



Merseyside & Cheshire Bridge Association

County Newsletter



Issue 4

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Editorial

Firstly, as there is not a January issue of the newsletter, may I take this opportunity to send belated best wishes to all of you for the New Year.

I particularly want to offer greetings and thanks to all those people locally who freely give their time to help organise this game that we all love. Whether it is in our clubs, leagues or at County level we would not be able to enjoy our bridge without their efforts. I am sure that you all appreciate their work as much as I do.

I also bet that there are a few of you out there who would like to do their own bit to help; certainly the County committee would love to have a few more volunteers. The more people who are involved the easier the load on everyone. So if you have a bit of time to spare consider offering it to helping to administer the game. You will not regret it.

As our County borders on Wales and several of our members live there, it is hardly surprising that some players are involved in bridge in both areas. One of these is Alan Stephenson, who is currently a selector for the Welsh Bridge Union and this year was given the job of being non-playing captain of the Welsh team for the Camrose. This event is the home international series and is played over 2 weekends, with each country playing 160 boards each weekend, so a gruelling event. The captain's job is to decide which 2 of the 3 pairs will play each 16 board session and against which opponents they will play. He also has to research the systems of the other teams, advise on tactics, boost the morale of the players and give them a massage after each match (only kidding on the last one!).

In the first weekend, Wales lost their first match 12-18, but steadily improved and ended with a 25-5 win against Eire (Eire have won the trophy in 4 of the last 6 seasons). Currently, England lead with 92vps, Wales are lying 2nd with 88vps, so an exciting second weekend in prospect. You can see all of the matches of that weekend (March 4th-6th) via the internet on Bridge Base Online, easy to use and free to watch. After the team's encouraging performance it is not surprising that Alan has been confirmed as the npc for that second weekend as well.

I asked Alan about how he had felt during the first weekend, and he replied "*It was interesting and after the first match on Friday I definitely wasn't feeling good, but after the thrashing of Ireland in the last match I think Wales have reason to be optimistic. It's quite stressful when you are watching and cannot influence the result in any way, but a lot easier when the results are good!*"

On January 19th, a heat of the EBU National Pairs was held at the Deva BC. It has been some years since a heat of this national event was held in the County, so well done to the club (and to David Armstrong in particular) for arranging it. 16 pairs took part with the top 6 going to the Northern final. With green points throughout, including for the club heat, I reckon this event will be here to stay - look out for it next season.

BLACKPOOL GRAND PRIX

by Bill Niccol

At the end of December the E.B.U. hold their year end congress in Blackpool. Having a desire to escape from the television I agreed to play in the teams with Alan Stephenson and Stuart Matthews. With Al and Stu in the team you always have a chance to do well - whatever bad results you may achieve on any particular hand. Their style may be described as "turbo-charged" pretty accurately, but more than that they are excellent fun to play with. Have you ever then played a match of 7 boards where you have two disasters and still win 20-0? No neither had I - till then! Two swings of 17 imps in the plus column certainly helped and here was one of them -

Dealer East. EW Vul.

	♠ 10 6 2		
	♥ K 9 8 7 4		
	♦ K 6 5		
	♣ 5 3		
♠ Q 9 8 7 4		♠ K 3	
♥ Q 10		♥ A 6 3 2	
♦ 7		♦ A Q J 9 3	
♣ A 8 7 6 4		♣ Q J	
	♠ A J 5		
	♥ J 5		
	♦ 10 8 4 2		
	♣ K 10 9 2		

West	North	East	South
		1♦	Pass
2♣	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Sitting South my first problem was what to lead? (The less said about West's bidding the better!) A lot of players may have led a spade and on some layouts this could have been correct. Also give partner dummy's 10 of hearts and a heart lead would have been sensational. Luckily I decided on quite a rare strategy - I led declarer's suit, a diamond. This now went to the king and ace. Now declarer led the king of spades. Obviously you win this and then? Luckily for me I happened to hit on the right card again with the King of clubs. This effectively has the effect of cutting declarer off from dummy and the contract now fizzled one off. Ted Reveley will tell anyone that for me to do the right thing twice on one hand is unheard of and I have to agree with him. But as with the monkey and typewriter analogy it had to happen one day!

This play is known as the Merrimac Coup. This is named after the sinking of a coal supply vessel called the Merrimac during the Spanish American War. It was a suicide attempt to block up Santiago harbour and nullify the force of the Spanish fleet. Ultimately the mission was unsuccessful. Thank goodness my effort wasn't! Pleased with your effort you return to score up. "Plus 100 - the Merrimac," you say, looking for plaudits from team-mates. Then you find out that Al and Stu had somehow managed to play the hand in 1H redoubled, making with two overtricks, for +1520 or something similar. And yes they knew it was a 4-2 fit! "We had you covered," Al says with a big grin on his face.

Llangollen Swiss Teams by Bill Niccol and Bob Pitts

As reported in the December issue, this event was a success with it's revised format and new venue. There was insufficient time and space for a some hands last time, so now we can catch up.

Bill's favourite hand from the weekend came in the first match on Sunday.

Dealer East. E/W vulnerable

	♠ K 10 8	
	♥ K Q J 10 9	
	♦ Q J 8 5	
	♣ 6	
♠ 9 3		♠ A Q 7 5
♥ 6		♥ A 7 4
♦ A K 9 7 6		♦ 4 3
♣ A 9 5 4 2		♣ Q J 10 8
	♠ J 6 4 2	
	♥ 8 5 3 2	
	♦ 10 2	
	♣ K 7 3	

The auction	W	N	E	S
			1NT	P
	3♥	double	4♣	4♥
	P	P	4♣	P
	5♣	5♥	P	P
	6♣	All pass		

Bill and his partner were E/W against Rhona & Bernard Goldenfield. West's 3♥ bid showed at least 5/5 in the minors and a game force. East accepted with 4♣ and 4♣ was a cue bid. In their methods, when East passed over 5♥ it showed first round control and was forcing, thus West had little problem in selecting 6♣. The cards were lying well and 12 tricks rolled in for a flat board!! There were many pairs who stopped in game.

Note that 3NT needs the club finesse, so in that case you may as well try the club slam. For those of a cautious demeanour 5♣ is best.

In Swiss teams matches, obtaining an extra imp or two can easily gain your team an additional victory point, which might be crucial for your final placing. This deal showed Paddy Murphy, one of my team-mates, alive to such an opportunity.

Dealer South N/S Vulnerable

	♠ K 6 4 3 2	
	♥ K Q J 10 2	
	♦ 9	
	♣ A 4	
♠ J 8		♠ Q 10 7 5
♥ 6		♥ A 9 8 4 3
♦ Q J 6		♦ 2
♣ K J 8 7 6 5 2		♣ Q 10 3
	♠ A 9	
	♥ 7 5	
	♦ A K 10 8 7 5 4 3	
	♣ 9	

West opened 3♣ and after a take out double by North, South leapt to 6♦. Paddy led his heart, and East won and returned the suit, which was ruffed with the diamond queen. Now Paddy exited with a club leaving declarer to decide if West genuinely had begun with two red singletons or whether he was being conned. South guessed wrong, taking a first round trump finesse and losing 3imps when the contract at our table was 6♦ one off.

Merseyside & Cheshire Bridge Association

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Latest Results

In the Swiss Teams at the end of year congress in Blackpool Stuart Matthews, Alan Stephenson and Bill Niccol (along with Tracy Capal from Manchester) finished in 3rd place

It was pleasing that the Chester Congress held in mid-January was a sell-out. The pairs event was won by Dan Crofts and Gary Hyett. The highest Deva pair being Shirley Webster and John Arrowsmith in 3rd place. The teams event was won by Catherine Draper's team from Lancashire with locals Peter Kaufmann, Chris Pope, Matt Foster and David Stevenson second.

John Salisbury is based in Cardiff, but continues to be a County member and has recently joined the Deva BC. He was a member of the team that in January won this year's EBU National Swiss teams.

The County Trials were held last Sunday and there was a good turnout of 15 pairs. Alan Stephenson & Stuart Matthews took first place. Second were Julian Merrill & Paul Roberts, with Liz Commins & David Stevenson third.

Calendar

All events here are correct at time of publishing but you are advised to take the precaution of checking with the organisers in all cases.

February		
13th	Merseyside & Deeside Cup	Merseyside BC
20th	Jean Keen Trophy	Merseyside BC
March		
10th	Charity Challenge	Merseyside BC
13th	Eric Howarth GP Teams	Deva BC
27th	Portland Pairs	various venues
April		
2nd/3rd	North Wales GP Swiss Teams	Northop Hall
3rd	Preece Rosebowl	Blundellands BC
17th	Charity Teams	Merseyside BC
May		
2nd	May Day Pairs	Merseyside BC
11th	Simultaneous pairs	Merseyside BC
19th	Andrew Rosebowl	Liverpool BC
22nd	Green Point Pairs	Merseyside BC
28th/29th	Annual match v Dublin	
June		
2nd	Liverpool Open Pairs	Liverpool BC
3rd	Worldwide Sim. Pairs	Merseyside BC
9th	Liverpool Open Teams	Liverpool BC
16th	Jim Davies Swiss Teams	Heswall BC
23rd	County AGM	Liverpool BC
28th	Bill Hughes Sim. Pairs	Deva BC

Contacts and information

MBC : www.merseybridge.org.uk

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Deva BC : www.bridgewebs.com/deva

Angus Clark (county secretary) : aandsclark@aol.com

Dave Keen (chief selector) : email admin@mcba.org.uk

County website : www.mcba.org.uk

Conventions Corner

A regular feature to help explain popular agreements

Puppet Stayman

A not unusual problem - you pick up ♠ 6 5 ♥ A K J 10 6 ♦ K Q 10 ♣ A K J. Comfortably the right strength for a 2NT opener, but the spade weakness is a worry as a lead in that suit might beat 3NT with game on in hearts. Somehow a strong 2♥ does not seem quite right, even if available. These days when quite a few partnerships have 2♣ as their only other strong opening bid you might prefer to open a very heavy 1♥. The solution is to still open 2NT, but instead of Stayman or Baron, use 3♣ to ask for 5 card majors, which does not preclude finding a 4 card major suit as well. So after a 3♣ response, opener rebids as follows: 3♦ denies a 5 card major, but promises at least one 4 card major. 3♥/3♠ shows 5 cards in that suit. A 3NT reply shows no major suit. Once opener has replied 3♦ then responder can continue to seek which 4 card major opener holds. Many partnerships like the 2NT hand to be declarer if possible as this conceals the main strength, and thus the 'puppet' part involves responder bidding the major he does NOT hold on the second round.

e.g. 2NT - 3♣ (asks for majors) - 3♦ (a 4 card major) - 3♥ (I have 4 spades) - now opener bids 4♠ with a 4 card suit and bids 3NT otherwise. *Warning - this can be a problem if one of you forget, so it might be better to keep it simple and as responder bid the major that you have got.*