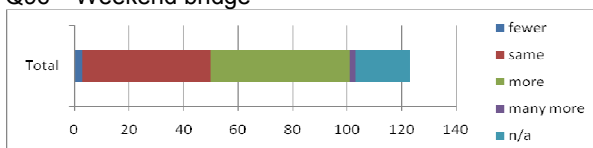
Q9a – Afternoon bridge



Q9b – Evening bridge



Q9c – Weekend bridge



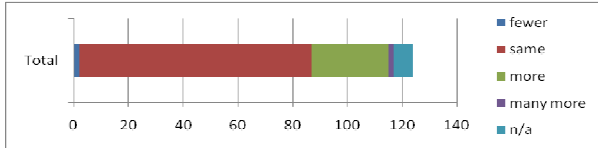
When should Club events take place?

Afternoon: strong demand for more afternoon bridge, but over 30 people put "n/a" (workers?)

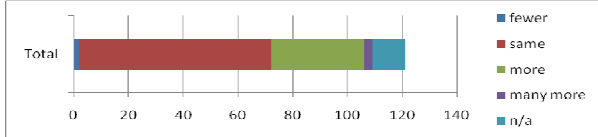
Evening: stay as we are

Weekend: Greater vote for "more" than "same", but again 20 people put "n/a", so significant number have said they're not interested

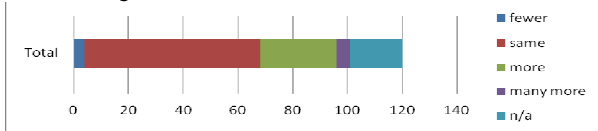
Q10a – Advanced events



Q10b – Intermediate events



Q10c – Beginner events



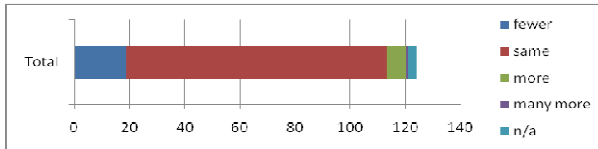
Demand for events at different levels

All three levels have a similar profile, but all seem to be asking us to lay on more bridge events.

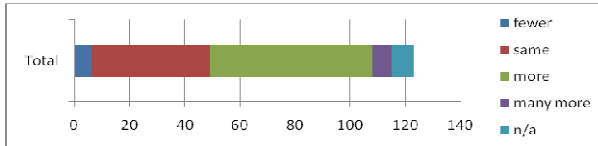
We asked people to respond with what would matter most to them individually – hence the higher number of n/a responses for beginner events from a fairly advanced survey population.

Few insights to be derived from this question.

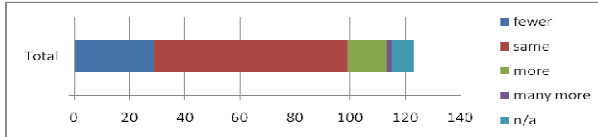
Q11a – Pairs events



Q11b – Teams events



Q11c – Individual events

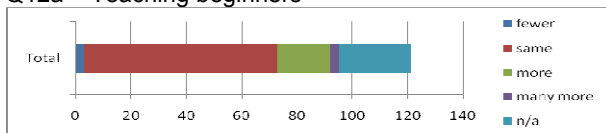


Demand for events of different types

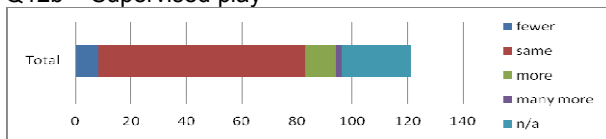
The main finding here is the overwhelming support for more teams events at the expense of pairs and individuals.

We've already taken action on the individuals, but replaced them with a pairs league.

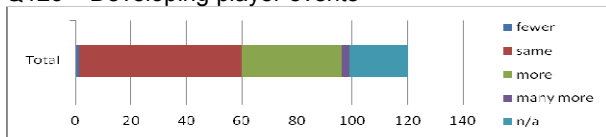
Q12a – Teaching beginners



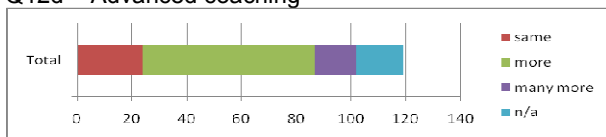
Q12b – Supervised play



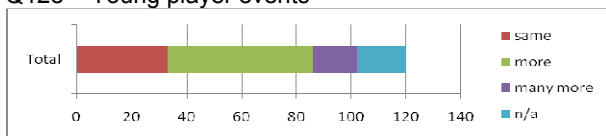
Q12c – Developing player events



Q12d – Advanced coaching



Q12e – Young player events



Coaching and development

There is more that we can do to lay on teaching/events for beginners and developing players – perhaps increasing revenues as a result.

But the big finding from this survey is the massive demand for advanced coaching.

Almost as big is the demand for more young player events.

Question 13 – Ideas for MC to consider

Verbatim ideas are shown in the appendix. The range of suggestions is so wide that it isn't possible to make an analytical assessment of the sort we've done for other questions.

Question 14 – Do you know occasional players who might be interested in competitive bridge?

25 respondents said that they did know of someone and some made additional comments which included:

"There are a ton of bridge players and would-be bridge players out there. They fit in best with a group that matches their own social profile, but YC's trump card is the level of expertise offered."

"I am afraid I recommend Robsons. I see the yc as a club mainly for advanced or ambitious players"

"I know a few people who are currently learning at Robsons, I dont know if they will reach a suitable level or have the interest to play duplicate at the YC"

"The sessions start too early for them currently"

Question 15 - Do you know any 18-26 year-old players who would like to develop their bridge at the YC?

Only 13 repondents said that they knew young players, but there was usually a caveat about location being wrong – difficult to get them here.

One observation ("Important to get a critical mass of such players together if this is going to work. This was the original basis of the YC franchise") was worth noting in the event that we decide to take action on young players.

The new premises

This ranked question delivered a remarkably consistent response. The priorities did not change when analysed by categories like “How long have you been a member” or “How often do you play”.

1st + 2nd: The two “location” criteria got the highest number of priority 1 and priority 2 responses, with “close to tube” marginally more important than “zone 1/2”.

3rd: “Bar + seating area” by a large margin, although 30 people rated it priority 1 or 2.

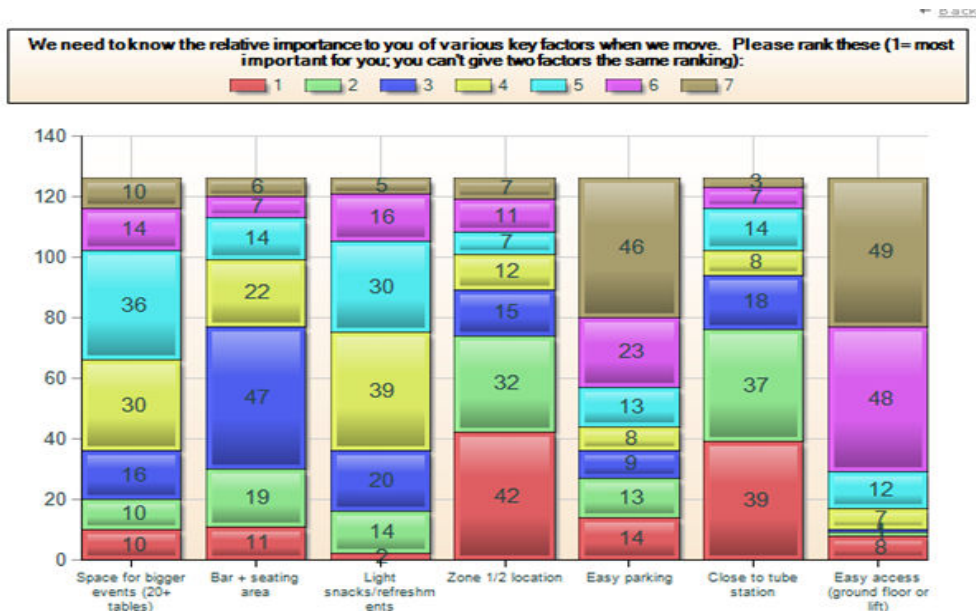
The next three got exactly 36 priority 1, 2 & 3 votes. So other factors need to be considered and I have rated the in the following order:

4th: Light snacks/refreshments (because of its v. high priority 4 vote)

5th: Easy parking (because it had more priority 1 & 2 votes than the other 2)

6th: Capacity/space

“Easy access” was rated the least important, apart from 8 people who rated it priority 1.



See also the verbatim comments in appendix. The themes are: clean, well lit, good air con controls, space between tables. They also reinforce importance of the two location criteria.

Proposed action: MC appoint a member to draw up a list of possible locations that match the above priorities and remain affordable in the light of the finance report from the treasurer and the manager of the Club. This can be run as a subcommittee with delegated authority.

How the Club is operated

18. We need members to chip in and help operate the club - in what ways could you contribute? Actions ▾				
Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	I've the ability & time	I've the ability (can advise)	I've the time (can be taught)	Not interested
Run a regular event and get players to turn up (eg ADD on Tuesdays, annual Keith Loveys cup, new events)	6 5%	7 6%	7 6%	106 84%
Stand-in tournament director (in case a regular is not available)	10 8%	5 4%	18 14%	93 74%
Coach advanced players	4 3%	7 6%	3 2%	112 89%
Coach intermediate/new players	14 11%	12 10%	12 10%	88 70%
Introduce new members to the club	15 12%	14 11%	20 16%	77 61%
Organise one of our social events (summer, Christmas)	6 5%	7 6%	7 6%	106 84%
Help to make a social event happen (promotion, food, etc)	11 9%	6 5%	8 6%	101 80%
Keep the window boxes fresh and bright	1 1%	0 0%	0 0%	125 99%
Help to find/assess new premises	9 7%	7 6%	12 10%	98 78%
Help to revitalise the decor from time to time	1 1%	7 6%	5 4%	113 90%
Create and run marketing plans to promote YC and its events	1 1%	7 6%	6 5%	112 89%

The overwhelming result in the above table is in the right-hand column (unfairly headed “not interested” as opposed to “neither”).

The highlight among the “interested” is the 50 people willing to help with member recruitment – if they deliver 3 or 4 new members each that will deliver a major increase in membership and member activity.

In addition, “intermediate coaching”, “stand-in TD”, “help find new premises” and “help with running social events” all yielded a significant number of people with ability and time.

These are useful, but we also have some volunteers for two other very important activities: “run a regular event” [new initiatives that are owned and driven by one or two members do well, those with passive promotion do not] and “advanced coaching” [to match the high demand for this new activity].

Only one person out of 126 declared that they had some interest in the window boxes so we can make an early move to re-appoint her.

Q19 to Q21 – Wider offers of help and other comments

There are many other offers of help which I will publish on a separate list. It was very encouraging to see the level of active support that members are prepared to offer when needed.

Appendix

Findings from the YCBC Member Survey

Player profile	Years memb ship	games per mnth	Q 13: What other ideas should the Management Committee consider as we review the role of YCBC as a Bridge club? [we have included these verbatim comments from the survey. In practice, several of the issues raised are already offered or under control – but the commenter may not be aware of this]
	3 - 10	10	Table bar service, playing specials, monthly events (3 or 4 nights)
	3 - 10	15+	I think what has been done along with the survey show the intent and that sits well with me.
	10+	<1	Non-bridge events for social purposes.
	10+	4	Better advertising
	3 - 10	1	Although I have said we need more intermediate and beginner events, I think we should remember the differentiator of the YC as place to get the best face to face bridge. So the aim should be to make people better at bridge.
	0 - 3	4	How you can adapt to the internet game - no idea on this, but something that needs to be faced.
	10+	4	Pleasant to be able to have a drink where further discussion of hands usually occur. I hope it will be possible to do so in future.
	10+	10	Developing players include younger players who will provide the backbone of the club in future years.
	10+	10	Increased variety of format for events
	3 - 10	10	Keeping the whole membership informed of the club's activities
	10+	10	how to attract a new generation of younger players. Improve the hosting and welcome to new and prospective new members
	10+	4	Get a more dynamic teacher. Someone who brings the pupils/beginners into the bar, has a drink and introduces them to regulars
	0 - 3	10	include a more active bridge teaching schedule (along the lines of A Robson's club)
	10+	4	More imps/teams events.
	0 - 3	4	Maybe some junior events eg under 50's
	10+	10	Rebuild the old Tuesday-Thursday crowd - those that will play at that level for ever and those who will move up to M-W-F
	3 - 10	10	The food offerings should be much better
	3 - 10	4	There are ideas that can be introduced to encourage single players to come play more often. This way, one has more opportunities of finding a regular bridge partner.
	3 - 10	<1	It needs to re-instate itself as the premier bridge club in the country. You do this already with strong players and a well-qualified TD but you also use unqualified TDs which although possibly cost-effective does not enhance your reputation.
	3 - 10	4	There are high numbers of players on-line; if there was some way to connect some of these to the club (eg run/sponsor on-line competitions - maybe with a final at the club) it could make a difference to club attendance.
	3 - 10	4	Bridge needs to be fun. You need to ban bridge bores.
	10+	1	How to persuade internet players to play face to face
	0 - 3	4	The social aspect of the YC is very important and much more well-developed than many other clubs. It is important to retain this.
	10+	1	Consider running event at external venue (either UK or "abroad") with agency who arrange & profit share (but use YC brand) This could generate revenue stream and/or "advertise" YC for extended membership
	3 - 10	4	Opportunity to find partners for national / congress events would be good.
	0 - 3	15+	Ways to get young people involved in Bridge. A program to help beginners who have completed the intermediate course to begin playing in the Club's duplicate sessions.
	10+	10	YCBC needs to retain its reputation as the club which attracts top players.
	10+	10	a regular league for less experienced players (no pros or "experts") on Tuesdays say. Afterwards someone like David Gold could lead a discussion of the hands. If they are in a team it commits people.
	0 - 3	4	Perhaps making bridge more accessible to people who would never think about playing eg maybe even starting with mini bridge, so people don't get frightened before they are hooked!
	0 - 3	4	On-line tournament
	10+	10	Accessibility is always going to be a key concern. Wherever you move will be better for some and worse for others. It is important to get a secure base for the future, but make sure most players can still get there.
	10+	4	You might consider holding sim pairs in the afternoon, especially since ARBC, Acol have both disaffiliated. You would have the corner of the London market, With the right publicity, I think it would be very popular.
	10+	4	More work to understand why some of the very best players who used to play regularly now do not do so.
	3 - 10	10	Perhaps changing the format on some of the less popular Thursday evenings
	10+	4	I am happy with how it is.
	3 - 10	10	Weekends away - seem successful in other clubs Other non bridge events - quizzes, nights out
	10+	4	I think the ability to eat much more interesting food would be a significant move beyond the current toasted sandwich option.
	10+	10	Is there a way of surveying London area players who do not play at the club, in order to find out what is discouraging them.
	never	4	I think it is difficult to change the atmosphere at a well-established club, and in the case of the YC it is not needed; what you are currently doing at the club is successful from what I have seen.
	10+	4	Stop members being booked-in as North-South at their favourite tables by others, i.e. not being able to effectively make reservations on-block. Why should some people be able to book a N-S position when they are not at the club to do it themselves?
	3 - 10	15+	Need to try and reverse the feeling that some people seem to have that the YC is unfriendly and intimidating. I think the majority of people are not like this at all but a minority are scaring people away.
	10+	<1	Banning anything more than minimum discussion of hands at the table, especially if more boards to be played.
	0 - 3	10	You might try to get more London University students to play, though this might best be achieved through some suitable classes as well as games.
	10+	1	Try to get more use of the premises.
	10+	4	Playing on Sunday Having once a fortnight/month a "big" prize money event to attract outside bridge players
	10+	15+	No specific ideas off-hand
	3 - 10	1	Joint events with other clubs
	3 - 10	1	do some market research
	10+	10	We must run on a commercial basis, and if teaching or supervised play is costing the club money it must be reviewed. The members have no idea if teaching is funding duplicate or afternoon rubber bridge is supporting supervised.
	3 - 10	10	More teams events. Review of starting times. Advertising.
	10+	4	How to run the club more professionally - it's a bit too "best endeavours" at present, with nobody taking responsibility for developing the strategy and driving it through.
	10+	10	to provide the best playing area possible
	10+	4	Introduce a clock. Improve the social atmosphere. Start on time.
	10+	1	You've got there already: older players prefer early finishes, i.e. afternoon games

Findings from the YCBC Member Survey

[we have included these verbatim comments from the survey. In practice, several of the issues raised are already offered or under control – but the commenter may not be aware of this]

Question 17: Do you have any other comments to add about facilities at the new premises?
Generous space per table. Most members are getting on a bit. Cramped conditions were fine when our hearts were young and gay but are a bit tiresome for those of us weary from the burdens of the day and creeping feebleness.
It would be good to have the playing area all on one level with other rooms/areas available for teaching/matches/renting out
Easily sectioned for different rooms for teaching or separate events and matches.
Clean and well lit please
The mix of rooms we have at the mo probably makes it more difficult to run an event, but it generally feels cosier than one big room so I quite like it.
Having a non playing Director is a luxury
Decent air conditioning - no down draughts !
Ideally a bit more room between tables.
I think it feels better when all tables in a duplicate are in one room - the sessions where a few tables are upstirs and a few down are untidy.
The above is restrictive, but close to a tube with good parking for the many players from Central London.
Good quality hot snacks are important, as people don't get the chance after work.
Sitting in the bar is a great way to get new partners, so worthwhile considering too.
From my point of view, it is important that the YC is kept clean and tidy. I hear it is better of late than the tip it was in danger of becoming. It is important that it is a place to which one feels good about bringing friends.
Bright and light !
What about the first floor of O'Neills on the corner of Earls Ct Rd. Their function room is always empty
Maybe the pub would like more revenue particularly in the future the way pubs appear to be going
Bright and air conditioned premises are needed
My answers above have been 'forced' due to the restriction imposed by the survey designer. They do not truly reflect my priorities. You MUST have ease of access.
Need effective air conditioning especially if space is tight, as now.
good lighting and temperature control; toilet facilities are important.
I regard both a bar and light snacks as important. My ranking is determined by the fact that it is possible to have light snacks without a bar but, if there were a bar, it would be foolish not to offer snacks.
They have got to be clean and of high standard to attract/maintain the clientele.
Please choose a building with some history, some atmosphere, some character. Please don't be too sensible or too practical.
strong standard is YC differentiator so spend the money/ design the interior with best playing quality in mind. Other stuff is secondary
The answers largely depend on sole/shared ownership. Would we be tenants of another club eg ala TGRs at present.
Needs to be as central as we can afford/find - preferably in same area as present - moving far will inevitably lose players who will be difficult to replace
More organised analysis at the end of the evening, or follow up after the evening, of the particularly challenging/interesting hands.
Good ventilation
Improved toilets / towels
KEEP BAR
one larger playing area, one level
To encourage younger members I believe any venue should be very modern and contemporary and the food should reflect this.
Can the club buy somewhere? How about selling shares in the club - in the way the Barcelona FC has done very successfully?
Any rich benefactors or someone who has a London townhouse they will leave to the club (or lease for a peppercorn rent?).
Can the club get non-profit status that could help getting a share scheme going?
For me, the atmosphere is better in clubs with one large room than smaller ones. If there is no bar, a lounge or breakout room is essential.
Need to maintain phone and Internet access and wireless scoring facilities.
I feel very strongly that part of the "spirit of the YC" will die if we don't have a bar where we can chat afterwards
Comfortable. Assuming there will never be sufficient funds for *elegant* austerity!
If space for matches had been in the above list, I would have ranked it about 3. I play lots of matches at YC. The facilities and catering have always been excellent and I am unaware of any equivalent facilities easily accessible from SW London.
Improved temperature control
bright outlook, not basement.
If possible on one floor
Air conditioning and or good ventilation are important. Lighting must be very good.
Make sure there's space for people to gather and discuss before and after the bridge - that's how people make friends and form an attachment with the YC
playing size and area v important, as is central location, then bar facilities are also vital for us boozey bridge players!