

Well here we are, the third empty Monday Night. I haven't yet got round to reading the bridge books I thought I would, as the weather is so glorious that I am out in the garden or off for my Allotted Exercise, and the evenings are neatly filled by an instalment from my Box Set of Foyle's War, which is somehow very comforting. Lots of stiff upper lip and bit-doing.

But maybe I'll be driven to reading about the fiendishly clever ways of winning NT contracts – or the excellent EBU magazine articles – eventually.

I'm impressed by the activity of many now that the EBU is organising tournaments galore. I'm a little timid myself, having tried out BBO and found myself catapulted into playing with Real People who could and did 'chat' [?fulminate] about the bids that were made. I exited rapidly.

What has worked for me is a twice a week BBO table by invitation which means that Ruth Kim and Howard Arnes can play against me and my brother. At a prearranged time Howard invites the three of us and off we go. The scary chat is fun rather than fearsome – Ruth is particularly good at jokes, and as my Alpha Male brother knows R&H will read his comments on my bidding, his chat to me is relatively civil. Eg 'I have absolutely NO IDEA what your 3NT bid means'. You have to be careful not to let your finger stray to the keyboard rather than the mouse or you can, as I did, find yourself catapulted off the table and a complete stranger barging in and bidding wildly for you.. Fortunately there is a 'Can we have a Redeal button' (though it took Howard a long time to agree to it when the robot got Peter and me into an impossible slam contract). It can be avoided by clicking on No Kibbitzing and No Joining buttons before setting up your table.

Two hours is plenty, and among friends you can throw in your hand sooner if you've had enough. It is very unthreatening, just fun and practice plus a certain amount of satisfaction when you win – and the more ambitious will get into tournaments.

I also like solitaire Fun Bridge – it has a much more attractive card layout than BBO, and as I've been a subscriber for ages I've got my system registered so I don't get too many surprises at the bids made by the robots that I play with in the fortnightly tournaments. It is always worth clicking on every bid anybot [and you yourself] make as they often seem to have meanings one didn't bargain for.

Steph mentioned Faringdon's Fun Bridge tournaments – OBC has also set up two similar straightforward ones, both for MPs and IMPs – open Fun Bridge, click on Get Started/Practise, then click on Exclusive tournaments and type in Oxford [or Faringdon] at the top. Every 24 hours, starting at 8 am, you get to play 12 hands in the MPs one and, if you want to, 12 in the IMPs one. At the minute around 12 people go in for it at different times during the day – then you can see at the end where you are rated. Most people [including me] hide under pseudonyms, but Gustave and Marion Sheppard are bravely out there. The good thing is that you can sit down and play your 12 boards at any time during the day – maybe three after meals and 3 with a nightcap.

James Bentley sent in this recommendation:

The Mr Bridge Library – I'm on defence to pre-empt at the moment

<https://mrbridge.co.uk/library/single-magazine.html?issue=199#199/page/14-15>

Finally, a warning Bridget got from a friend and is sensibly passing on:

Just be careful because people are going crazy from being in lockdown! Actually, I've just been talking about this with the microwave and toaster while drinking coffee and we all agreed that things are getting bad. I didn't mention anything to the washing machine as she puts a different spin on everything. Certainly not to the fridge as he is acting cold and distant. In the end the iron straightened me out as she said everything will be fine, no situation is too pressing. The vacuum was very unsympathetic... told me to just suck it up, but the fan was more optimistic and hoped it would all soon blow over! The toilet looked a bit flushed when I asked its opinion and didn't say anything but the door knob told me to get a grip. 😓 The front door said I was unhinged and so the curtains told me to .....yes, you guessed it 😊.....pull myself together

I hope it made you smile 😊

Keep safe all

Xtina

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