

# CLUB FOCUS

Volume II, Christmas Issue

December 2009



## ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION

### Welcome

Dear Club Focus Readers,

I cannot believe that a year has passed since my last Christmas message. It has been an extremely busy twelve months with our staff and volunteers working to ensure that we continue to build strong relationships with clubs. Time has flown by.

In 2009, we have asked you, our clubs, to make a decision about your future and universal membership. The majority of you have chosen to remain affiliated to the EBU, and take part in growing and developing our community of duplicate bridge clubs. Since October 2009, we have welcomed back some substantial clubs who have re-considered their original choice to disaffiliate. If you haven't made up your mind yet, or if you wish to return to us, please contact either Karen Durrell (Tel: 01296-317200; Email: [karend@ebu.co.uk](mailto:karend@ebu.co.uk)) or Krys Kazmierczak (Tel: 01296-317206; Email: [krys@ebu.co.uk](mailto:krys@ebu.co.uk)), who will be able to provide further information.

In my Christmas message last year I mentioned what universal membership means for duplicate bridge:

*"We believe it means more people coming in to our clubs to learn to play. We believe it means creating environments for new players to join with existing players to enjoy this great game of ours. Every player in every EBU affiliated club will be playing a part in this expansion; you will be contributing to the development of teaching, training and learning for all ages. But more than that, it will provide you with the individual benefits of EBU membership, which includes the opportunity to have a say in that which we do."*

In the past year we have worked to set up new initiatives like the free club teacher training programme to help our clubs gain more members. Please keep an eye open for the first courses which will start after April 2010.

2009 has seen us bring the EBU closer to the organisation it needs to be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are working on ensuring that there is effective representation through corporate governance with our work investigating charity registration and organisational change. We have raised the profile of our game where it matters; at Parliamentary level, which is allowing us to demonstrate to government the benefits that playing the game brings to society. We are also developing initiatives in the Really Easy programme of activities and will be launching some partnership programmes for Improver Weekends and club holidays in the New Year.

Many clubs are assisting us by providing us with their membership data and testing the new IT system in advance of it going live in April 2010. If you would like to take part in this project please contact Michael Clark (Tel: 01296-317207; Email: [michael@ebu.co.uk](mailto:michael@ebu.co.uk)).

So far this year, the Club Committee has asked for your comments on doubling regulations and on English Bridge, and has provided us feedback on new tournaments for our new club members, all of which has been taken on board. They have also assisted clubs with universal membership and have helped us to compile a group of IT experts to help those clubs that require support with this aspect of the project.

And we continue to work with you and for you to ensure that you, our clubs, and your members, are at the centre of our service provision.

So it only remains for me to thank all our Club Committee volunteers, our Club Liaison Officer Krys Kazmierczak, our Communications Officer Matt Betts, our Aylesbury Office Manager Karen Durrell, our IT support staff Michael Clark and Ian Mitchell, and all the other EBU volunteers and staff for all their hard work this year.

And finally to wish you and your members the compliments of the season and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Very best wishes

Sally Bugden, Chairman

### This Issue

Welcome	1
Bidding Tools	2
Xmas Fun Bridge	2
Book Review	3
Minibridge	4
Notices	4 - 5

#### HAVE YOU DECIDED ON AFFILIATION YET?

##### IF SO, PLEASE SEND YOUR AFFILIATION AGREEMENTS IN NOW!!

If you require any advice or information, or for some reason have not received your Pay to Play pack, please either phone our helpline on 01296 317200 or email us at [paytoplay@ebu.co.uk](mailto:paytoplay@ebu.co.uk)

We look forward to hearing from you.

**DON'T DELAY, RETURN TODAY!**

#### ASK US - THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW

If you need any information about Pay to Play phone us on 01296 317200 or contact us at [paytoplay@ebu.co.uk](mailto:paytoplay@ebu.co.uk) for the correct information about Universal Membership and the EBU.

**PLEASE DO NOT RELY ON UNOFFICIAL DOCUMENTS!**

## Bidding Tools - 4NT Opening (Name Your Ace)

You've just sat down at the bridge table with your favourite partner. You are dealer and pick up the following hand: ♠AK ♥ - ♦AKQJ10963 ♣KQJ. Christmas has arrived! Now there's a coincidence, this being our Christmas issue! Playing in diamonds, you have eight tricks in that suit, two in spades and if partner happens to have the ace of clubs, another three tricks in clubs – grand slam. If partner doesn't have the club ace, you will want to stop in six diamonds. If partner happens to have both missing aces, you will want to be in the no trump grand slam.

The problem is how to find out whether partner has the ace (or aces) you need him to have. The usual ace asking methods of Blackwood and Roman Key Card Blackwood might show that partner has one ace but not tell you which one. If it's the heart ace, that is no use to you. You need to know which ace it is.

As it happens, over recent issues we have been examining the various opening No Trump bids and the responses to them, and this is a continuation of that series because the answer is to use an opening bid of 4NT to ask partner to name his ace. The usual responses are:

5♣	No aces
5♦	Ace of diamonds
5♥	Ace of hearts
5♠	Ace of spades
5NT	Two unspecified aces
6♣	Ace of clubs

Some partnerships play the last two with their meanings reversed. We suggest you play whichever version you find easier to remember, but make sure both members of the partnership play it the same way.

This is one of those conventions which doesn't come up very often, but many experienced players have it on their convention card, and it is not too difficult to remember if you revise it occasionally with your partner. Needless to say, it is a bid you should only use when you have a suitable hand with only one or two losers. Note that the 4NT opening also has a useful pre-emptive function. If you have a long solid suit, then the opponents are also likely to have a long suit, and this may help prevent them finding their fit. Two more examples where you might use a 4NT opening:

- ♠AK ♥AKQJ106 ♦K ♣KQJ10
- ♠4 ♥AKQJ10864 ♦2 ♣AKQ

With hand a) you would like to play in 6♥ if partner has the club ace, 6NT if he has the diamond ace and 7NT if he has both.

With hand b) you could start low, planning to use Blackwood later to find out about partner's aces, but to reduce the chances of opponents interfering, it may be better to open 4NT. You are happy to play in 5♥ even if partner is aceless.

You never know – it might be Christmas tomorrow!

So, we've now covered opening 1NT, 2NT, 3NT and 4NT. You may think this concludes our NT series of articles, and you'd be right. However, if you are really curious as to what esoteric use a 5NT opening might be put to, well.... We know of one partnership which uses a 5NT opening as a high level pre-empt showing an extreme two-suiter, at least 6-6, in the minors (the bid has not come up yet!), and then there is an interesting suggestion on the Cambs and Hunts CBA website at <http://www.cambsbridge.org.uk/articles/5NT.html>

We wish all our readers plenty of nice juicy Xmas hands over the festive season!

## Christmas Fun Bridge

Now is the time of year when most bridge clubs hold a special event to celebrate Christmas and perhaps enjoy a more light-hearted game of bridge than usual. This may mean no more than just savouring some mince pies and a glass of wine with the usual evening's duplicate, or it could involve some more serious fun. If you are looking for some ways to liven up your Christmas party, here are a few ideas. You may want to set aside a budget for buying small prizes for some of these and charge an appropriately higher table fee on the evening.

**Round prizes:** The TD sets a particular task on each round and there is a small prize for, say, the first person to make a doubled contract, the first person to go off by three tricks, the first person to win a trick with a specific card, etc., etc.

**Overall prizes:** for a change score the evening on an aggregate basis with prizes for the highest total overall at the end of the evening. You can also have prizes for the lowest (or even better second lowest) score, and the score nearest to zero.

**Deuce ball:** Find or make a small soft ball out of sponge, preferably covered in fabric. Each time someone wins a trick with a two, they should shout "Deuce Ball!" and whoever is in possession of the ball at the time has to throw it across the room to them. Whoever is holding the ball at the end of the evening, and/or at a particular time designated by the TD wins a prize.

**Bingo Bridge:** Everyone is given a sheet marked up like a bingo card with squares to be crossed off as they accomplish particular tasks, e.g. bid and make 3NT, go off in a doubled contract, make a contract with three overtricks, etc., etc. As people complete a row of tasks, they can claim a prize.

**Change the Rules:** At the beginning of each round the TD announces a new rule for that round only, e.g. Aces are low not high, all contracts must be in No Trumps, the bidding must start at 2 Clubs, the bidding must not die below the four level, etc., etc.

If these ideas are too late for this year, keep them in Santa's sack for next year!

Book Review



**Gentlemen and Players: The History of the Tunbridge Wells Bridge Club**

Oliver Kinsey

Published by Greenman Enterprise ISBN 978-0-9561768-3-7

Available online from [www.oliverkinsey.info](http://www.oliverkinsey.info) and [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) - price £12.00

As an aspiring young Kentish bridge player in the late fifties, I can remember even now the awe I felt when first entering the portals of the majestic Tunbridge Wells Bridge Club. I think it was because it was so very different to what I was used to, because it had such a sense of history, and it was hard to imagine anyone playing bridge there without feeling a certain amount of reverence. Over the years I drifted back to that club on occasions, when an away match might take us there, and that feeling I had first encountered was always there.

Oliver Kinsey, who was chairman of the club for 2006/07, has written a fascinating biography of the life of this club, from its beginnings back in 1872 until the present time. Of course, in those early days it was more of a gentleman's club, a retreat perhaps, with billiards and backgammon and certain other card games being the order of the day.

But as well as detailing the changes that the club encountered over its many years, the author also treats us to the history of the game itself. Certainly the game that we play today was very different from its embryonic state, which possibly had its origins in a game called 'biritch'. A Mr. John Collinson who had played this game in Constantinople wrote a book detailing the rules, although only four of the fifty-six pages had any printing on them! In 1908 auction bridge made its debut, when someone had the bright idea of allowing all four players the chance to nominate a 'trump' suit, and not just the dealer and his partner. It was an exciting step forward, but it was not until 1925 that the game changed to its present form when Harold Vanderbilt introduced the concept of vulnerability and the notion that you had to bid a game or slam in order to be credited with making the requisite number of tricks.

During the war the gentlemen of the club continued to play bridge, but austerity was clearly not an issue as twelve members signed a letter to the Committee stating that they wished to play for higher stakes – a flat rate of 6d/100. (A note in the suggestions box that members should refrain from *post mortems* was ignored.)

In 1948 ladies were admitted to the old Counties Club in an effort to prop up failing resources, but rather quaintly they were to have their own rooms upstairs and had to use a side entrance. One of the earliest female members of the club was Dimmie Fleming, whom many of our readers will have known. She was an International for many years and, I believe, played in the British Open team on one occasion. As an aside, I can remember playing with her once myself. I cannot remember why or indeed where, but I can recall that she made a contract on a squeeze. I thought at the time that they only occurred in books.

Another star player of the time was the grand sounding Baroness Olga Knoop who proved her undoubted ability by her handling of the following hand, taken from a match where there appeared to be too much bidding: -

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

The Baroness, sitting West, arrived optimistically in 5♦ after the opposition had bid to 3♥. North cashed two hearts and switched to a club. Declarer won the ace, drew trumps and took the spade finesse. Four more rounds of trumps squeezed the hapless South in spades and clubs!

The last few chapters concentrate on some of the personalities from the last half-century who have helped shape the club to be what it is today. Some of them are no longer with us but have left their names on the cups that are still competed for today, while some of them are still playing bridge at a very high level.

This is a unique book about bridge and about bridge people. The amount of detail is staggering, and it will appeal on several levels; either as a documented account on the life history of a club, or the game, or the people who make up the game. The author deserves our congratulations.

*Dave Huggett (England international, bridge teacher and writer)*



## Minibridge - Maximum Fun



Having previously written in Club Focus about how I came to take up bridge three years ago and about the enjoyable and instructive course of lessons I've been taking at the Wimbledon Bridge Club, I am pleased to report that I have recently started a bridge club of my own.

I hope that WBC won't think that I am setting myself up in competition. Far from it. My bridge club is aimed at an entirely different section of the population – I have started a Minibridge Club at my youngest daughter's primary school.

The Hollymount Minibridge Club has nine members aged between seven and ten years old. We meet for an hour after school once a week to play Minibridge.

Minibridge is a marvellous game, as it enables the children to start playing bridge almost immediately with no need to learn a bidding system. They sort their cards, count the High Card Points and quickly learn who will be Declarer, who will be Dummy and who will be defending. It may sound simple enough, but even the basics can be challenging for children whose hands are so small that they struggle to keep a grip on all 13 cards. Many a neat fan of cards has ended in a muddle on the floor. Happily, the EBU came to the rescue and sent me a pack of brightly coloured plastic card-holders (see photo). These, of course, can be spun like tops and clicked like castanets, and there is always a friendly debate over whose turn it is to have the red one. If my bridge teacher thinks he has a tough time with his adult beginners, he can think again! However, I'm sure I will be sincerely grateful to the EBU for the card-holders in a few weeks time once the novelty has worn off!

After one Half Term of lessons, I am pleased to report that the Dealer occasionally succeeds in giving 13 cards to each of the 4 players, everyone knows the suits and how to count their points, and once in a while the combined total even comes to 40! The concept of a "trick" has been grasped even though the tricks are not always won by the player who ought to win them. Furthermore, play sometimes proceeds in a clockwise direction, players usually remember to follow suit and they are beginning to get an idea of strategy. When things go wrong we sort them out somehow. Progress is being made and everyone seems to be enjoying themselves even if the Laws of Bridge are occasionally and inadvertently broken. If all else fails, we click our castanets and dance around the room. Where we lead, I'm sure other bridge clubs will soon follow!

I think you can see from the pictures that everyone is having fun. With Christmas fast approaching along with the prospect of spending some "quality time" with the younger generation, why not crack open a pack of cards and introduce your children and grandchildren to the best card game in the world?

Full details of how to play Minibridge can be found here:

<http://www.ebu.co.uk/minibridge/11easysteps.htm>

**Elisabeth Bingham**



## Learn to Play Bridge Software



Are you a relative newcomer to Bridge? Or perhaps you are, or know, someone who would like to learn Bridge but doesn't have the time to go to classes? Why not try learning at your own pace and convenience at home using the EBU's new free software: *Learn To Play Bridge - Acol Edition*? Or use it as a supplement to your learning in class.

Based on the popular *Learn to Play Bridge* written by Fred Gitelman for the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL), the EBU is pleased to introduce an Acol version of the software.

Most of the sections remain unchanged from the ACBL version but the sections on 'Introduction to Bidding' and 'More on Bidding' have been modified for the UK market, where ACOL is the widespread system – allowing for 12-14 No Trump and 4-card majors. Opening 2-bids are introduced as 'strong' bids in line with traditional Acol. There is a new section entitled 'About the EBU'.

This release is a 'beta' version which allows for comments and suggestions and will be available until February 28th 2010. All suggestions for improvement will be considered, after which a final version will be produced.

The software is available from the EBU website. [Click here](#) to go to the web page from which you can download the program. We hope you find it useful.

Comments and suggestions should be sent to [john@ebu.co.uk](mailto:john@ebu.co.uk) with the subject LTPB (Acol) in the subject line.

**John Pain**



## County TD Preparation Course

This NEW one-day course will be held at the EBU Headquarters in Aylesbury on Saturday 15 May 2010 from 10:30am. It is intended for those who are thinking of tackling the County TD Course held annually in September.

We will use material from previous County courses to give people a flavour of harder book and judgement rulings. It will also cover use of the White Book (the TD Guide). There will be a limit of 12 places. Course fee £40. Bookings should be made through the Competitions Department in the usual way.

## Small Xmas present for Club Tournament Directors

The EBU Laws and Ethics Committee has put together some flow charts to help Club TDs with their rulings for some of the most common infractions. They are based on the latest version of the Laws. They can be downloaded from the EBU Website, printed off and put together as a booklet or laminated as individual cards.

See:

<http://ebunews.blogspot.com/2009/11/laws-flow-charts.html>



## Limerick Competition

This time it is many thanks and very well done to Peggy Millidge from Cumbria for sending in the winning limerick for the Essex-themed competition we set in the last issue of *Club Focus*. Peggy's entry was as follows:

*There was an old man from Mountnessing  
Who found bridge an absolute blessing  
It kept his wits honed  
And his social life toned  
- Though his bidding left everyone guessing.*

Peggy's prize, a copy of *Winning Bridge at Home* by Tony Forrester, will be on its way to her shortly. Many thanks to her and everyone else who sent in entries for the competition. Limericks for our next competition must have a Bridge theme and include the name of a place in the (Bridge) County of Gloucestershire. Why not try out your rhyming skills on such wonderful place names as Corse, Dudbridge, Northleach, North Nibley, Stroud, Syde, Uley and Upper Slaughter. Entries should be in to the address on page 5 by 15 January 2010. The winner will receive a copy of *The Bridge Player's Supper Book*, by Nicola Cox!

## Xmas Limerick



*Who's that man with the beard sitting West?  
He's not what you'd call properly dressed!  
His bidding is lax,  
With presents in sacks!  
Is it Santa? Well, who would have guessed!*

Sandra Nicholson



## Shop Offers!



We have a couple of special offers on our shop products. Both end on 18 December but don't forget that the last posting date before Christmas for 2nd class post is 17 December.

\* Free Ron Klinger book with every order over £20.

\* Buy any 2 Really Easy books for £10 plus postage. No further discounts.

## Upcoming Events



**Year End Congress, 27-30 December 2009, London**

**Year End Congress, 28-30 December 2009, Blackpool**

Visit: [www.ebu.co.uk](http://www.ebu.co.uk) for more Information

## Contact us



We hope you have enjoyed reading our Christmas issue of *Club Focus*. Are you interested in writing for the next newsletter? Have you started learning bridge? Have you got any funny stories about bridge? Does your club have any interesting ideas or solutions to common problems which other clubs might benefit from? Would you like to publicise any special events open to non-members and members? Do you have a special pet who likes to play cards? Please let us know!

If you would like to contact us or send us your articles, feedback or comments, please email: [clubfocus@ebu.co.uk](mailto:clubfocus@ebu.co.uk) or post to: **Club Focus, English Bridge Union, Broadfields, Aylesbury, HP19 8AZ.** Deadline for submissions is 15 January 2010.

## Bridge Tails



A turkey just for bridge players



If this newsletter is printed, please don't forget to recycle it afterwards.

Information contained in this edition is correct at time of going to press. Production schedules mean that entries listed or reviewed may change between going to press and publication.

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