



Surrey County Bridge Association

Newsletter # 44, January 2022



Introduction

Tim Warren

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2022 ... but we need your help to make sure it's not our last. See the article just below for how.

This one features a hand that helped Surrey B win their Division of the Met Cup. And we have our usual puzzle, information about upcoming county and club events, etc.

We also address a key topic – who are our leagues and Lady Rose Cup for? Next season, we're aiming to tighten up the rules on who can enter. This is a significant move, so we set out our reasons for deciding to take this action. We recognise that there's not just one side to the question, and we also have an article setting out a counter-view. If you have an opinion on this matter, I'd very much like to hear from you, whether for publication or not.

Join Our Team!



We have two key roles to fill. Firstly, if we're to publish newsletters, we need a new editor – could it be you? Currently, they're quarterly, but we're very open to new ideas about how best to reach our members, including online platforms.

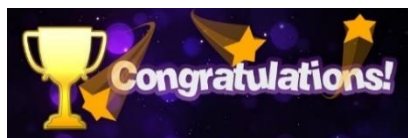
We also need a new treasurer, to take over from April. Now that online bridge is the norm, there are many fewer transactions to handle – since May 2020, there's been an average of 12 per month. You'll not need to be a qualified accountant.

If you could embrace either of these challenges with enthusiasm, and would like to join our friendly and active team, [please get in touch](#). A love of playing the game is essential ... but bridge ability isn't important at all. In both cases, there'll be lots of support available to help you learn about the role.

Surrey Results

Met Cup The Met[ropolitan] Cup is the Teams-of-8 championships for the south-east counties. Thank you to all who represented Surrey in this recently:

- A: Frances Hinden & Jeffrey Allerton / Richard Fedrick & Mike Scoltock / Arun Suri & Peter Lee
- B: Peter Hardymont & Malcolm Bricknell / Tony Cherrett & Steve Irwin / Robin Clarke & Christine Dyer / Fionn O'Leary & Pat Bohan
- C: John Lemmey & Karen Murphy / Simon Prager & Henryk Klocek / Berlie Mullins & Marilyn Frame / Peter Langford & Charlie Palmer



Many congratulations to the B team on winning their division, losing only one of the five matches, and earning the right to play in the national final, which is held in early summer. Fionn O'Leary tells us about one of the hands in the next section.

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Our strategy includes offering training and development opportunities to Surrey members at all levels of ability. As part of this, to help celebrate their success, we invited those who had earned the most EBU master points at various levels from Local Master up to County/Advanced Master to an event in October we called 'Play and Coach'. Sally Brock (one of our top English internationals) and Barry Myers talked those present through some key learning points from the hands.

Congratulations to Dave Andrew & David Burch and Marianne Tudor-Craig & Mark Simpson for being top Surrey NS and EW respectively; you can see [the full event results here](#).

For us, this was very much a step into the unknown. While not all was perfect – in particular, some people had difficulty hearing – the great majority of those who responded said they supported repeating the initiative. I hope we'll be able to do so in an improved form later in the year.

Surrey Clubs Teams-of-Eight

Shirley Pritchard

On Sunday 16 January, Surrey held the first online heat of the Clubs Teams of Eight event. Nine teams represented five clubs: Camberley, Mayfield, Richmond, Selsdon and Wimbledon.

This event has been held at Richmond when it was run F2F, and holding online meant some changes to the way it is organised. Because all teams play the same boards at the same time online, where there is an odd number of teams it means a sit out for 5 boards which is unfortunate. However, sit outs at home are not the same as at the club!

Mayfield Red won the Surrey heat by a large margin. Good luck to them when they represent Surrey at the Regional Final of the Garden Cities Trophy, which is organised by the EBU. If Mayfield win the Regional Final they will progress to the National Final.

Metropolitan Cup

Fionn O'Leary

The Met Cup is a Teams-of-8 event for counties in the south-east of England. It is played across three divisions, with stratification based on NGS grades. While the spoils went to Kent and London in the A and C divisions respectively, Surrey claimed victory in the B division.

Joining Peter Hardymont & Malcolm Bricknell, Steve Irwin & Tony Cherrett, Robin Clarke & Christine Dyer, were Pat Bohan & myself. Being the debutants on the team, we were keen not to let the side down.

<p>♠ 10 9 7 3 ♥ 9 4 2 ♦ A J 5 ♣ A Q 3</p> <p>♠ - ♥ 10 8 7 6 ♦ K Q 10 8 6 4 2 ♣ J 8</p> <p>♠ A K J 6 4 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ 9 ♣ K 7 5 4</p>	<p>♠ Q 8 5 ♥ K Q J 5 ♦ 7 3 ♣ 10 9 6 2</p>	<p>B39, Game All, dealer West (rotated for convenience)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>N</td> <td>E</td> <td>S</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>1♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>2NT*</td> <td>P</td> <td>3♦*</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>4♣*</td> <td>P</td> <td>4NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>5♥</td> <td>P</td> <td>6♠</td> </tr> </table> <p>2NT 4-card spade support, maximum pass 3♦ Diamond shortage and extra values 4♣ 1st- or 2nd-round club control 4NT Roman Key-Card Blackwood 5♥ 2 key cards, without ♠Q</p>	W	N	E	S	P	P	P	1♠	P	2NT*	P	3♦*	P	4♣*	P	4NT	P	5♥	P	6♠
W	N	E	S																			
P	P	P	1♠																			
P	2NT*	P	3♦*																			
P	4♣*	P	4NT																			
P	5♥	P	6♠																			

This hand, on which we gained 13 IMPs, was decisive in a narrow 11-9 win over Berks & Bucks. Here, lady luck was on our side – West decided against opening a vulnerable 3♦ with a side 4-card major. I have some sympathy with this decision, but fortunately it made our auction much easier.

South opens 1♠ and, after North's conventional limit raise, shows extras with a shortage in diamonds. As South is unlimited, North is obliged to show his club control and now South's hand looks huge. Opposite as little as 4 small spades, ♥K and ♣AQ the slam is cold, barring the most unfortunate of spade layouts. North has promised a little more than this and should either have another honour or some compensating distribution for the 2NT bid.

Even allowing for the 3-0 trump split, the play is straightforward, just losing a heart. Most Wests did open 3♦, making things much more difficult, and in our match no-one else reached the slam.

Surrey County Pairs

We've decided that the heats and the County Pairs final on Sunday 20 March will all be online on BBO, not F2F. We hope this will encourage more members to enter. There will be heats on Sundays [30 January](#) and [20 February](#), with the top several pairs from each heat qualifying for the final. You can enter by clicking on either date above.



NGS 9 or less? As well as the main competition, we'll be putting on a free event on 20 March for pairs with NGS of 9 or less who didn't qualify for the final. If you don't usually play in Surrey events, why not give it a go – it's a great opportunity to put a toe in the water.

Eligibility – Surrey League & Cup Teams

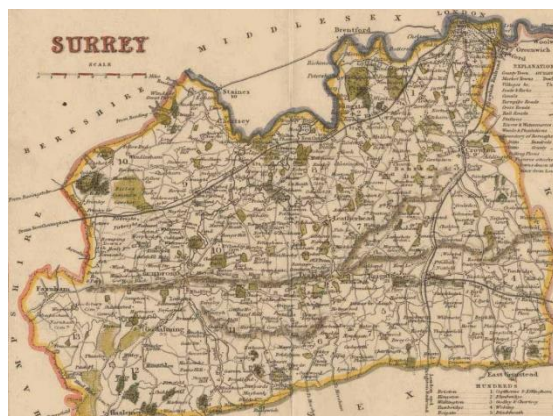
[Tim Warren](#)

Surrey Leagues and Cups – Who are they for?

One of the features of the last couple of years that I find really pleasing has been the renaissance of teams play. After many years of a slow downward trend, the move of most matches online has helped bring about a huge change. Entries for the Surrey Leagues and Lady Rose Cup both went up more than 50% in 20-21, and have continued to grow this season.

But physical location being irrelevant has brought new issues that I'd never thought about. It's caused us to ask ourselves – who are Surrey leagues and cups for?

In the past, we've not had to bother too much about where people come from, because long-distance travel simply would not have made sense. Then we became aware that some teams had recruited professional bridge players to join their sides, including from far-off counties. I emphasise that this was entirely within our rules.



Map of Surrey 1850 courtesy of ExploringSurreysPast.org.uk

We welcome players from nearby clubs; they very much add to the value of our leagues and cups. But how far should this go? If there are no limits, what can it mean when we say it's a Surrey competition?

Polling Surrey Teams So, we polled this year's league and cup captains, asking them to consult their teams about two questions (I've reworded them here):

- Should our leagues and cups be open to all?
- Should we allow teams to hire professional players?

Usually when we ask something, responses straggle in over a long period. This time they poured in. Overall, the results were:

	Disagree	No preference	Agree	Can't enforce	Total
Open to All?	14	-	-	1	15
Allow Payment?	22	-	3	3	28

"Can't enforce" means "no point setting a rule, we can't make sure it's followed" (especially whether someone's being paid). You can debate how to categorise that, but however you do it the overall message is clear. The message was consistent across all league divisions. It's worth adding that many of those who disagreed expressed quite strong feelings.

Next Season's Rules In view of this, we're aiming to revise the rules for next season's leagues and cups. To be eligible:

- you'll need to live in or have primary affiliation to Surrey, or – and we're still consulting about this part – be a member of a Surrey club and live in an adjacent county;
- you cannot be paid to play.

As some responders said, we can't know whether people are paid, but we will trust in the integrity of all concerned. Our revised rules are not intended to prevent a person from playing if they're on holiday or working away from home.

(Note from Tim Warren: Roger has agreed that his views on the question of eligibility – adapted from a recent exchange between us – should be set out here. As I said above, we'd be especially keen to hear your views on this matter.)

I do support geographical restrictions on team members. However, with regard to paid professionals, there is a difference between allowing them to play in a partnership with a non-professional, and including one or more paid professional pairs to play in a team with one another.

Will allowing professional + amateur pairs improve the level of competition in Surrey League Div 1 (SLD1)? I believe it will. Will allowing professional + amateur pairs make SLD1 more accessible to improving players and teams? If so, what has changed compared to the era before the 'established' SLD1 teams became established? Apart from international team members (almost certainly including membership of junior teams), there are very few opportunities for Surrey players (including surrounding counties within the new geographical catchment area) who are new to the game to get the experience and coaching necessary ever to improve to a level where they might be considered strong players.

I do worry about the future of bridge. I've only been playing for 7 years. In that time, at least at the clubs I play in, evening bridge has declined to next to nothing. Even before Covid, numbers in evening games had roughly halved. In my opinion, there's also been a significant decline in standards, largely a result of the better players no longer attending evening games. Opportunities for development beyond the core EBU syllabus have become more limited and attendance at any class or seminar advertised as beyond 'intermediate' often too low for the class to be viable. There are a few exceptions.

In the long run, I suspect the rule against paid professionals will be counter-productive and, if anything, will marginally accelerate an eventual decline in the standard of competition in SLD1. It's certainly not good news for ambitious new players or the teaching professionals they might want to play with.

Confession Corner

Tim Warren

Seduced by the Heart

In our first Surrey League match of the season, we're meeting Fionn O'Leary's team, newly-promoted from Div 2. Towards the end, with the opps vulnerable and us not, I pick up this hand:

♠ A K Q J 8

♥ A Q J

♦ -

♣ A Q J 7 5

24-pointers are rarely *unattractive*, but this is even better for being concentrated in three suits.

Surprisingly LHO opens 1♦, and unsurprisingly that's followed by two passes. What to do? We play some two-suited overcalls, but nothing that would cover this hand. Our system bid is double, but partner can have virtually nothing, so that probably isn't going to get me anywhere and I'll be faced with the same dilemma on the next round. We can hardly stop short of game, so I make what I feel is the pragmatic bid of 4♠, which closes the auction.

They lead ♦A and my first reaction to dummy is huge disappointment:

♠ A K Q J 8

♠ 6

♥ A Q J

♥ 10 8 7 3

♦ -

♦ 8 2

♣ A Q J 7 5

♣ K 10 9 8 3 2

Yet again I've got it completely wrong. 7♣ is cold but partner's paltry spade holding means even game in that suit isn't certain. I ruff the lead and set about trumps, but they break 5-2 and, with RHO having more of them now than me, I repeatedly get forced in diamonds and the contract fails. In the match as a whole, Fionn's team give us a good thrashing, taking it 17-3.

Only in our team's post-game commiserations on Zoom do I realise I'd mucked the play up as well as the bidding. I'd been seduced by the power of my heart suit. I should have discarded ♥QJ on the first two diamonds, enabling me to ruff a third round with dummy's singleton trump, not in hand. Then I can

come back to hand with ♥A, draw four rounds of trumps, and simply trundle the clubs. The defence can take their trump winner whenever they like, but I remain in control, and have got the rest for ten tricks. At the other table, our team-mates played in 4♦X, going one off for -200, so that was 6 IMPs away, when it should have been 6 IMPs in. Not enough to turn the match round, but it would have made it a bit less painful.

Prize Double Dummy Puzzle #13

[John Manches](#)

As promised after the fiendish No 11, DD No 12 was gentle, although there were not as many entries as hoped. Congratulations to Beryl Mullins who provided the winning entry (you can see [the solution and all entrants here](#)). This month's puzzle is a little harder – a hand from the Masters' Pairs many years ago. Many declarers failed – can you do better?

♠ 5	Contract 5♦ by South
♥ 10 9 6 5 4	Lead ♥3 – East wins and switches to ♦2
♦ J 8 7 4	
♣ Q 4 2	
♠ K J 10 8 2	♠ Q 7 6
♥ 3 2	♥ A K J 8 7
♦ Q 3	♦ 2
♣ J 8 6 3	♣ K 10 7 5
♠ A 9 4 3	
♥ Q	
♦ A K 10 9 6 5	
♣ A 9	

Please send your answers to me at Johnmanches74@gmail.com by the deadline of 31 January. Names of all those with a correct-first-time solution will be put into Tim's Morris hat and the winner selected randomly. The prize will be free entry to one of our county competitions for the winner and partner of choice, and all Surrey members are eligible.

Club News

Leatherhead Bridge Club We started playing face-to-face as soon as government restrictions allowed, on 19 July 2021. The club prepared a COVID-19 risk assessment, surpassing government guidelines for the safety of members – for example by requiring those attending to be fully vaccinated. Members feel safe and we are continuing to have good attendance in 2022.

It is a smaller club than previously, now playing on Monday evenings at the Institute building in the centre of Leatherhead, and actively cooperating with neighbouring bridge clubs which play on different days of the week. Several members of Effingham Bridge Club joined us for a very friendly Christmas party (which was well within the rules). Sessions are open to all members of EBU-affiliated bridge clubs, subject only to the requirement to register in advance – as described [on the website](#).

Fun 2 Play and Surrey & Friends Meena Samani, who leads these online clubs, is running a course on Duplicate Tactics and Partnership Convention card. It covers the key agreements that a partnership should ideally discuss, whether it is a one-off or regular partnership.

Topics include: conventions after our 1NT is Doubled, a real grasp of Doubles and responses in various bidding sequences, Slam conventions, Defence methods, etc. There are also sessions on Duplicate Tactics, e.g. Scoring and Hand Evaluation, Which Game/Slam to bid, The Part Score Battle, etc.

The course begins on Wednesday 19 January at 09:45 on Zoom, followed by play at a Teaching table on BBO – more information can be found on the [Fun 2 Play website](#), or call Meena on 07740 053683. Each session will be recorded on Zoom and the link will be sent to all players who booked for that session, so if a player cannot attend a session, but would like the notes, quizzes and video link, they would have access to all the material.

We're sad to say that **Chobham** and **Limpsfield Chart** have closed down. We thank all those who have led or helped to lead these clubs, in some cases over several decades. By your efforts and enthusiasm, you've brought many people enormous pleasure. For those looking for somewhere else to play, the Surrey website lists [the days our various clubs have sessions](#). If you spot that any of this information is wrong, please [let us know](#).

Having had to drop it last year, we are hold our Surrey Schools Cup again on Friday 4th February. As before, there'll be three events:

1. The main Surrey Schools Cup
2. The Salver for newer players
3. MiniBridge pairs for those just starting

Many schools seem keen to give it a try after missing out on face-to-face events for so long, so we will all be crossing our fingers that they will be able to bring their teams.

We thank Wimbledon BC for offering to host us.



KCS, Wimbledon – SSC winners in 2020

That Gauntlet

Tim Warren

In the last edition, I threw down the gauntlet to newsletter readers – could anyone compete with the session of ten boards in which I'd averaged only 6.7 HCP per hand?

Andy Poole interpreted it inventively, telling me of a recent game in which he'd held a total of 82 hearts in 20 hands, never having fewer than two. I don't know how to work out the chances, but it does seem remarkable.

No-one else came close ... but a certain Tim Warren did tell me about a BBO session in late November in which he'd held 105 HCP over 15 boards, or 7/hand. A slightly higher average, but over half as many hands again, which seems even more extreme.

So, I think Mr Warren has to take the award. Now, why did I say there'd be no prizes? As an aside, it did make me wonder: why does anyone bother partnering me?? No, I'm not asking for answers to that one.