

CHELSEA BRIDGE

THE MAGAZINE

OF

THE YOUNG CHELSEA BRIDGE CLUB

November 1997

Janet

Most members of the club will have known Janet Andrew. She was a member for many years and she played regularly in both the Tuesday-Thursday duplicates and the Monday-Wednesday-Friday sessions. She hadn't been around so much in the last year or two, though, as she became ill. First she became diabetic, then she went down with jaundice. Although she seemed to be getting much better for a while, she relapsed in the summer and died on 2nd September this year.

I served with Janet on the Club committee for a long time. She was always willing to do whatever needed to be done, never complaining. I couldn't possibly count how many sausages and chicken drumsticks she must have cooked for innumerable Christmas parties and marathons! And when it came to setting up the party, on the Saturday afternoon when others would be thinking about getting themselves ready for their evening out, there we were - me and Janet along with Anne Brewster and the odd man we might have roped in - setting out plates of food, blowing up balloons and climbing on chairs to string up the decorations. Janet helped to make it all fun - she was always giggling about something, unfailingly managing to keep us all in good spirits.

Brian believes he was the last person to play with Janet at the club, last May. His recollections of her as a player? Well, she wasn't the world's greatest (though she wasn't that bad) but she was always cheerful and she never took the slightest notice of his frowning, raising his eyebrows and shaking his head! I guess that sums her up. Her sunny personality is what I miss most, but it helps me always to remember Janet with a smile.

Chris Duckworth

Editorial

I used to play at a bridge club once. Highest standard regular duplicate in the country, they told me, and it didn't take long to find out they were right. Playing conditions were excellent, the place had its own bar - always a major plus - and because the members were no more anti-social or psychotic than you'd expect bridge players to be, I could be certain of a serious but friendly game of bridge.

It's different these days. The club seems to have been infiltrated by several bizarre life forms that I barely recognise. There is, for example, the Gloater. Only the other evening, I could hear from three tables away this specimen commenting loudly to his partner: 'Well, that was a jolly co-operative defence!' Now, if I could hear him, then the visiting pair who had just misdefended and were taking their seats at the next table could certainly hear him also. I shouldn't think they'll be anxious to come back. Of course, the Gloater's bidding and play are so awful that the only way he'll ever make anything is when the defence is inaccurate - but that does not stop him from believing himself to be the finest player who ever drew breath.

There's the Summoner - a barking mad individual who can't get through an evening without at least four calls to the director. Waves Stop and Alert cards all over the place until his poor opponents are hopelessly confused, then accuses them of hesitating. Good job the club is several miles inland, because the way he summons the TD is exactly like the mating call of the cachalot whale. Obviously there are going to be times when the rules need to be applied - that's what you expect in a high-standard game. But although none of my opponents ever commit more than the occasional technical foul, which is really quite easy to deal with politely, his seem to swindle him out of his birthright half a dozen times a session. They're the same people though - must be a statistical miracle.

The Slapper, who bangs his cards down on the table in triumph every time a finesse works, does little for his opponents confidence or enjoyment of the game. Perhaps that's his objective, though it's difficult to understand why. The Bletherer, who plays every hand to the accompaniment of his own running commentary, is being neither amusing nor clever - a fact which would astonish him if you pointed it out, for he and his equally dismal cronies seem to think it's the greatest show on earth. And I've never been able to understand why one particular character always finds it necessary to utter some obscenity loudly enough to be heard by the entire room. It isn't.

I used to play at a bridge club once. I hope to be able to play there again soon.

Forthcoming Events

The Lederer

For the uninitiated this is the prestigious invitation teams event run by London County which has its origins in the mists of time. It is sponsored by the Club in that no charge is made for the premises. It has been held here for nearly 20 years.

The date this year is 8th and 9th November and, if you receive your copy of the magazine by then and you have time on your hands, it's well worth watching. You can sit behind any player or watch from the Vu-Graph room where the commentary is both expert and amusing.

There are no foreign teams this year if you discount the Irish. But Tony Forrester and Andy Robson will be playing together for almost the last time. Also playing will be David Burn, Brian Callaghan, Joe Fawcett and Glyn Liggins who won it last year masquerading as London. If you've never been to watch before, this event is a must!

Beaujolais Nouveau Duplicate

A new addition to our calendar will be a duplicate on Thursday 20th November which is the release date for Beaujolais Nouveau. We have ordered four cases from the vineyards of Georges Duboeuf who has sent us this report:

'The general state of the vineyards is good and healthy. There is practically no sign of rot though there has been the odd localised storm, and we are expecting the wine to be of excellent quality'.

There is no increase in table money for the evening so come and help us drink 48 bottles of wine. If successful this event will become a regular feature of our calendar.

Junior Pairs Championship

The English Bridge Union are holding heats here of the Under 25 Junior Pairs and the Under 19 Junior Pairs on the 16th November. The events are open to anyone in these age groups on 1st January 1997. Qualifiers from the heats will play in the final which will be held at the club on Easter Monday next year.

The Daily Telegraph Cup

A heat of this London event will be held at the club on Sunday 23rd November from 1pm till about 6pm. Teams of four in an all-play-all format. Members wishing to play without a partner or team-mates should let the club know and suitables will be found. Table money is £6 per player.

The Club Party

We are trying something different this year. The dance floor was never likely to be universally popular with bridge players, and the choice of music was always going to be controversial. So the disco has been levered. The new style party will be on Saturday 13th December starting at 6.30pm. A feast of food is promised by Caroline Gunn and Sati McKenzie who are crossing the Channel to buy everything including (we believe) 250 (yes two hundred and fifty) bottles of wine. Not that we expect them all to go that night, but just to be on the safe side!

The duplicate will start at 7.30 if Mahmoud has arrived by then. Numbers are limited so be sure to buy your tickets well in advance. These are priced at £6 each to include table money and food & drink (spirits as always excluded).

No Fear Pairs

Sunday 18th January 1pm to 6pm at the club. Tuesday/Thursday players who have not previously played in a county event will find the standard here no better or worse than the club duplicate. The pace of play is 'leisurely' and there is a free glass of wine at the end when some of the boards will be discussed by an expert. Partners can be found for those without.

General Club News

Christmas & New Year

The final duplicate this year will be on Tuesday 23rd December. After that the club will be closed until Monday 5th January 1998.

Anyone at a loose end on Friday, Saturday & Sunday 2nd-4th January is welcome to drop in as we shall again be hosting the Premier League matches which will determine the composition of the British team in 1998.

Rubber Bridge

Anyone who has an occasional free afternoon and fancies a game of rubber for low stakes could do worse than come and play at our own very own rubber club here.

About three years ago we took over the New Fourth Club whose origins go back to before the Second World War. Now called the Chelsea Club it meets every weekday afternoon from 1.45 till 6pm. Every day except Tuesday is partnership but we can always find you a partner if necessary. The stakes are 20p per hundred.

Novice Duplicate

There is now a duplicate for novices every Thursday at 7.30 in addition to the regular duplicate. The hands played are from a previous club duplicate with the original travellers in the boards. This enables the players to compare their scores with those of more experienced players.

Supervised Practice

This continues as usual on Mondays at 7.30.

Friday Nights by Dave Maeer

I have never really liked IMP Pairs scoring. I'm inclined to agree with the late Terence Reese that one might as well play total points and have done with it. Depressed by the usual poor results I decided to take some advice to improve my score. Isobel supplied the first piece of tactical genius - 'Double your opponents in game in contested auctions when they are cold for an overtrick'. At first sight this might appear not to do very much for ones chance of plus scores, but see it in action before you rush to judgement!

| | | | | |
|-----------|----|-----------|------------|----------|
| | | S xx | | Dealer N |
| | | H KJxxxxx | | N/S Vul |
| | | D 10 | | |
| | | C KQx | | |
| S xx | | | S AQJ10xxx | |
| H Qxx | | | H - | |
| D AKxxxxx | | | D xxx | |
| C xx | | | C Jxx | |
| | | S Kx | | |
| | | H A10x | | |
| | | D QJx | | |
| | | C Axxxx | | |
| | N | E | S | W |
| | 3H | 3S | 4H | x |
| | No | 4S | No | No |
| | No | | | |

A purist might object to the double of 4H with only one probable defensive trick - a pedant might even object because it converts two probable defensive tricks to one. However the effect was dynamite -neither opponent could advance to 5H (always difficult when you've been doubled in 4H) and, as they were not sure who was saving against whom, neither opponent doubled. To complete a thoroughly satisfactory board for us, when they realised what had been done to them they forgot to defend and let me get out for one off.

The hand below is one where the double should have worked but 'mea culpa, mea maxima culpa'.

| | | | | |
|--------|--|----------|----------|----------|
| | | S AQ9x | | Dealer N |
| | | H Axx | | Game All |
| | | D KQxx | | |
| | | C Jx | | |
| S xx | | | S KJ10x | |
| H Kxxx | | | H xxx | |
| D 9xxx | | | D - | |
| C Qxx | | | C Axxxxx | |
| | | S xxx | | |
| | | H QJ10 | | |
| | | D AJ10xx | | |
| | | C K10 | | |

| | | | |
|-------|-------|----|------|
| N | E | S | W |
| 1S | 2C | 2D | No |
| 2N(1) | No | 3N | x(2) |
| No(3) | No(4) | No | |

1. Few people would have thought of this bid, fewer still would have admitted it if they had.
2. Again a purist might feel that asking partner to lead diamonds is an overstatement of 9xxx but consider the effect the double should have had - would you stick 3N doubled as North!
3. Which is he - lunatic, genius, drunk or wired?
4. A clear cut mistake - I naively felt that we would make two diamonds, two spades and the ace of clubs. Had I bid the obvious 4C I could be doubled for 500 but would expect to get out for 200 (if South thinks North has a club stop, the King of clubs is a sensible lead) or beat 5D on a spade lead.

The following board - same round, same opponents - demonstrated that revenge is a dish best served piping hot. It also illustrated the merits of two more sage pieces of advice cribbed from the late Rixi Markus - never make a normal bid or play in a normal contract - and Martin Hoffman - never signal.

| | | |
|---------|---------|-----------|
| | S xx | Dealer E |
| | H xxx | E/W Game |
| | D Axx | |
| | C Q9xxx | |
| S 10x | | S AKQJxxx |
| H AJxx | | H xx |
| D xxx | | D KQ |
| C A10xx | | C Kx |
| | S xx | |
| | H KQxx | |
| | D Jxxxx | |
| | C Jx | |

Our uncontested auction to 6S as E/W (1S-1N-4S-6S) certainly demonstrated Rixi's adage. On the lead of the King of hearts this might appear to be an unpromising contract but: Ace of hearts, club to the King on which the Jack was played, club to the Ace, small club, Queen of clubs, ruff high, Ace of trumps, trump to the ten and claim!

Which opponent is to blame? I am told the latest dealing programs carry as a statistic, just after the one that tells you that the King of clubs has been singleton offside 8 times in 32 boards and that this is within the expected probabilities, an analysis of deals with 14 clubs and 12 hearts. Therefore North's decision to play for 14 clubs and 12 hearts is reasonable. South is at fault - had he played the Jack of clubs a trick later his partner would have had to remember it's existence for only 5 seconds, which is well within the attention span of the average player, instead of 10 seconds.

You see what I mean - if North remembered seeing the Jack of clubs he would never have played for it to be the 14th - NEVER SIGNAL!

New Laws

These came into effect on 1st October. Anyone interested in having a look at the changes is welcome to do so.

One of the more interesting changes is that it is no longer a requirement to deal the cards in rotation. It is recommended that they be dealt in rotation, but it is no longer an illegal deal if they are not.

An entertaining change is Law 74 which states that a player has to address the director courteously. The rumour that Jojn Probst was behind this to get his own back on Andy Bowles is not true!

The Quiz

Quiz devotees in the club could do worse than come along to our (almost) monthly quiz. The next one is on Thursday 4th December at 8pm. Long-standing member Ian Gardiner will be asking the questions. Teams usually consist of three, four or five people. But if you are on your own we will be able to put you into one of the teams. Table money is £1 and all the proceeds go to the winning team.

This event is of course in addition to the Thursday duplicate.

YC on TV

Amid great excitement a film crew from Ricochet Films was here for a couple of days in July. They filmed the Friday duplicate in its entirety but it is not true that they had to be paid to suppress certain parts! The previous day they took some shots of the rubber bridge club and the quiz.

The film is for a series starting on 10th November called 'Movers and Shakers'. The half hour programme devoted to bridge will be shown on Channel Four on Monday 1st December at 8pm. Its title is 'Dream Contract'!

And now for what is hoped to become a regular feature of the magazine, a profile of one of the club's personalities. We start of with:

Wendy

Members with long memories will know that it has never been the practice to profile a club personality in the magazine. When the idea was mooted there was only one name mentioned. This alone is a measure of the affection in which Wendy is held by everybody.

Wendy is the eldest of three sisters and was born in Johannesburg shortly after her parents emigrated to South Africa. Her father was a geologist with a mining company and she spent her early years in the mining town of Randberg just outside the big city. She loved going down the mines and remembers this time with great affection.

When she was sixteen she went to art school where she specialised in drawing and painting. After gaining her 'matric' (equivalent to A level) she was rewarded by her mother with a return ticket to the UK for a year. This was in 1985. She lodged with family friends in Richmond and worked long hours as a waitress to save for a trip around Europe. She had a great time travelling the continent marred only by the widespread anti-South African sentiment she encountered. This was the time of the boycott and eventually she had to stop mentioning where she came from.

On her return to Johannesburg she studied fashion & design after which she found work in that field, but poorly paid. Through her work she met Sias (now her husband) and they came over here in December 1989 in what was intended as a world trip. She found a good job as a dress designer and, though the urge to travel was always there, she felt loyal to the small family firm and did not want to let them down. She and Sias also had loads of friends as they enjoyed the whirl of London social life. So they never got further than Shepherds Bush!

When the bad times came with the recession they both lost their jobs. But it was at this time that Wendy heard about the bar job vacancy here. She has been here six years and, as everybody knows, is the one person we cannot do without. Apart from working behind the bar, she has given us the benefit of her expertise whenever we redecorate. The colour scheme in the basement was hers as was that for the ground floor room on which so many people have commented favourably. She is also the only person consulted by the Club Secretary when it is time to buy some new shirts!

Recently Wendy has been heard saying she is getting too old for bar work, and when she leaves here she will pack it in. May that day be a long way off, for the club without her is unthinkable.

The Ladder

For the first time in our history we have started a ladder. It operates on Tuesday and Thursday only and will span twenty four duplicates from 23rd September. The best nine results for each person will count and each player must partner at least three different other people in order to be eligible for prize money. The winner will receive £50 and second and third prizes will be £30 and £20.

Whether or not this becomes a permanent feature will depend on your response. It is not intended as an attempt to lure better players from the other evenings.

Margaret McCarthy

Margaret still keeps us in mind from her sojourns in Malaysia where she is teaching bridge among other things. Her most recent postcard from Pahang in the Perhentian Islands mentions a trip in the jungle train on Grafton's recommendation. 'A truly amazing journey', she says, 'through jungle areas the roads do not reach. Right now I'm shattered having just spent eight days trekking in the jungle. Everyone raves about the night time symphony and they are right. You really have to experience it to believe it'.

As yet no word about returning.

Conventions you don't need to know by David Burn

There appears in English Bridge a series which by now is about as long as Coronation Street and nearly twice as funny called 'Conventions you need to know'. This, the work of Young Chelsea stalwart Jeremy Dhondy, has produced much invaluable instruction to EBU members. But it is my firm opinion, based on years of painful experience, that there are certain gadgets the game would be better off without. For example:

GHESTEM. This unspeakable device for generating rulings, acrimony and enormous penalties was invented by the great French player Pierre - wait for it - Ghestem. I have never been sure whether the naming of conventions after their inventors is a result of egoism or merely lack of imagination. That imagination in this area is possible was once graphically demonstrated by Peter Burrows, another YC member, who used to play with David Stevenson. Their partnership methods included the following admittedly infrequent agreement that if a 5C response to Blackwood was doubled, a redouble asked partner to show how many kings he held, with the first response showing 0-2. This convention -Redouble Over Clubs for Kings in Excess of Two - took pride of place on their convention card, for obvious reasons.

But I digress. Ghestem in its original form is a system of two-suited overcalls that involves two harmless devices and one lethal one. Over a 1S opening, for example, a 2S overcall shows hearts and clubs, a 2N overcall shows the minors - and a 3C overcall shows hearts and diamonds. It is the last of these that invariably produces this kind of auction:

| South | West | North | East |
|--------|--------|--------|----------|
| 1S | 3C (1) | Pass | 4H |
| Double | 5C | Double | All pass |

(1) Hearts and diamonds

West, of course, has a weak jump overcall in clubs, and given what passes for a weak jump these days, the resulting penalty is always in about band E for council tax purposes. I remember as if it were yesterday - better, in fact, for ever since Warwick switched to a sensible brand of lager I don't always remember yesterday - the following deal from the Swiss Pairs at Brighton a couple of years ago. NS game, dealer West:

S 63
H 83
D Q9
C Q1098763

| | |
|----------|---------|
| S AKJ4 | S Q1098 |
| H AJ1064 | H Q75 |
| D A82 | D K53 |
| C 5 | C AJ2 |

S 752
H K92
D J10764
C K4

| | | | |
|-------|--------|----------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
| David | | | |
| | 1H | 3C (1) | Pass |
| 3S | Double | Pass (2) | Pass |
| Pass | | | |

(1) Modified Ghestem, showing spades and clubs. In an effort to reduce the disaster potential, and to make life harder for the opponents, we switch the meanings of a cue bid and the 3C overcall.

(2) The ethical call. Standard Ghestem involves cheating at this point by correcting to 4C (as in my first example auction above), but North is obliged to proceed as though he had not heard South's alert and explanation of 3C, so North must pretend that South is bidding his own spades in the expectation of a weak jump overcall in clubs opposite.

Since Jean-Marc Roudinesco's inestimable Dictionary of Suit Combinations fails to cover a combined trump holding of 63 facing 752 I was left to my own devices in the play. Though the defence, as always happens on these occasions, failed to extract the maximum penalty, our score of minus 2000 was still a shade below average. North, of course, claimed that he had been fixed by the vulnerability - if it had been the other way round we would have found a good sacrifice against our opponents' laydown grand slam. For reasons of which I have since been deeply ashamed, I failed to treat this argument with the sympathy it deserved.

Now in theory the Ghestem convention is without doubt technically superior to the Michaels cue bid. Often you will have a hand such as:

S 7432 H K6 D A3 C AJ865

on this kind of auction:

| | | | |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
| | 1S | 2S (1) | 4S |
| ? | | | .. |

(1) Michaels, hearts and a minor

and you won't know what to do. If partner has hearts and clubs then you should bid; if partner has hearts and diamonds then you should double (if partner is a human being) or pass (if partner is a junior). When the overcall specifies partner's two suits precisely, you are much better placed than when you only know that he has one minor. But you don't get marks for technical merit at bridge, and you don't need Ghestem.

Postscript. The French magazine Le Bridgeur carried a story last year that involved this auction:

| | | | |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| South | West | North | East |
| | 1H | 3C (1) | Double |
| 3D | Double | 4C (2) | Double |

All pass

(1) Spades and diamonds (2) Cheating - vide supra

The contract was one down, but East-West had a cold game in spades. The Director, the Appeals Committee and the Vatican Council amended the result to three diamonds doubled minus six. The name of the North player was Pierre - well, you've probably guessed him by now.

Ken Midgley

Congratulations to Ken Midgley on his feat of cycling from Lands End to John O'Groats (a distance of 1,054 miles) in September. For those of you who don't know, Ken is 62, has survived seven (yes, seven) heart attacks and has had a heart transplant. Shortly before he started his journey he was in hospital for a couple of days after being savagely mugged. The object of the exercise was to raise funds for the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund for Children. The exact amount he raised from all sources is not yet known, but club members sponsored him to the tune of £450 and the club itself contributed £415 towards his expenses. Ken tells us that next time he plans to do it 'downhill' from John O'Groats to Lands End!

The Marathon

Like its predecessor, the 22nd Young Chelsea Marathon was full two months in advance and was arguably the smoothest running of all. One of the competitors who was playing in the event for the first time was so enchanted that shortly afterwards he sent us a cheque for the next marathon!

The winners were Maciej's team of Peter Gawrys, Wit Klapper and himself. Gawrys is undoubtedly one of the ten best players in the world and is not in the current Polish team only because he has not got a regular partner. Apparently when he goes to the European in a non-playing capacity he is sought out by all and sundry for advice on what they should have done. Whenever he is over here to play in the big game at TGR (stakes £100) he comes to the club for a duplicate with Maciej. He comes across as a quiet, low-profile person, almost the opposite of the charismatic Zia Mahmood.

Maciej had intended to play as a pair with Wit Klapper, another excellent Polish player though not in the same class as Gawrys. In the previous Marathon Maciej had gone close playing with Wit and his son. He had set his heart on winning it this time, though it was quite a close run affair between them and the Hackett twins. Full marks also to young Mark Teltscher playing with Swedish international Gunnar Hallberg. They were lying second with one session to go but could not quite keep up the momentum and dropped to eighth.

The full prize list was:-

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| 1. Maciej, Peter Gawrys, Wit Klapper | 58.97% | (£2000) |
| 2. Jason & Justin Hackett | 58.43% | (£500) |
| 3. Unal Durmus & Michael Courtney | 58.16% | (£250) |
| 4. David Muller & Peter Lindon | 57.93% | (£150) |
| 5. Niklas Sandqvist & John Short | 57.86% | (£100) |
| 6. Brian Senior & Rob Cliffe | 57.39% | (£50) |
| 7. Phil King & Neil Rosen | 57.38% | (£50) |
| 8. Mark Teltscher & Gunnar Hallberg | 57.20% | (£50) |
| 9. Andrew McIntosh & Brian McGuire | 56.08% | (£50) |
| 10. Marc Smith & Phil Glanville | 55.53% | (£50) |