



December Newsletter

STOP PRESS

**We have half tables in each of the Men's and Ladies' Pairs on December 7th.
One (or three) more pair in each would be very welcome**

The Forum for the Future

An opportunity to discuss the development of club bridge in Somerset

Is bridge fighting for its very existence as a game? How can we improve membership of our clubs and participation in bridge? Where are our new generation of players? How do we inspire and educate them?

Monday **January 20th** at the Victoria Club, Street at 10am
Victoria Field, Leigh Rd, Street BA16 0HB

The SCBA is looking to reach out to bridge players and potential bridge players across the county to find out what they think about the state of the game and how an organisation like ours can operate to improve the accessibility of bridge in Somerset.

To this end all interested parties are invited to the Victoria Sports and Social Club, Street for an open discussion of the operations of SCBA and how we and the EBU in conjunction with us may be able to promote the game in the county. We are seeking input from all those interested in bridge whether or not they are EBU members at present.

Programme

10.00 am Welcome and opening presentation (Tony Russ)

10.15 am Open Forum chaired by Tim Anderson (EBU)

Followed by a break and bridge for those who wish to stay. Basic refreshments will be provided and the bar will be open but those staying for bridge should bring their own lunch.

Registration - No need to register or to bring a partner for the bridge. Just turn up and bring your friends!

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Upcoming:

Perhaps it is too early to wish everyone a Merry Christmas but by the time the next Newsletter appears it will be far too late so here is hoping that you all have a great December. The winter line-up includes our last event of 2019:

December 7th – **Mens and Ladies pairs** at Woolavington 1pm start.

Men's entries can be made here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwx/bw.cgi?pid=display_page4&sessid=649673953526733&wd=1&club=somerset

Ladies' entries can be made here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwx/bw.cgi?pid=display_page8&sessid=649673953526733&wd=1&club=somerset

Winscombe will be holding their last improver session the morning of December 14th Please contact Janet O'Brien for further details via the club website.

In the New Year there will be a flurry of events for you to enjoy:

January 5th - **Swiss pairs** at Woolavington - 1pm start. A great way to chase away the post holiday blues. All the details and entry information on the Somerset web-site: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwx/bw.cgi?pid=display_page39&sessid=649673953526733&wd=1&club=somerset

January 11th – **Cannington open pairs** – 1pm St Georges Parish Centre, Wembdon TA6 7RR An event for all bridge players with prize money, a raffle and coffee, tea and biscuits provided. Masterpoints will be awarded to EBU members. There is plenty of on-site parking.

Please contact mike.cotterilldsd@btinternet.com for further details.

Cheddar Bridge club will be starting a series of ten beginner lessons at 2.00pm Tuesday **14th January** in the Catholic Church Hall, Upper North Cheddar. This is the free taster session but if you are looking for a unique present that will give a lifetime of pleasure then gift vouchers are available. The course includes a tuition manual normally retailing at £26.

Seminar - **“Double!” by Caroline Macpherson** Sunday **February 9th**
Venue – Claverham Village Hall, Bishops Road, BS49 4NF

A look at the various uses of the double card – penalty, take-out, negative and responsive doubles to name but a few. The emphasis as always will be on declarer play and defence.

There is no charge but please register on the Somerset website if you intend to attend so that the organisers have an idea of numbers.

From 10am until 4pm approximately with a break for coffee and lunch (drinks are available all day from the bar but no food so please bring your own as well as a mug for the hot drinks).

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Chairman’s Blog 11

I have recently obtained statistics from the EBU setting out how our clubs are performing in various categories and I shall shortly be sending these out to individual clubs. Generally speaking the situation is static compared with two years ago but this overall figure obscures the fact that some clubs are doing very well in terms of maintaining and increasing table numbers whilst others are doing less well.

Overall the figures for the past three years are 7902,8122,8008 player sessions with an average number of tables 7.0. 7.2 and 7.3. Congratulations to the Frome and Wilton clubs who have the highest average number of tables at 10.3, in Frome’s case increased from 6.3 two years ago which shows what can be achieved.

Each club will wish to evaluate its own figures not only in terms of player sessions but also using the membership factor which basically indicates the regularity with which primary members turn up. A club with a low number of primary members but a high membership factor for example will be badly affected each time a primary member is lost.

Those clubs that are doing better seem to be the clubs that are working harder at membership development through teaching and other strategies.

As you may know we recently ran a club development programme which despite best endeavours was largely (not completely) met with a lukewarm response from clubs. However, nil desperandum and all that, I am once again offering the practical support of the SCBA to any club that seriously wants to commit to a development programme.

As part of our offer to clubs we have arranged for an EBU Teachers' Award course to be held in Somerset. The first step for any club interested in setting up a teaching programme would be to get someone on this course (which is free for EBU clubs) as soon as possible. The course is at Nailsea on June 1st and 2nd 2020 but there are lots of other courses available as you can see [here](#).

Progress in clubs is largely driven by enthusiastic people who may or may not be on a club committee. If you are one of these people and want to get something going please talk to your committee whom I am sure will snap your hand off with enthusiasm. One or two enthusiasts make all the difference.

Results

The **Inter-club pairs** (affiliated) was won by Thomas Gibbard and Marion Blackhall in a closely fought contest. Christine Dean and Michael Powell came second with Katrina Foote and Simon Brooke in third overall winning the category B section. Full results can be found here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwon/bw.cgi?pid=display_rank&event=20191110_1&club=somerset

The results leave Nailsea and Langport tied for first place in the competition on 14 points apiece.

The **non-affiliated section** was the predicted close tussle between Weston-super-Mare and Chew Valley with Lin and Mike Dudley of WSM tying with Mary and Alan Rodgman of Chew Valley. Chew just shaded the contest overall scoring 14 points to WSM's 12. Full results can be found here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwon/bw.cgi?pid=display_rank&event=20191110_2&club=somerset

The **Teams section of the event** will be held on **January 19th** at Woolavington at 1.00pm to determine the Club Championship in each category. Entries can be made here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwx/bw.cgi?club=somerset&pid=display_page34

The **Swiss Teams** event was won by Eric Cummings, Ceri Pierce, Jette and Alan Bailey with a score of 105 VPs. Second place was shared by Anne Skinner, Barbara Biggin, Michael Smith and Ray Beach and Ben Ritacca, Michael Wigmore, Tony and Michael Letts both on 93 VPs.

Full results can be found here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwon/bw.cgi?pid=display_rank&event=20191124_1&club=somerset

Much happening in the county league:

At the beginning of the month the third meet produced wins in Division 1 for Taunton JB, Langport LB, Taunton RS and Yeovil SD. In Division 2 Winscombe Rh, Langport AA, Nailsea JC and Street AD were all successful. In Division 3 Yeovil RP, Frome RN, Cossington DA and Nailsea AE were the winners.

In the fourth meet at the end of the month wins in Division 1 for Wells AR, Taunton RS, Wells GH and Langport LB. In Division 2 Street AS, Sherborne PD, Langport AA and Nailsea JC were successful. In Division 3 the winners were Castle Cary BS, Nailsea AE, Wells KF and Cossington DA.

League tables with all the current standings and results can be found on the EBU website here: <https://www.ebu.co.uk/leagues/SOM-000015-01>

Full results for County events can be found here: https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwx/bw.cgi?club=somerset&pid=display_past&sessid=435035260145748

Introduction to Jack

I'd like to introduce you to Jack, a bridge playing friend of mine. Jack is substantially better than your average club bridge player and can play any number of different systems but he is exceptionally good at playing a hand, particularly in teams play where he often manages to play for that particular layout that lets him make his contract.

As an example, look at this hand:

North

S J932

H AJT

D A62

Q64

South

S T764

H KQ9854

D K

C K3

Both sides bid to **4 hearts** when this hand came up in the recent Venice Cup final in China despite having **AKQ of spades** and **A of clubs** to lose. Both sides, however, had a reprieve when West led the **jack of diamonds** and they subsequently made their contracts. I couldn't see what the best line of play was so I asked Jack. Before reading on, however, consider what you would do now.

I can probably program a button at this point to show the following solution when pressed.

After a little thought Jack said "draw trumps ending in the South hand and lead the small **club** towards the **Queen**. If West has the **Ace** and doesn't play it you can discard the **King of clubs** on the **Ace of diamonds**. If West does play the **Ace**, there's still the chance that the spades are blocked after one or two tricks and you can then discard a **spade** on the **Ace of diamonds** and another on the **Queen of clubs**."

The spades were blocked, with East having the singleton King and this is exactly the play that Cecilia Rimstedt of Sweden and Wen Fei Wang of China found to make their contract!

Despite being up there with the best when playing a hand, however, Jack can't play in the Somerset League - there isn't a section for computer programs. He has, however, won the World Computer Bridge Championship ten times since 2001.

If you have a problem hand, bidding or play, send it to me, Geoff Davies, (geoff@profdavies.co.uk) and I'll 'Ask Jack' for you if I can. Hopefully, we will get enough interest to make 'Ask Jack' a regular feature in the magazine.

For those who are interested. Jack found the solution to the above problem by dealing 1000 pairs of E/W hands consistent with the actual bidding and play so far. He then tries playing each card from the hand currently on lead and performs a double dummy analysis on every deal to find the best card to play on average. His plays are based on the actual statistics for the hands he has generated rather than rules of play like 'eight ever nine never' for whether to take the finesse when missing a queen. For example, looking at what card to play after taking the Jack of diamonds with the King he finds that on average he will score about 93 points by leading a heart (he is non-vulnerable hence making 4H would score 420) but by leading a spade he would score -59 on average. He would also score -35 by leading the 3 of clubs or -54 by leading the King of clubs hence he leads a heart. He sees what West plays (I have to put in an actual full deal) and repeats the dealing of 1000 hand pairs since now he knows another card that must be in West's hand and determines the best card to play from North's hand and so on. Strictly, therefore, Jack doesn't have a strategy as I presented the answer above. He merely determines the best card to play at any time based on everything he knows up to that point, bidding and play. I put in the actual E/W hands, Jack drew

trumps in two rounds and led the small club to the queen. As West I played the Ace and then ran the simulation a second time when I played small. Having seen the resulting play I produced the strategy description,

This hand came to my attention when I saw it in 'A New Bridge Magazine' which is a free on-line publication. See <https://www.newbridgemag.com/>

Another excellent piece from Geoff and a facility that can be very useful for future analysis. Hopefully we will be seeing Jack evaluating some tricky hands over the coming months.

Newcomers' Congress

Our first event for those new to bridge was held on Sunday December 1st. The event was very successful and seems to have been enjoyed by those taking part. The event started with a seminar on transfers from Caroline Macpherson and after lunch everyone took part in a simple tournament.

Photos below are of the winning pairs and of the runners up.

Winners: N/S Sarah & Veronica
E/W Sally & Sheree

Runners Up N/S Avril & Barbara
E/W Denise & Sarah

