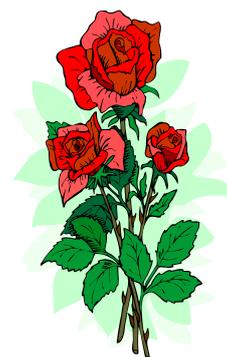




County Newsletter



Inside this issue:

Lady Connell by Bob Pitts	1
Northern Counties League report	1
Slam Heaven and Hell by Bill Niccol	2 & 3
Hand from Down Under by Tim Bourke	4
Tollemache Cup by Bob Pitts	5
Calendar	6
N. Wales GP pairs	6

The Lady Connell is the main teams event within the County, but sadly in the last couple of seasons fewer teams have been entering. The County committee would love to hear suggestions as to how this premier competition, which qualifies the winners for the EBU national teams final the Pachabo, can boost entries in the future. Do let them have your views.

The qualifying rounds this year had only 10 teams entering, and the big shock was the early exit of the holders, though the result might have been different had the cards been more co-operative on this deal.

<i>Dealer North Love All</i>		
	♠ 9 8 3 2	
	♥ Q J 8 3	
	♦ 9	
	♣ J 10 5 4	
♠ A Q J 10 7 4		♠ K 6
♥ A		♥ 10 4
♦ A 4		♦ K J 5 2
♣ A K 7 3		♣ Q 9 8 6 2
	♠ 5	
	♥ K 9 7 6 5 2	
	♦ Q 10 8 7 6 3	
	♣	

Latest Results

In the Merseyside BC Anniversary pairs on September 4th, the winners were Anne Harwood and Joyce Kennedy. Ian Stanley and Pat Crossley were the runners-up.

The Merseyside League season began with a 2 session Swiss teams event. The winners were Dusty Millers Blue, with Arrowe second and Abercrombie third.

The North Wales one day GP pairs was won convincingly by Ted Reveley and Bill Niccol, with David Stevenson and Liz Commins second. A further vp back was Stuart Matthews partnering Tracy Capal of Manchester.

At one table North passed and East opened an aggressive mini no-trump. Despite a lot of interference from South, E/W still reached the excellent contract of 7NT, but this was doomed by the bad club break. When the board was replayed, after 2 passes South opened 2H (hearts + a minor) and West's 4S call ended the auction. Had the grand slam made, the match would have been all square.

The first round produced wins for the teams captained by David Stevenson, Andy Prothero, Bob Pitts, Dave Shaw and Barry Griffith. Julian Merrill's team had a bye as they were the only team to turn up for the Deva heat. The QF draw is Shaw v Pitts and Merrill v Griffith. The other two teams get a bye to the semi-final.

Congratulations to Ted Reveley on becoming one of this year's recipients of the EBU's Dimmie Fleming award for services to bridge — thoroughly deserved.

Northern Counties League

Sadly, after three of the four rounds all of our teams are struggling to keep up with the leaders in their respective divisions.

The A team have been unable to maintain their early lead and have dropped back to equal 3rd place. The B team had a decent round 3 but are still only lying 4th out of 7 teams. The C team seem unable to get going this year and remain rooted to the foot of the table in their division.

Slam Heaven and Hell *by Bill Niccol*

Another event I would thoroughly recommend to members of M&CBA is the Great Northern Swiss Pairs, played in the Hilton Hotel, Leeds. The event is quite good value for money as it includes a meal each day, albeit only sandwiches and fruit on the Sunday. Leeds is also a very friendly city, fun to spend some time in.

Isn't it strange that we bridge players find our pulse rates increasing when a slam hand is in the air? Fair enough playing teams, when one hand can determine the event of a match, but in pairs every hand is of equal importance. Why we are deluded into thinking slams are of more importance than a part-score hand, for example, is simply illogical, probably because we are psychologically teams orientated. This year's event seemed to abound in slam hands and yes, my heart rate did quicken. On hand 12, as North I picked up the following;

♠ AKQ3 ♥ 54 ♦ void ♣ AKQJ986

Well do you reach for the 2C card? Hopefully not! A simple 1C is the correct opening bid. The auction will never end after 1C and you can hopefully catch up later. The auction thereafter could not have gone better for me –

North	East	South	West
1♣	1♦	1♥	2♦
2♠	3♦	3♠	Pass
?			

We are now at the crossroads. Which road do we take? If partner has the ace of hearts we can virtually underwrite a grand slam, but the opposition may have the ace and king of hearts, then slam may go down. But aren't we likely to get a diamond lead? If so we may be able to throw dummy's hearts on our clubs anyway. So once more into the breach and I decided to venture forth with a bid of 5D. This is something that rejoices in the name of Exclusion Roman Key Card Blackwood. What a mouthful. Basically partner ignores the diamond suit and tells you how many other 'aces' they hold. Partner replies 5S – showing none. Now you try 6S and find partner with –

♠ J952 ♥ KJ632 ♦ J10 ♣ 104

12 tricks were easy on a diamond lead with trumps 3-2. Phew, heart rate back to normal – but not for long. Board 23 you pick up ;

♠ AKQJ ♥ AQJ10876 ♦ K ♣ Q

To your amazement partner opens a 12-14 No – Trump. To bid a grand slam there are 3 cards you need to find out about, but how? If you play Roman Key Card Blackwood – a convention worth the memory effort, the hand is a pianola – or is it? If you transfer then bid 4NT is this quantitative or RKCB? I never know, so I decided on a different route. I transferred and then bid 4C. This is known as a “Self-Agreeing Splinter” and shows slam interest in your transferred suit, with a singleton club. Then it was easy. Partner cue-bid 4D. Now enter Mister Blackwood, of the RKC variety. Partner’s 5D response showed those magical 3 cards you were after, so you happily take all the bidding cards out of the box. 7NT. Dummy’s cards go down with the remark “The play won’t take long partner” and it didn’t. Heart-rate soon back to normal. It was the last hand before dinner, so you imagine a breather in the evening session and so it proved - until the final match.

The hands in this final match were wild, more like hurricanes actually. Opponents get everything right, then enter Mister Frankenstein. You pick up;

♠ Void ♥ AKQ10653 ♦ AK1075 ♣ 4

You do open this one 2C and partner bids 3D. An explanation is needed here. Your 2C is either Acol or a weak hand with a diamond suit. Hence partner is just saying they want to play in 3D if you have the latter. Anyway you soldier on with 3H, confirming the Acol hand. Rightly or wrongly partner takes off with 4NT Blackwood. We have no suitable response now in our system to describe my hand and although technically I could have responded 5D, I wasn’t going to risk that being passed. I actually bid 5NT, showing a void and 2 key cards (the King Of Hearts is a third key card). Partner looked bemused and settled on 6NT. I converted to 7H hoping for the Ace of clubs opposite or the wrong opening lead. My blood pressure dropped when I saw the opening lead was the Ace of Spades. Dummy hit the table with;

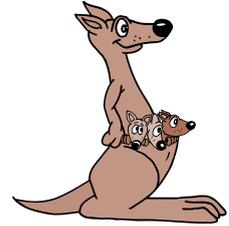
♠ KQ74 ♥ 8 ♦ Q42 ♣ AQJ83

Delightedly I tabled my hand claiming drawing trumps and throwing 2 diamonds on spades. Equally delightedly my left – hand opponent claimed 1 off holding J x x x of trumps. A 75% grand slam (after the lead) had floundered on the distributional rocks of the Gods.

Pulse normal you saunter down to Wetherspoons, saying to partner how much bridge is like life with its ups and downs. Had I been partnering Roy Dempster I know what he would have said, “Like is a word that can never be forgiven!”

A HAND FROM DOWN UNDER

By Tim Bourke



Dealer South. Neither Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♦
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♣	All Pass	

North's jump to three spades was forcing, asking for a cue bid. When South cue bid in diamonds, North Checked for key cards and when the queen of spades was not admitted to by South, bid the small slam in spades.

West led the queen of diamonds. Declarer took this with his ace and played two top clubs from the dummy discarding his diamond loser. When clubs proved to be 4-2 or 3-3, declarer formed a plan that would make certain of his contract provided the trumps were no worse than 4-1 (as long as there was no heart ruff about). He continued with a trump to the king and the five of trumps towards dummy. When West followed, declarer finessed dummy's jack of trumps. After East discarded here, declarer cashed the ace of trumps and ran the clubs from the top. Now West could only make his queen of trumps.

What would have happened if the jack of trumps lost to East's queen? Simply, as only a club continuation would cause a problem; declarer would ruff the club exit with the spade ten and cross to the ace of trumps, drawing the last of these from the defence. He would make four trumps, two hearts, a diamond and five clubs for a total of twelve tricks.

Finally, suppose that West had discarded on the second round of trumps. Declarer counters by winning the trick with dummy's ace of trumps and running the clubs through East. If East ruffs low at any point, declarer overruffs and crosses to the heart ace to play more clubs. When East ruffs with the queen, declarer discards a heart, ruffs the diamond return and gets back to dummy with a heart ruff and runs the clubs. If instead he ruffed in with the queen first, declarer wins his return and draws the last trump with the jack. So, no matter how East defends, declarer makes his contract

The Tollemache Cup *by Bob Pitts*

The Tollemache Cup is the trophy awarded to the winner of the EBU inter-county teams competition. Each of the counties send a team to a qualifying weekend, where they are divided into four pools with the top two counties in each section then proceeding through to the finals in February. The scoring is by double comparison, so each N/S pair on your side imps with both of the E/W pairs, making it vital that games and slams are bid and made, as missing one costs your team double the normal amount. It has been a few years since we got through to the latter stages so fingers crossed for our team for the qualifier event in late November. The team is Dave & Jean Keen, Alan Stephenson, Stuart Matthews, Ted Reveley, Bill Niccol, Chris Pope, Andy Prothero, Danny Miller and Peter Hall.

One year in which we did qualify for the finals was 2001 and this deal went some way towards that achievement.

Dealer South Love All

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

At one table the Merseyside player opened a mini no-trump as South and West overcalled 2NT showing any strong two-suiter. Four spades from North got passed back to West who did not wish to give up and tried 4NT. With his partner's suits undefined, East tried 5 diamonds hoping to hear a conversion to 5 hearts, which never came. On a spade lead 5 diamonds was in trouble as there is no quick entry to the East hand for the trump finesse. Declarer tried a heart to the ten, but with the ace and queen of that suit in the South hand the contract was doomed. After the same start at another table, the Merseyside East was confident that 2NT showed specifically the minors and chose to play in 5 clubs. On a spade lead declarer had little option but to play for the actual lie and so slightly fortunately brought in a very healthy swing as four spades one off was the result at the other two tables in the match. I like to feel that our pair deserved their success for at least knowing which suits West was showing (this may sound biased, but I promise it was not my partnership who achieved this big swing).

There will be a report on this year's qualifier in the next newsletter but regardless of how that team perform, the selectors are always looking out for fresh talent (and occasionally old talent). Considering our size we are a very successful County - help us to maintain this by expressing your interest in playing representatively, competing in the major County events and attending the trials in February.

COME ON WE NEED YOU!!

Merseyside & Cheshire Bridge Association

Editor : Bob Pitts
21 Dingle Road
Leeswood
Flintshire CH7 4SN
Phone : 01352 771304
E-mail: bob.pitts1@btinternet.com

Contacts and information

MBC : www.merseybridge.org.uk
LBC : email jo-rogerarnold@talktalk.net
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

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.

October

22nd Northern Counties League Round 4

November

13th Waterworth Cup (county gp pairs) MBC
14th 'Children in Need' sim. Pairs MBC
19th/20th WBU Swiss teams Llangollen

December

4th Merseyside Cup MBC

January

9/10/11th BGB simultaneous pairs Clubs
21st/22nd Chester Congress Deva BC

February

5th County trials MBC
12th Merseyside & Deeside Cup MBC
19th Jean Keen trophy MBC

The North Wales Autumn green pointed pairs was held on October 9th and resulted in a comfortable win for Ted Reveley and Bill Niccol. This is an excellent event, well run and everyone is friendly - I thoroughly recommend it. With a 12:15 start and a 1 hour break we were finished by 8pm which I think is perfect timing for a one day competition. If you have not played in this event yet then I suggest you give it a try next year.

This was my favourite hand from the event.

♠ K 9 5 ♥ void ♦ A Q J 8 4 ♣ A K Q 10 4

In recent years, the EBU have published regulations on what they think constitutes an Acol 2C opening, some of which I do not agree with, but that was not an issue here. Despite the playing strength, minor two-suiters are hard to describe after a forcing opening bid, so I selected the 1D card from the bidding box. The next hand passed and partner responded with a jump to 3D. We play this as a weak bid, but he often has 5 card support (though little else of note). A 3H call came on my right, and feeling that I should be able to discard any spade losers on my clubs or that the spade ace would be well placed I leapt to 6D. My right-hand opponent took issue with this and doubled, but with the spade ace well placed, the contract was cold. Partner putting down

♠ 8 6 4 2 ♥ 9 ♦ K 9 6 3 2 ♣ J 3 2

Of course we got a good score for this but not an outright top as this result was duplicated at 6 of the other 29 tables!! At another table these two hands reached the odd contract of 4 spades doubled and with one defender holding ♠ A Q J 10 ♥ A K J 7 3 2 ♦ 5 ♣ 7 6 this should have gone down, but it was let through and I am sure that declarer was disappointed to only get a 61% score for this achievement.

Bob Pitts

The Chester Bowl charity pairs was held on October 16th. The winners were Ian Kane and Ken Hasell, just 1.2 matchpoints ahead of Julian Merrill and Paul Roberts. In the consolation event the winning pairs were Annie Mead and Gwen Hurst N/S, Roy Wallwork and Keith Perry E/W.

The event was a virtual sell out, so bearing this in mind, don't miss out. The equally popular Chester Congress takes place at the Deva BC on 21st - 22nd January - Book early