

A Brief History of IBA

The Illawarra Bridge Association was incorporated in 1994, following discussions after bridge amongst a small group of players. The main point of contention was to have premises dedicated to bridge. At this stage, bridge was being played in licensed clubs, and the rooms had to be set up and dismantled before and after play – having our own rooms would eliminate this onerous chore. Things moved quickly from there, within a few months the money needed for the new hall was raised, mainly through members' debentures but also with the assistance of a loan from the ABF. The new hall was quickly erected, and the first bridge was played on the 17 May 1995 in our premises at Figtree.



Figure 1: Bridge session at the Club room at Figtree

From the beginning, we were fortunate enough to have the services of one of Australia's finest directors with Chris Diment serving as our chief Tournament Director until his untimely death in 2011. Chris always provided us with a wide range of event types and remained abreast of the latest developments in bridge. This tradition lives on 'til this day. The Chris Diment Memorial Congress is hosted by IBA annually in his honour.

In her write-up of the 2017 Congress for the New South Bridge Association Erica Gray wrote¹:

John Brockwell surprised everyone when, in accepting his team's prize for best placed team, John opened his remarks by saying how proud he was to be part of a team playing in this Congress named in honour of Chris Diment. Chris and he had been good friends, and at the time of Chris's death in 2011, Chris had been appointed to the directing staff of the GNOT National Final in Tweed Heads. John said that it fell to him to say some words of respect but he was so overcome with grief that he could say nothing coherent, thus he welcomed this second opportunity.

He went on to say that Chris Diment was one of nature's true gentlemen and his directing prowess was respected at all levels of bridge from local to international. His passing was an enormous loss, not only to the bridge community but to the whole of the human race. Everyone present was extremely moved by John's words and no doubt, those who knew Chris, were reflecting on their own memories of an outstanding gentleman.

Since 2022 the Chris Diment Memorial Congress has been held at Port Kembla Golf Club allowing a larger field to be accommodated.

¹ https://www.nswba.com.au/enews/congress/docs/17Jul/201707_IBA_Chris_Diment_Memorial_Congress.pdf



Figure 2: Chris Diment Memorial Congress at Port Kembla Golf Club 2023

The northern branch of IBA, known as IBAND, was formed in February 2006, as a result of a meeting of bridge players in the Northern Suburbs. The meeting was organised by George Cole. With a lot of support from the IBA committee and Chris Diment, we played our first game of duplicate bridge at the Thirroul Railway Institute Hall on Wednesday night, 22nd February 2006.

The Association operates in a competitive but friendly atmosphere, with new members and visitors always welcome. We offer bridge at the above two venues and at various times (see below for session times) throughout the week. Beginners lessons are offered at least twice a year.