The UK online bingo explosion!

2005 has seen a multi-player UK online bingo explosion, as over the past 6 months more and more sites have been launched in the UK, including some from land based bingo. Why this sudden spate of activity, and rapid closing of the gap with the US?

To get an overview of the basics of online bingo operation, and a brief history of the UK market, we spoke to Phil Fraser, owner of bingo information site Which Bingo UK, which provides a very easy way to find UK online bingo sites and communities.

Phil explains that, in order to own/operate an online bingo site you need to license software from a specialist online games supplier. The main software licensors in the UK 90 ball market are the experienced suppliers Parlay Entertainment, Chartwell Technology and Playtech Software. These three have been joined by ‘new kids on the block’ Virtue Fusion and 1Gaming. In addition, there are other companies, notably Aqua Online, who offer a 75 ball game, but played in pound sterling.

For the use of their software, these suppliers will charge a license fee made up of a combination of set-up costs; an on-going management fee; and/or an on-going revenue share agreement.

In addition to selecting a software partner, there is a choice of one of two business models to follow. These two main business models are known as a ‘stand alone’ game or a ‘network’ game (also known as a ‘front end’ game).

Stand alone game
A ‘stand alone’ game is a game set up by one operator, alone. To launch a

Continued on page 4

Celebs make a fast start with this year’s Bingo for Breakthrough!

Ahead of this year’s official Bingo for Breakthrough week, a number of well known celebrities have got into the bingo spirit early. Dabbers at the ready, it was eyes down, look in, as celebrities played Bingo for Breakthrough at this year’s annual TV Quick Awards. The ceremony, held on Monday 5th September at The Dorchester Hotel in London, where Bret Hyrak, a previous finalist in Caller of the Year and a contestant in this year’s competition, did the

Continued on page 10
The National Game

Quarterly news and update from Chief Executive, Paul Talboys

As 2005 rapidly draws to a close, you and your customers are hopefully going ‘Bingo Bonkers’ and ready to play Bingo for Breakthrough, our award winning fundraising campaign in support of Breakthrough Breast Cancer.

This has certainly been a good year for NBGA promotions and developments with Ground Shaker, the introduction of the hugely successful afternoon games, The BIG Number, Bingo Bonkers and the launch of Eyes Down, all of which have been in addition to our £500,000 games.

Our final activity for 2005 will be our traditional £500,000 Game on Sunday 18th December. This special game will be promoted in the November edition of the new-look Eyes Down, due in clubs mid-November and full of Christmas features, news and competitions. In addition, to promote our Christmas game, there will also be in-club point of sale (available by 25 November), PR activity and press advertising in key women's weekly magazines. And may I also take this opportunity to wish every one of you a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

HRH The Prince of Wales announces Ambassador for East Midlands

His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales has made John Kelly, Chairman of Gala Group, his Ambassador for the East Midlands.

The Ambassador Award is part of the Business in the Community National Awards for Excellence

His Royal Highness paid tribute to Mr Kelly for his commitment to responsible business and contribution to local community, particularly disadvantaged communities.

The Prince of Wales stated, ‘In 1998, John visited a school in South London on the Seeing is Believing programme where he met a young Ethiopian teenager, who told him about some of the problems she had faced in her life. That visit motivated him to take on the leadership of the ‘Race for Opportunity’ campaign in the East Midlands, and to encourage his employees to become involved in community activity.’ He added, ‘John has done much to promote business engagement in the most disadvantaged areas.’

All of us at Bingo Link would like to congratulate John on receiving this richly deserved award.

European Bingo Federation Takes Shape

The Federation of European Bingo Associations is due to be formed on 15 November 2005, when representatives from the UK and Spanish Associations sign-up as its first members. It is hoped that the Italian Association will join in early 2006. As European legislation gains greater importance for bingo, it is clear that this Federation will have an increasingly significant role to play. Bingo Link will take a closer look at this new Federation in the January 2006 issue.

Bingo in the news

April and May were quite good months for press coverage this year, helped by the advent of Ground Shaker 2005 and the introduction of Shaker Plus prizes. These additional 130 prizes gave us more stories of winners and greater opportunities to talk to the press.

Club staff play a crucial role in encouraging players to agree to publicity, and many of the concerns that previously existed have been minimised by the availability of full PR support from the National Game. By encouraging players to work with National/Regional PR teams – and not to take any press enquiries themselves – we have greatly reduced the chances of any adverse publicity for winners.

The busiest regions for coverage during the months of April, May and June have been West Midlands (17%), Scotland (18%) and the North East (12%) respectively. The NBGA offers support at regional and national level for helping to manage the media, and works with players and clubs to promote bingo.

2005 Diary

24-30 October
Bingo for Breakthrough 2005

27 November
Caller of the Year 2005
National Final
Mecca, Catford, London.
For details call Pattinson
PR: 020 8310 5086

January 2006
ATEI/ICE
Earls Court Exhibition Centre, London

10-11 March
Amuse UK
Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool

National Bingo Game: key statistics

Total prize money since the game began £857,585,750
Total prize money played for in 2004 £ 50,703,875
Total prize money played for in 2004 to 2 October £39,523,373

Biggest games for 2004

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Month</th>
<th>Prize Sales</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept</td>
<td>932,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>1,069,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>1,180,644</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biggest game to date for 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Prize Sales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>1,180,644</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Number of press hits by month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Consumer magazines</th>
<th>Electronic media</th>
<th>National press</th>
<th>Regional press</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quarterly total: 367 Year to date: 910

The National Game

Editor: Steven Baldwin

Bingo in the news

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National Game Regional PR contact: Georgina Palmer 01438 718500

National Game National PR Agency: Beattie Communications 020 7053 6000

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Update on smoking ban

Legislation is still proceeding which could mean a ban on smoking in bingo clubs. But the laws are changing at different times in different parts of the country.

**Scotland legislation**
The Scottish Parliament has not been slow in legislating for a smokefree environment in the workplace and enclosed public places. Whilst the Government in Westminster is still in consultation mode over what should be done in England, the Scottish Parliament has already passed legislation banning smoking in all but a very few enclosed public places. As from 26th March 2006 smoking will be banned in all bingo clubs in Scotland.

**Wales legislation**
The National Assembly for Wales has expressed views very similar to the Scottish Parliament, but it does not have the powers at the moment to set its own legislation. However, it has expressed an intention to ban smoking in enclosed workplaces and enclosed public places within two to three years. This full ban would obviously affect bingo clubs in Wales.

**England legislation**
For premises in England, the situation is less clear-cut. The Government has just finished a consultation exercise based on a proposal for a partial ban, whereby large numbers of premises will be excluded from the prohibition. As things stand at present, bingo clubs will not be excluded from the prohibition.

The bingo industry takes the view that the fairest and most easily enforceable system would be to impose a total ban, as is the case in Scotland. All venues in the leisure sector will then be equally advantaged or disadvantaged.

If the Government continues with its proposal to exempt certain leisure premises, then the industry takes the view that any exemption should cover all like premises rather than just an arbitrary selection.

End of the 24-hour rule

Commencement Orders signed by the Minister for Sport, Richard Caborn MP, brought into force a number of provisions of the Gambling Act 2005. The Orders dealt with predominantly administrative matters, but there was one item that will be of considerable and immediate interest to bingo operators everywhere.

As from 1 October, 2005 the rule requiring new members to wait 24 hours before being eligible to play bingo as a member has been removed. This means that instant membership is now available to all new members – which means they can join a club and play straight away. Play today, win today!

Of the administrative matters brought into effect, the most significant was the establishment of the Gambling Commission, which replaced the Gaming Board and took over all its functions, rights and liabilities from 1 October, 2005.

The Act, when it is finally decided, will be phased in over a three or four year period, according to current plans. The Government is due to publish a Bill during the course of this Parliament.
The UK online bingo explosion!

Continued from page 1

'stand alone' game an operator needs to arrange, amongst other things, an off-shore license, web site hosting, bandwidth, payment processing, technical support, chat management and game management and of course marketing. The benefit with this business model is that the operator has full control over the game and all aspects of its running. In addition, ongoing software fees are reduced.

Network game
A 'network' game is the Internet's version of a land-based Link Game. With this business model an operator, through the software licensor, creates a game site that, in simple terms, plays bingo with an existing site's balls. In technical terms, one set of balls are being 'called' but numerous sites are being 'called' using the software licensor are higher than the stand alone model.

In very general terms, most operators of stand alone UK online bingo sites already run stand alone US versions of the game. Exceptions to this include Foxy Bingo, Think Bingo and Mecca Bingo. The network route is the one that has been taken by some of the UK’s most high profile online bingo games, including Virgin, Gala, Yahoo, The Independent and AOL.

Network or stand alone?
What would that choice mean for a land based operator looking to work with a licence owner/provider?
Aqua Online Bingo, like many providers, offers both solutions. Their Open Network is a full turnkey solution for businesses who are looking to focus solely on customer acquisition, and want to use experts to run their player management, promotions, competition, retention strategies, chat room moderators and newsletters. Some Aqua clients already benefiting from this model include: www.bingoballroom.com
www.uk-bingo.net
www.abcbingo.co.uk

Aqua's open network has over forty sites feeding into a common bingo room, where pooled players benefit from enhanced jackpots, including progressive jackpots and a massive weekly £1 million coverall jackpot, as well as 24/7 monitored chat rooms. While the unseen technology driving the site is relatively standard, the 'front end' or look and feel of the site is finished to represent the corporate/visual identity of the individual operator. Their stand alone network on the other hand offers a bespoke approach, meaning that only players from the operator’s own websites feed into the bingo room. All aspects of the bingo game are customized to meet individual requirements.

Secrets of success
Whether you are a large operator with funds and an existing customer base available, or a complete newcomer to either online bingo or bingo per se, there are some aspects of online life that are paramount to success, regardless of the business model you choose.

Player support, chat room management and overall customer relationship policies will have a key impact on a site. For any land based operator this will come as no surprise, for just like club bingo, it's all about people and the fact that they never read the instructions and quite often get things wrong. Just as they would expect a member of staff in a land based bingo club to be on hand to help, so it is online. As many of them may not be fully web literate it is doubly important that this need for support is met. These support issues must be given full consideration – and remember, this is a 24/7 environment.

On land or on line?
Many land based operators will be asking whether, if they get into online bingo, it will affect their club business. For an answer we need only look across the Atlantic. For many US players online bingo is a complement to club bingo, rather than a replacement, used when time does not permit a trip to the club, with most players tending to use the sites favoured by their friends. Online sites are used to extend a brand, creating a virtual club that can be visited anytime.

Taking Gala's game on line
Gala is the UK’s single largest bingo operator, with 166 clubs. An organisation of this size had all options and models available to them, so it is interesting to see the decisions they made.

Gala had a strong...
customer base, with great brand recognition as a starting point. However, its objective in going online was to develop a new audience, that would contribute to its overall customer base, and might also take to the club experience in due course.

Since launching in May, GalaBingo.co.uk has become one of the UK’s fastest growing bingo sites, registering over 50,000 players in its first 15 weeks of operation. Meanwhile its land-based clubs have benefited from cross-promotional marketing synergies. Point-of-sale materials in the clubs drive traffic to Gala’s online site, and in turn, the website advertises club promotions and encourages players to register at their local club.

Gala’s site was developed to replicate the Gala club buzz online, and the company promises that players will experience the same high level of customer service that they expect in their land-based clubs. ‘As with our land operations, the community is very important to Gala,’ says Dominic Harrison, Gala Group’s Trading Director. ‘In the chat room, players are able to communicate, with each other, share tips, or talk to our moderators who are on hand at all times to keep players company and answer any questions they may have.’

Behind the scenes, Gala’s online game is operated by St. Minver, a turn-key supplier of online gaming solutions which has operated Gala’s online casino and poker rooms since 2003. ‘We run the day-to-day operations,’ says Alison Digges, St. Minver’s Marketing Director. ‘but Gala is very proactively involved, ensuring that the online bingo experience is true to their brand.’

The online bingo platform is provided by Parlay Entertainment, the world’s leading developer and licensor of Internet bingo. Parlay’s random number generator – one of the most sophisticated in the world - ensures that every single game is truly random.

A new audience

Ms. Digges explained how Gala is indeed broadening its audience. ‘A lot of the online audience have never been to a bingo club. They tend to be younger, and are used to playing games online, but they don’t necessarily want to have that land-based experience. Then there are people who play for the first time online and love it so much they decide to go to a bingo club to experience the game first hand.’

GalaBingo.co.uk is proving that online bingo can mean boom, not bust, for traditional club operators. Its success is proving that online bingo is here to stay – and may be the best marketing tool land-based clubs have ‘virtually’ ever seen.

WhichBingo
www.whichbingo.com
0113 393 0500
Aqua Online Bingo
www.aquaonline.co.uk
0207 424 3000
St Minver
www.stminverltd.com
Tel: 00350 49552
Parlay Entertainment
www.parlaygroup.com
ptrinz@parlaygroup.com
Tel: +1 905 337-8524
Moving on up at RLMS

Leading gaming and amusement machine distributor, RLMS Sales has recently implemented some key personnel changes.

Managing Director, Rolf Neilsen, who has successfully led the company since it was sold by Rank Leisure 18 months ago, is moving on to pursue other ventures within the Danoptra Group.

Neilsen has played a pivotal part in driving the company forward and RLMS Sales are keen to maintain his good work.

Sales Director, Tony Glanville said, ‘Rolf has been instrumental in getting RLMS Sales where we are today. In just eighteen months we have accomplished a great deal and we are sorry to see Rolf go, as he has been a core part of the RLMS team.’

‘RLMS Sales will be left in the very capable and experienced hands of Reg Morosoli.

Reg himself will have increased involvement in business operations as Chairman of RLMS Sales, with Sales Director, Tony Glanville reporting to Reg.

RLMS Sales already have plans to expand and have announced that they are looking to introduce some additional members to the Sales and Support teams in the coming months.

This expansion will give the company the ability to continue to build upon on its current success.

Jono’s jackpot at Mecca Wood Green

It was all ‘Lights! Camera! Action!’ at Mecca Wood Green on Thursday 25 August when a television crew arrived with Jono Coleman in tow. They were there to film Coleman’s Cash, a competition giving away £10,000, which was later shown on GMTV.

Jono, of Heart FM and Celebrity Fit Club fame, mingled with the customers and had a bite to eat in the café before trying his hand at calling a game of bingo. However, the customers were not impressed with his bingo skills as he kept calling the wrong numbers – but it was all part of the script, of course!

'It was great to have a celebrity guest for the evening,’ said Damian Smith, general manager at the club. ‘It created a lot of excitement in the club, and the customers really do love this sort of thing.

‘He was really down to earth, actually,’ Smith continues. ‘He chatted to loads of the customers and even stayed for a bite to eat. He didn’t ask for any special treatment and even offered to pay for his own food!’

Calling All Bingo Operators

Top Ten Bingo are looking to acquire Bingo Clubs

If You Want To Sell!!

Contact: Bruce Roberts or Alan Weston
Tel: 01727 850793
Link discovered between gambling and superstition

Recent research from the International Gaming Research Unit at Nottingham Trent University found that heavy spending gamblers are significantly more likely to be superstitious.

Professor Mark Griffiths presented his findings at the British Association for the Advancement of Science Festival in Dublin on 8 September, as part of a symposium on Science and Luck.

Professor Griffiths and student Carolyn Bingham examined the beliefs of 412 bingo players and discovered that they were more superstitious in general while playing. However, heavy spending gamblers – those who spent more than £20 per bingo session – were more likely to be superstitious while gambling and also to believe in luck, unlucky numbers and astrology.

Having a lucky seat or lucky friend was also more prevalent among heavy spending gamblers. The most common tactic by bingo players in an attempt to alter a run of bad luck was to change pens or dabbers (29%). The research found no differences between men and women with regards to luck and superstition while gambling.

Professor Griffiths says, ‘The findings show that a large percentage of players believe in superstition and luck. However, the findings did vary, with a far greater percentage of players reporting everyday superstitious beliefs than those concerned with bingo.’

This was reflected in such beliefs and behaviours as having a lucky night of the week (5%), having a lucky friend (4%), having a lucky mascot (6%), sitting in the same seat for luck (21%), believing that certain numbers are lucky or unlucky (13%), and switching dabbers or pens to change bad luck (29%). The research also showed that 27% of players believed in winning and losing streaks, 25% regularly read their horoscopes and 57% believed in fate.

Another chance to win Hollie the Hippo

If you’ve been too busy helping make Bingo for Breakthrough happen in your club, then you probably haven’t entered our Hollie the Hippo competition. So here’s another chance! We have three medium-sized Hollies looking for homes.

For your chance to win one, just complete the Bingo Link competition entry form, or put your name, club name and club address on a post card, and send to:

Hollie Competition, Bingo Link, Lexham House, 75 High Street North, Dunstable, Beds, LU6 1JF

All entries must be received by 25 November 2005. Winners will be announced in the next issue of Bingo Link.
The bingo buddies that mind your tickets

With their improved function and ease of operation, the latest electronic bingo ticket terminals are catching on in clubs

As electronic bingo terminals lead to greater ticket sales, they’ve always been appealing to operators, but now they’re gaining popularity with the players, too.

Bingo Link talked to the providers of the UK’s two leading products, TED and PET, to find out why.

First we asked ECM sales manager Jim Moss what he sees as TED’s plus points. ‘Operators have found TED useful in a variety of ways, but all would agree it boosts revenue through ticket sales. Using TED, players can buy up to 75 tickets per game. And, while this rarely happens, they typically buy two or three sets of tickets instead of one,’ says Moss.

‘The effect is like getting more players through the door, without having to find or accommodate them. These “virtual admissions” generate income that a club needs to survive in a competitive arena.

‘One club that has introduced TED imposes a minimum purchase of three sets of tickets per TED for their cheap sessions. They usually sell around 200 more sets of tickets than they would have without TED. And that’s just for one session out of 14.’

So, it’s easy to see why operators love TED, but what does it offer the player? ‘The ability to play more tickets and increased chances of winning,’ replies Moss. ‘TED makes it easy to play 12, 18 or more tickets at once. Even novices can enjoy a game using TED, within seconds of walking into a club for the first time.

For seasoned players, TED adds spice to their usual bingo experience, by enabling them to play a number of electronic tickets alongside the usual strip of six on paper.’

Moss continues by explaining how TED operates in a club. ‘TED is the most integrated portable bingo terminal available, linking into a club’s existing systems. We provide a sales terminal to allow staff to select the player’s choice of tickets and download them to the next available TED. The TED is then given to the player, with a ticket receipt.

‘As the numbers are called, they appear on the TED screen. Once the game is closed, the next one is displayed on the screen, without the player or caller having to press any buttons.

‘It is impossible for a player to end up on the wrong book or page for the game in progress.’

‘When you also consider that operators can try TED in their clubs for free and pay only when the TEDs are used, it’s no surprise that TED has taken off in such a big way.’

Robert Walker, business development director at Edward Thompson, shares this enthusiasm for electronic bingo terminals, having achieved success with PET. ‘The benefits of electronic bingo are being proven across the UK. With admissions waverering and it becoming harder to keep the prize board attractive, electronic bingo can create virtual admissions and extra value for operators. And the benefits to the operator stem from the appeal to the players. The more tickets they play, the more they win and the more often they get close to winning. So using PET increases the “sweat factor”, which helps to keep players coming back for more.’

Edward Thompson is best known for producing the paper tickets used in commercial clubs and was keen to create a technology product that enhances the game and is popular with players. ‘A major part of bingo players’ loyalty is enjoying the way bingo is played,’ says Walker. ‘The skill is important to them – it’s more than a game of chance. If technology were to change this, it could damage the dynamic that is bingo. We took a deliberate, thoroughly researched decision to limit the amount of automation available to the player and to replicate the paper game as closely as possible. PET still plays bingo. Its key pad is organised in the same way as six tickets are, with the numbers displayed in the same columns. So playing is exactly the same, keeping the player engaged.

“We also believe that it is vital to provide clubs with a durable and robust product. In the unlikely event of breakdown, technical support for PET is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.’
Introducing the new...
INTERACTIVE BINGO CHANNEL

Designed specifically for Bingo Clubs, the Interactive Bingo Channel incorporates the latest digital split screen technology and interactive message boards.

Broadcast on 42” plasma screens the channel brings up to the minute information on the services, promotions and products at your venue. The system is designed to give total control of what is displayed on the screen. Operated in-house by a member of staff, the system is TOTALLY FREE OF CHARGE to your club.

For further information call Steve Roberts at Arena Digital Productions Ltd on 01253 896 786

For a free information pack, simply remove this advert, fill in your details and return to: Arena Digital Productions, West House, Bracewell Avenue, Poulton-le-Fylde FY6 8JF

Club Name: ____________________________
Contact Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________
Phone Number: ____________________________

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NRM’s ISDN Networks, Wide Area Gaming and Digital Link Systems have revolutionised network gaming.

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- Proven pedigree in wide area gaming networks
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Network Resource Management Limited
Newlands House, Newlands Science Park, Inglemire Lane, Hull, East Yorkshire. HU6 7TQ.
Telephone: +44 (0) 1482 441142.
email: info@nrmgroup.com Web Site: www.nrmgroup.com.
Celebs get in early on this year’s Bingo For Breakthrough!

Continued from page 1

calling honours with Antony Cotton (Coronation Street’s Sean). Celebs hoping their numbers would come up included:

★ Anthony Hutton, winner of Big Brother 6, plus fellow BB6 housemates Craig Coates and Derek Laud

★ Antony Cotton, Sean from Corrie and the host

★ Bruce Forsyth, The Generation Game and Strictly Dance Fever host

★ Calum Best, son of George and star of Celebrity Love Island 2005

★ Carrie and David Grant, Fame Academy voice coaches

★ Casualty cast, several

Getting in on the action... Craig from Big Brother 6 (left) and Paul Burrell, Princess Diana’s former butler and star of I’m A Celebrity...
In a deal worth £5.35 million, the St Albans-based Top Ten Holdings plc has acquired all 13 clubs operated by Walker Leisure (UK) Ltd, which are located mainly in the Midlands and the North of England. The clubs will continue to trade as normal, with no change of staff, offering main bingo, prize bingo, fruit machines and a bar and buffet service.

Graham Kerr, managing director of Walker's parent company, Derby-based Westvale Leisure Limited, now becomes an executive director of Top Ten. He said: ‘This is a positive move for all our venues. Top Ten has a good reputation for investing in the clubs it acquires and improving what’s on offer to customers. I think we have a bright future ahead of us.’

In just over two years, Top Ten has grown from 11 clubs to 24 with the acquisition of Welcome Clubs, in the south-west and the Mason Group in the north-east. The latest addition of 13 Walkers Clubs brings Top Ten’s portfolio to 37 bingo clubs that stretch all the way from Gateshead in County Durham to Camborne in Cornwall.

Alan Weston, joint managing director of Top Ten, added: ‘Thirteen might be “unlucky for some” but it’s a real bonus for us. This deal confirms our position as one of the major independent UK bingo club operators and puts us well ahead of our smaller rivals.’

Top Ten’s annual results were announced on the same day as the Walkers acquisition. They showed a turnover of £13.9 million and a pre-tax profit of £1.6 million.

Alan Weston said that the company expected to secure further acquisitions in the short and medium term, to take advantage of a fragmented market and drive returns for shareholders.

An in-depth feature with yet more images from the fantastic event will run in the next edition of Eyes Down, due out in November. If you have pictures of the fundraising fun taking place in your club, please send them in to us or even directly to Bingo for Breakthrough!
Home-style food at Mecca Bingo

Something fresh is being cooked up in Mecca Bingo kitchens across the country, where tasty, home-style food is being put on the menu.

Mecca Bingo is now offering customers far more choice in its diners with a new selection that includes family favourites such as beef pie, lamb casserole, sweet and sour chicken and chilli con carne, as well as the customary chips, of course.

Martin Shaw, head of catering at Rank Group Gaming Division, believed it was time to open up the menu and offer some old favourites. He says, 'The new menu gets us into using far more “real ingredients” and puts quality and choice behind the counter. We’ve launched eight dishes to date and we’ll continue to develop more in future to create a bigger menu bank. From that bank, each club will choose the dishes they want to serve, specific to their customers’ tastes.'

The new menu was given a trial run at five Mecca clubs, and met with great success before being rolled out across the country. Shaw adds: ‘Some people had doubts about whether this kind of food would be popular, as the previous menu was based around fast food. However, when we trialled the new dishes, we saw the numbers of people visiting the catering areas start to increase and sales of chips decline. The trial proved that customers want quality and choice, so we’re responding to their needs by offering them just that.’

Dominic Harrison joins the Gala board

Gala Group Ltd, one of this country’s leading gaming companies, has recently announced the appointment to the Group Board of Dominic Harrison, Gala’s Trading Director.

Dominic joined Gala in June 2004. Having qualified initially as a Chartered Accountant with KPMG in 1988, he then moved on to join Grand Metropolitan plc.

He worked initially in Corporate Finance, moving into Marketing and Brand Management on Haagen-Dazs, Green Giant and Pillsbury in the UK and Europe.

In 1997 he moved to Bass plc, to take up a position as International Marketing Director for Bass Brewers, before moving into General Management in a role as Director and General Manager in Bass Leisure Retail.

Dominic then took the role of Commercial Director at Ladbrokes - the betting and gaming division of Hilton Group plc.

Commenting on the appointment Neil Goulden, Gala Group Chief Executive, said: ‘Dominic’s appointment to the Board not only recognises his significant contribution to the Group’s development over the last year but also underpins Gala’s commitment to maximising the opportunities in a modernised gaming environment and identifying new areas of growth open to us.

‘This appointment further strengthens our Board and we are looking forward to the continued benefit from Dominic’s experience and judgement in the future.’
BA Annual Golf Day goes with a swing

This year's annual golf day was a great success, raising over £1,000 for Breakthrough Breast Cancer.

A splendid day of golf was enjoyed by a record number of 72 players, over the course at Hawkstone Park Hotel and Golf Club in Shropshire. The Prize Table was once again full, thanks to the terrific generosity of our sponsors. A Best Team prize, Best Lady Player prize, Best Endeavour prize, together with prizes for nearest the pin and the longest drive were also awarded.

Unfortunately the Hole in One Prize was left uncollected yet again! However, ECM Systems kindly donated the £250 prize, together with a further £250, to Breakthrough Breast Cancer. Paul Talboys, Chief Executive of The Bingo Association, was delighted to receive the cheque on behalf of Breakthrough.

The charity also benefited from the proceeds of the Dutch auction for the use of an apartment in Puerto Banus - kindly donated by Janet and John Anderson.

David Hawkes, President of the Golf Society, said, ‘Once again this has been a great day. The golfers have had two good competitions, the course has been challenging and enjoyable, and we have been able to support Breakthrough admirably.

I would very much like to thank all of our sponsors without whom this event would not be possible, and I very much look forward to welcoming entrants old and new to the 2006 Golf Day.’

So a big ‘thank you’ to Arnold Palmer Golf, Carlton Clubs PLC, Cavenbridge Confidential, ECM Systems Ltd, Gala Bingo, Gametech International Inc, Jardine Lloyd Thompson, Mazooma Games, Meeron Ltd, PMS International Group PLC, Shipleys Bingo, Syndicate UK and The Edward Thompson Group.

Winners of the annual cups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cup</th>
<th>Prize Winners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nesfield Cup</td>
<td>Mike Pilkington Jnr, Keith Maleedy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jarglen Jug</td>
<td>David Aitken</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary’s Cup</td>
<td>Robin Porter, Stephen Cairns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sail Salver</td>
<td>Robin Porter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maygay Cup</td>
<td>Jason Roberts</td>
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Joe Hutchinson of Brooks Wilkinson Ltd (left) and Mike Pilkington Jnr and Keith Maleedy receiving their trophy.
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The search to find the Bingo Caller of the Year 2005 got underway in earnest during September, with six Regional Finals.

Every year the job gets harder! This year, the judging panel was Mandy Gargon (current Bingo Caller of the Year), Gloria Pattinson (the competition organiser from Pattinson PR) and myself, Steven Baldwin – and the high standard of callers made judging particularly hard this year.

North East Region – New Western Bingo, Armitage, Leeds
Linda Glendinning and her superb staff at the New Western Club rolled out the red carpet for the event and made everyone very welcome.

Each of the six contests gave a good account of themselves in the judges’ interview and went on to demonstrate their showmanship and calling skills. Malcolm Disbrow (Gala, Sheffield Parkway), Gary Walker (Mecca, Hull), Karen Winstone (Top Ten, Selby), Adam Lee (Gala, Wadsley Bridge, Sheffield), David Lambourne (Ritz, Castleford) and Gary Wilson (Gala, Hull) all took to the stage. They had obviously all worked very hard on their routines, but it was Gary Wilson who walked away with the Regional Title.

North West Region – Buckingham Bingo, Middleton, Manchester
Club manager, Lee Rich and his team were right on the ball. The club looked spectacular, decked out in helium balloons and special banners to welcome the contestants.

David Sharp (Buckingham, Hyton Liverpool), Alan Stockdale (Gala, Carlisle), David Freeland (Empire, Blackpool), Allen Musa (Mecca, Dingle Liverpool), Philip Reid (Mecca, Ellersmire Port) and Karl Seth (Buckingham, Old Trafford Manchester) all ensured an exciting and close final, with much audience support. Current Regional Champion and previous National Winner Alan Stockdale has always proved a tough act to beat, but he was pipped by Karl Seth, who took the title for the North West.

Scottish Region – County Bingo, Coatbridge, Glasgow
Manager, Billy McKay and his staff made sure the 400+ visiting supporters got real value for money on their day out. Contestants Ian Carroll (Gala, Kilmarnock), Graeme Garioch (Mecca, Aberdeen), John Lamb (New Globe, Johnstone), Nicky Davies (Gala, Darnley Glasgow), David McKeeown (County Bingo, Cumbernauld) and Alan Kerr (Gala, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh) all put in great performances and proved that the Scots certainly do have a robust sense of humour! Scottish Television filmed the performances, which were well received by the audience, who were treated to some very cleverly worded bingo songs and fresh jokes! Graeme Garioch, resplendent in kilt and sporran, took the Scottish title.

South Region – Gala Bingo, Lords Hill, Southampton
Deputy Manager, Ian Sopp and his team ensured that the show not only went on, but that it went on to time. Supporters enjoyed a fabulous cabaret performance and a free lunch!

As the cabaret entertained guests, contestants Ricky Denton (Mecca, Wood Green London), Melanie Ceazar (Gala, Enfield London), Mike Barnes (Leo Leisure, Eastleigh), Brett Hyrjak (Gala, Butlins Bognor Regis), Bobby Blount (BJs, Reading) and Miranda Steeples (Deluxe, Eastbourne) were tested by judges in the interview session, then took to the stage. All were exceptionally entertaining, with a special mention for Miranda Steeples’ acapella bingo version of George Formby’s ‘When I’m Cleaning Windows’! But when all the marks were counted up, Brett Hyrjak came out as a clear winner.

Wales Region – Castle Bingo, Merthyr Tydfil
Club manager Marc Richards and his team provided a warm welcome to their specially decorated club, and gave contestants Peter Lewis (Castle, Newport), Robert ‘Will’ Willard (Mecca, Cwmbran), Carl Mallon (Castle, Neath), Will McCarthy (Riva, Splott Cardiff), Mike Broad (Castle, Bridgend) and Terry Whitelock (Top Ten, Neath) a great party atmosphere to perform in.

The mix of entertainment and high standard made the final decision very difficult, but Robert Willard, known as Will, who had been beaten by Peter Lewis last year, got his turn this time, as he took his first title win.

Midlands Region – Gala Bingo, Erdington, Birmingham
Deputy Manager, Julie Whitehead brought in extra help to be sure that everything went smoothly throughout the day. The size of the club, which seats some 1,600, made contestants Matt Adlington (Gala, Scunthorpe), Andrew Healey (Shipley’s, Kidderminster), Barbara Miller (Mecca, Gloucester), Adrian Smith (Gala, Rubery Great Park Birmingham), Ivan Winser (Mecca, Norwich) and James Kavanagh (Mecca, Acocks Green Birmingham) really have to work the room. Each had something different to offer, and the judges had a hard time choosing just one winner, but finally awarded the last National Final place to Matt Adlington, from Gala Scunthorpe.

From over 100 entries we now have our six final contestants, who will travel to London for the National Final on Sunday 27 November. Mark Dicker and his team at Mecca in Catford, South East London, will host the event, with popular TV presenter, Colleen Nolan.

This year’s Regional Final hosting clubs all worked hard to help ensure success on the day. It was a close call, but the judges agreed that New Western Bingo in Leeds, was the winner of Best Regional Final 2005. Congratulations to them, and to all of our regional winners.

NATIONAL CALLER OF THE YEAR 2005 – REGIONAL WINNERS

Scotland
Graeme Garioch, Mecca, Aberdeen
Gary Wilson, Gala, Hull

North East
Karl Seth, Buckingham, Old Trafford, Manchester

North West
Graeme Garioch, Scottland
Barbara Miller, Mecca, Gloucester, Adrian Smith (Gala, Rubery Great Park

Midlands
Matt Adlington, Gala, Scunthorpe

South
Brett Hyrjak, Gala,Butlins Bognor Regis

Wales
Robert ‘Will’ Willard, Mecca, Cwmbra

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New Carlton Club for Dunfermline

Leading independent operator Carlton Bingo has opened a new club at the Fife Leisure Park in Dunfermline. The club is one of two new flat-floored developments being built by the company this year, the second being located at Beechwood, Inverness (due for completion late October 2005).

The Dunfermline site is adjacent to Bannatyne’s Health Club and the Odeon multiplex cinema at Fife Leisure Park, which is close to the M90, putting the venue within easy reach. With a 2000 seat capacity the new outlet is the largest in the area and is the flagship Carlton club.

Carlton member Margaret McVay was the first winner in the club on 25th August, receiving £50 winnings and a bouquet of flowers presented by general manager Christine Wright. ‘We’ve gone for a real wow factor with the design and lighting in the venue and it seems we’ve managed it from the response we got from our players last night. We’re now fully open for business and offering Bingo to Shout About!’

The 1500 guests were treated to an unforgettable night of entertainment, with anecdotes from actress Dorothy Paul and Dunfermline FC manager Jim Leishman, plus a firework display, cheerleaders and Las Vegas dancing girls!

Margaret McVay receives her bouquet from Manager Christine Wright.

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