

*London
Metropolitan
Bridge
Association*



MetroNews

*The newsletter of the
London Metropolitan Bridge Association*

Autumn 2017



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Words from the Editor

It is a time of change at the LMBA – or at least there are a number of small changes going on.

- The first is that after 39 years, The London Trophy competition has reached the end of the line and will not be held this season. This competition – an inter-club knockout competition originally for non-bridge clubs - was introduced to help encourage social players to try their hand at competitive bridge. Participants were mainly groups of individuals from golf, tennis and social clubs associated with businesses in the Greater London area. But in recent years numbers started to fall – business clubs ceased to exist and if bridge existed in golf and tennis clubs it was often within a formally constituted bridge section. The aim of introducing people to organised bridge was no longer meaningful and the competition has run its course.



But it is very much hoped that many of the teams that stayed with the Trophy until the end will now decide to take part in the London League. They will find that league matches – especially in the lower divisions - are generally quite as friendly and sociable as in the Trophy. And you are guaranteed a match against each other team in the League – no being knocked out straight away! If we can increase the size of the lower division sufficiently, it will be split into two on geographical lines which will have the benefit of minimising the distance you might have to travel to an “away” match.

Trophy players who don't want the commitment of several matches should also consider taking part in one of our hugely popular Café Bridge events – the next one is on 12th September in the Brook Green area of Hammersmith – see page 16 for details.

- Another change is the introduction of the new Laws of Bridge (2017). These come into force this August and will apply to all LMBA events in the new season. I don't propose to detail the changes here, but you can read about the main differences in the latest issue of English Bridge – I do recommend that you do so to become familiar with the new Laws. If you don't receive a printed copy you can see the article in the online version by logging into “My EBU” on the EBU website (www.ebu.co.uk).

- Some things come to an end. In this issue of MetroNews we say farewell to Barry Grimm, Veronica Thicke et al whose stories have graced the final pages for many years. They will be missed.

- Finally I have to mention the retirement of two of the LMBA officers. Roger Morton has been on the committee for 20 years and has undertaken a number of different roles during this time. He was Webmaster for 15 years and has been our Membership Secretary for the last 11 years. He has also been busy as a club administrator, competition organiser and bridge teacher and in 2011 his efforts

were recognised when he received a Dimmie Fleming award. He will be stepping down at the forthcoming AGM for a well-earned retirement.

The other change is that of LMBA Secretary. I have carried out this role for 25 years since 1992, and this seems quite long enough! I am delighted to say that Kath Stynes has agreed to take on the job so I am confident the Association will be in good hands. I will step aside at the AGM in September but will stay on the committee at least for a while to help ease the changeover and until I can find someone to take on my other roles!

Chris Duckworth



MetroNews Editor

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Annual General Meeting

The 2017 AGM of the LMBA will be held on Thursday 14th September, at the Young Chelsea Bridge Club, 54 Goldhawk Road, London W12 8HA, starting at 7.00pm.

All LMBA members are very welcome to attend. Do come along to have your say on the organisation of bridge in London - light refreshments will be available.

Agenda

- 1 Registration of proxies & apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of the AGM of 8th September 2016
(**Note.** These can be found at www.metrobridge.co.uk)
- 3 Matters arising from these minutes.
- 4 Chairman's Report
- 5 Treasurer's Report
- 6 Adoption of accounts for 2016
- 7 Subscriptions (direct and Pay-to-Play) for 2018-2019
- 8 Elections to the Executive Committee
- 9 Appointment of honorary auditor
- 10 EBU shareholders' Report
- 11 Any other business

LMBA results this season

London Congress

The London Congress was this year held at the Young Chelsea BC, which meant that capacity was limited and the Swiss Pairs on Saturday was fully booked well before the day. 68 pairs played 7 rounds of 7-board matches and at the end of the day these were the leading positions:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | David Arundel & Andrew Bannock | 112 VP |
| 2 | Mike Bell & Sarah Bell | 108 |
| 3 | Derek Oram & Celia Oram | 97 |
| 4 | Adrian Ring & Paul Chapman | 96 |

Teams of four are clearly twice as difficult to organise as pairs, so capacity was not quite reached on the Sunday. 27 teams assembled on the day, at the end of which the narrow winners were the team of Claire Robinson, Nick Boss, Martin W Jones and Kiril Delev (*left to right in the picture*).



The leading positions were:

- | | | |
|---|---|--------|
| 1 | Claire Robinson, Martin W Jones, Kiril Delev, Nick Boss | 97 VPs |
| 2 | David Kendrick, Paul Lamford, Andy Bowles, Shireen Mohandes | 95 |
| 3 | Simon Cope, Allison Green, Peter Crouch, Jeremy Crouch | 91 |
| 4 | David Muller, Mike Grounds, Peter Lindon, Dee Lindon | 90 |

Ian Gardiner Trophy

The leading positions at the end of the two-session Ian Gardiner qualifier held in early February, scored on the same basis as the Pachabo, the national Inter-County teams championship, were as follows:

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 1 | Chris Duckworth, Brian Callaghan, Ian Payn, Frank To | 114 |
| 2 | Richard Creamer, Trevor Mathews, John Pemberton, Steve Popham | 96.5 |
| 3= | Ned Paul, Kath Stynes, Albert Totah, Kostas Koussis | 94 |
| 3= | Fiona Hutchison, Peter Taylor, Heather Bakhshi, Guy Hart | 94 |

This meant the Duckworth and Pemberton teams qualified to play-off in a 48-board match to determine the title - a reprise of the 2016 match between the same two teams. The final was a close run and swingy affair, with the Duckworth team eventually running out as winners by 11 IMPs (113 to 102) – a fourth win in a row for this team.

They are pictured, *right*, celebrating their win.

The winners were unable to make the date of the Pachabo, so the county was represented by the Pemberton team. London has rarely done well in this event and sadly this year was no exception, with the team finishing in the bottom half of the field.



London Championship Pairs

This year there were 28 pairs competing for the Championship title. The event was run in two sessions, with the top 10 going forward to the main final while the remainder played off in a consolation event.

At the end of session one, the leading pairs were:

1	Beata Ruminska & Stanislaw Ruminski	61.26%
2	Kiril Delev & Reiko Sei	59.34
3	Heather Bakhshi & Claire Robinson	59.07
4	Keith Lai & Niall Igoe	57.42

The final proved to be very close between the leading two pairs, but the victors were the young Italian partnership of Ludovico Mori & Mark Golla, who scored 61.00%. Ludovico (*on the left in the picture*) is a London member but Mark was just visiting this country.



In a close second place were Ian Payn & Franklin To on 60.45%, while third place was taken by the first session winners - Beata & Stan Ruminski on 53.71%.

The consolation final was also close at the top, the leading positions being as follows:

1	John Pemberton & Stephen Popham	62.50%
2	Chris Duckworth & Brian Callaghan	61.46
3	David Muller & Sonia Griffiths	57.41

Only two pairs of London's quota of four were able to go forward to represent the County in the Corwen Trophy. They were Niall Igoe and Keith Lai, who finished just above halfway in the field of 100 pairs, and Nathalie Shashou and Nick Sandqvist who had an off weekend and were somewhat lower down.

Lederer Memorial Trophy 2017



This year's Lederer was won by a team captained by the incomparable Zia, who prevented the Allfrey team from completing a hat-trick. In fact, as the results below show, the Holders had a rough time over the weekend of the event in February – reflecting the quality of the field as a whole. See the article on pages 11-15 for more about the event.

The final scores of all the teams at the end of the weekend were as follows:

1	Zia	273
Peter Crouch, Simon Cope, Jan Jansma, Anita Sinclair, Zia (NPC Allison Green)		
2	De Botton	256
Peter Bertheau, Janet de Botton, Thor-Erik Hoftaniska, Artur Malinowski, Nick Sandqvist, Tom Townsend		
3	Israel	235
Ilan Bareket, Michael Barel, Migry Campanile, Assaf Lengy		
4=	Hinden	227
Jeffrey Allerton, Michael Byrne, Jon Cooke, Kieran Dyke, Frances Hinden, Graham Osborne		
4=	Gillis	227
Boye Brogeland, Espen Erichsen, Simon Gillis, Espen Lindqvist		
6	Ireland	218
Rory Boland, John Carroll, Tommy Garvey, Tom Hanlon, Mark Moran (NPC Gráinne Barton)		
7	London	215
Mike Bell, Richard Granville, Christophe Grosset, Sarah O'Connor, Stefan Skorchev, Peter Taylor		
8	Chairman's Team	211
David Burn, Heather Dhondy, Gillian Fawcett, Joe Fawcett, John Holland, Alan Mould		
9=	Holders	194
Alexander Allfrey, David Bakhshi, Tony Forrester, David Gold, Andrew Robson		
9=	Premier League	194
Jason Hackett, Justin Hackett, Paul Hackett, Alex Hydes, David Mossop, David Price		

Café Bridge Drive - Tonsleys

A record 80 pairs competed in the Tonsleys Café Bridge in April this year. There was some panicking by the organisers at the start of the day as some of the stationery and equipment for the event was accidentally left on a train and couldn't be retrieved in time! This included the movement instructions for all the players, but fortunately quite a lot of the participants had played in Café Bridge events before and had a good idea of what they needed to do.

It was also very good news that the event was being scored using the BriAn app which about half the players had installed on their mobile phones. This terrific app not only scores but also tells everyone who they should be playing next, and which boards, so it was an enormous help in ensuring the smooth running of the movement.

All in all, it turned out to be a very successful day and we raised a magnificent £2000 for our charity, Age UK Wandsworth.

The leading positions at the end of the day were:

1	Simon Prager & Dick Jordan	66.64%
2	Jackie Herring & Jennifer Giles	64.34
3	Lynn Arch & Sue McLaren	64.18
4	Susi Behrmann & Malcolm Morris	63.40
5	David Shore & Keith Mellor	62.98



Garden Cities

This year six team from 4 clubs competed in the London Garden Cities heat. The Woodberry BC and the YCBC have between them had a lock on this event for very many years, so it was most pleasing to see new winners this year, in the shape of BTONS Bridge Club.

The leading positions were:

1	BTONS (Nigel Stuttard, John Bernard, Mike Bull, Graham Horscroft, Gerry Weston, Jim O'Donoghue, Tim Pelling, Ken Barnett)	+49
2	YC Red (Paula Leslie, Francois Picard, Barry Myers, Franklin To, Richard Hillman, Keith Bennett, Ingar Hansen, Peter Taylor)	+44
3	YC Yellow (Lorne Anderson, Gordon Rainsford, Mike Bell, Sarah O'Connor, Nick Sandqvist, Nathalie Shashou, Keith Lai, Niall Igoe)	+24

The BTONS team represented London in the Regional Final of the Garden Cities with a couple of personnel changes - Bill Linton, Paul Lamford and Stefanie Rohan replaced Graham Horscroft, Gerry Weston and Ken Barnett. They performed with great credit, coming second to qualify for the finals. Sadly, they weren't able to maintain their successful streak in the National Final, where they finished seventh.

Fox Shammon

It was a small field in this year's Seniors Pairs for the Fox Shammon Trophy due to a clash with an inter-club event which we aim to avoid next time. None the less, the event was hard fought as can be seen by the close final percentage scores. The winners were Christine Tomkin and Peter Saies – pictured right – and the leading positions were:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Christine Tomkin & Peter Saies | 55.21% |
| 2 | Sonia Griffiths & David Muller | 54.51 |
| 3 | John Stimson & Ben Hackenbroch | 53.82 |



London Trophy

The final stages of the London Trophy, usually held at the RAC in Pall Mall, were held this year in a new but equally elegant venue – the Oriental Club, just off Oxford Street. Pat Brotherstone, the daughter of the Trophy founder Freddie Della-Porter, presented the prizes at the end – she is on the left in each of the pictures.

In the main final, the winners were CMS Alumni, represented by Mark Nichols (captain), Pamela Reiss, Arthur Dyson and Roy Griggs (*left to right in the picture, right*). David Reuben (*not pictured*) played the first half of the match. The runners-up were MCC: Russell Tenzer (captain), Gary Diamond, Harvey Laurance and Nigel Clayton.



In the Della-Porter Plate the winners were Sunningdale Golf Club - Peter Comber (captain), Tom Boardman, Robert Buxton and Mark Davies (*left to right in the picture, left*). The runners up were Coolhurst 2, comprising Sandie Grant (captain), Ian Kaye, Jeff Lewis and Ken Kentea.

See the article on pages 21-25 for a report of the finals. Sadly, due to diminishing interest, this was the last year of the London Trophy, but it is possible that an alternative tournament will be privately run. If this transpires, details will be made available on the LMBA website at metrobridge.co.uk.

London Trophy Pairs

The London Trophy Pairs was won by Peter Brook and Roy Westwater for the second year running. The leading positions were:

1	Peter Brook & Roy Westwater	62.50%
2	Paul Bracken & Liz Bracken	60.94
3	Ingleby Jefferson & Jenny Stack	56.55



Leagues

Division 1 of the London League was won this year by team Tartan, captained by Uday Hegde, ahead of second-placed August Red, captained by Mark Davies.

Division 2 of the league was won by Heather Dhondy's eponymous Dhondy team with 75 VPs, well clear of Bury the Hatchet, captained by Dudley Leigh, who finished with 53 VPs.

In Division 3 the convincing winners on 87 VPs were Napier Scinde, captained by Malcolm McIvor. In second place on 66 VPs were Hurlingham, led by Gitte Hecht-Johansen,

The Home Counties League was won this year by Surrey Purple, captained by Richard Millard. It was close between second and third place, but Kath Stynes' squad of women playing as London Blue finished with 55 points, just ahead of Surrey Orange, captained by Tony Richards, on 54.

London News

Tollemache Cup stays in London



The London team has won the Tollemache Cup for the second year running. The picture shows the victorious team holding the trophy – they were Tom Townsend, Nick Sandqvist, Heather Dhondy, Kieran Dyke, Paul Lamford, David Ewart, Mike Bell, Sarah O'Connor, Phil King, Stelio di Bello (*not in picture*) and Ian Payn (NPC).

They won the final by a big margin, 11 points clear of the joint second teams. London is very proud of them all.

Club News

The **Young Chelsea Bridge Club** will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in May next year, and is also planning a number of events as part of the celebrations to mark this milestone. The first of these will be a return of the classic 24-hour Marathon for which the club is famed. The Marathon will be held over the weekend of 28th-29th October 2017, with play starting at 12.00 noon on Saturday and finishing around noon on Sunday. More details from the website at www.ycbc.co.uk.

The **YCBC** is also introducing a new Ladies Swiss Teams event this autumn, in recognition of the fact that many women players greatly miss the National Women's Teams which used to be held each year. This event will be held at the club over the weekend of 16th-17th September 2017. It is a licensed event, open to all women players of all standards, with a good prize pool. See the YC website at www.ycbc.co.uk for more details, or contact Paula Leslie at paula2012leslie@gmail.com.

The **West London Gay Bridge Cub** will be holding its annual tournament, sponsored by Prestat Chocolates and the Victoria Pub, Paddington on Saturday 14th October. It will once again be held at St Gabriel's Church Hall in Pimlico starting at 11.00 am, with Pairs in the morning and Teams in the afternoon. This is a licensed tournament and is open to all – and you don't have to be gay to play, all are welcome! See the website at www.wlgbc.co.uk for full details of the event including how to enter, or contact David King at davidking1712@gmail.com or on 07967 655515.

The **Nippon Bridge Club** has a new contact. She is Junko Harris at junkoharris@gmail.com. The club meets every Thursday at the YCBC.

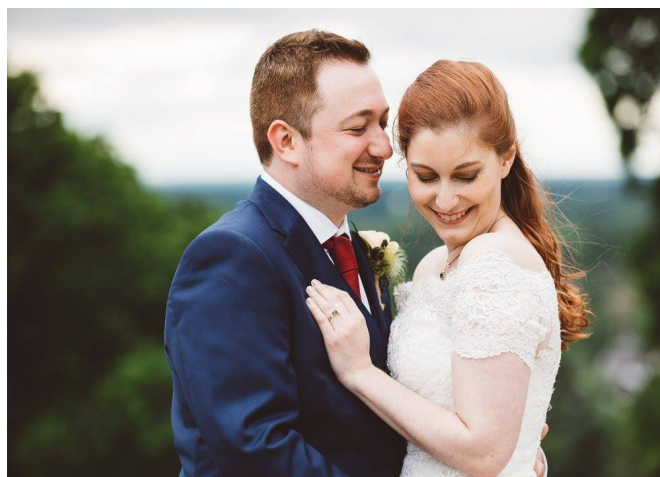
The **Upper Norwood Bridge Club** also has a new contact. She is Pru Bland who can be contacted at prubland@gmail.com. The club continues to meet on Monday and Thursday afternoons at the Phoenix Community Centre in Crystal Palace.

The **BTONS Bridge Club** has sadly ceased to hold regular weekly duplicates, due to falling numbers. The club will however continue to field teams in various leagues and other events.

Wedding Bells!

Very many congratulations to well-known London members Mike Bell and Sarah O'Connor, both of whom are very active in bridge, both as players and in encouraging youth bridge.

They were married in May and we wish them every happiness for the future.



New members

The LMBA is very pleased to welcome the following new members who have joined the EBU through the London County for the first time since January.

Ila Ibberson	Eve Thorne	Sushma Evans	Mike Pownall
Max Hobhouse	Carine Epardaud	Laura Harcourt	Gillian Bostelmann
Rosalind Wolfe	Maria Dallow	Jane Boote	Gavin Trechman
Steve Leeder	Mobin Rahman	Sigrid Thumfart	Angel Trechman
Clare Carpenter	Mike Prag	Ahsan Zahir Rizvi	Teresa Levitt
Jane Pettit	John Neilson	Georgina Pumfrey	Sally Cass
Peter Cook	Alka Bali	Michael Tomalin	Glennis
Julie Cook	Christopher	Louise	Mavromatis
Irene Winsby	Adams	Stephenson	

We also welcome the following existing EBU members who have transferred their allegiance to London, or past members who have rejoined, during the last 6 months:

I Lloyd	Jeremy Coke-	Rachel Kellett-	Thor Erik
Xavier Woodward	Smyth	Clarke	Hoftaniska
Zebedee Stocken	Richard Bayley	Geoffrey Rayner	Oliver Proudfoot
Janet de Botton	Cheryl Fraser-	Henry Bartram	David Lischka
Camilla Grundy	Sampson		Graham Barber

Lederer 2017: Putting It Together *by Ian Payn*

Every year, on the last weekend in February, ten teams gather at the RAC in Pall Mall to compete for London's Lederer Memorial Trophy. Over the course of two days the teams all play each other, until one walks off with the Trophy, and a £1,000 cash prize. The event has been sponsored since 2015 by Simon Gillis, and our use at the RAC is arranged through the good offices of our friend Colin Freeman (who also arranged for the final of the 2017 London Trophy to be held at the Oriental Club. He gets around). The weekend usually goes smoothly, with spectators both at the table, in the VuGraph room and (increasingly) on BBO. But it's like a swan. What you see is calm and serene, but it takes quite a lot to get things to that happy state.

As soon as one competition is over, preparations are underway for the next one. That's when I swing into what we shall call, for want of a better word, action. The RAC has to be booked for the next year's competition. That's easy (because Colin Freeman does it for me). Then March is barely upon us and I start looking for a line-up. There are certain teams that are guaranteed a seat. One is Simon Gillis's (that would be fair enough even if he didn't bring a team of Scandinavian Superstars, but he does), the other is ours, London. For the past few years the London team have been the winners of a play-off between the winners of the

London Teams of Four and the Young Chelsea Knock-Out (in recognition of the support the YC gave the event until 2012). Other than that, it is invitational event, and I have to work out who to invite.

Although this seems to be completely at my discretion, I do have certain indications. I would always invite Zia and whatever team he wanted to play in. Not only is he a loyal supporter of the event, but also he draws a crowd to his table like a magnet draws iron filings. Similarly I would also find space for Andrew Robson's team, for much the same reasons. That this team usually consists of some combination of the current English Open Team and the winners of the Gold Cup and various other events kills several birds with one stone.



Andrew Robson's attempt to hypnotise partner met with varying degrees of success...



Not a suspicious bone in Thor Erik Hofstanika's body...

Ireland, loyal supporters to a man, always receive an invitation. Of the remaining 2017 line-up, Janet de Botton always brings an interesting team: apart from her regular team-mates in 2016 she brought over Geir Helgemo, and in 2017 Peter Bertheau. The winners of Crockfords were invited, and so were a team headed by Frances Hinden.

London, because the timing of the YCKO didn't pan out, consisted of some players to whom I issued a personal invitation. The Chairman's team was similarly made up: stuck for a team in 2016 after a late withdrawal I did what any normal person would do, and ask some friends to help me out, and they did. There were mutterings from one self-interested professional that I had just asked my friends to play (suspecting

that his future invitations might be threatened by their presence). Well, who would he have expected me to ask? And in the event, the Chairman's Team finished third in 2016: well ahead of the Professional Whinger's team. The Chairman's Team played again in 2017, partially because they had helped me out before. Quite unlike the previously mentioned professional, they were completely relaxed and understood and played



Simon Gillis wonders where he's seen Gillian Fawcett before. Clue: last year, same place.

because I asked them to, and wouldn't have held it against me if they hadn't.

The wild card in 2017 was Israel. Quite out of the blue I was copied in on an e-mail from Tony Forrester to top Israeli player Michael Barel, explaining that Tony had no idea why Michael hadn't been invited to the Lederer as he (Tony) and Michael had discussed some months previously.

Well, Tony (may I call you Tony?) that's because your e-mail was the first I'd bleeding heard of it...still, no harm done, and after a bit of coming and going Michael and his friends were all booked up (oh, by the way, I have to arrange accommodation at the RAC for overseas players, as well. My Life as a Travel Agent: coming soon to a remainder bin near you).



Tony realises he's forgotten where he parked the car..

We also have to arrange TDs, of course. Martin Nygren has been running the floor nicely for us for the last few years but in 2017 he was going to be abroad celebrating his fiftieth birthday (it's just self, self, self with some people) but Richard Banbury stepped nobly into the breach. On the technical side we have Vigfús Pálsson from Iceland (at the time of writing trying to arrange an Icelandic team for 2018) who runs the scoring, display and all the clever stuff. David Muller makes sure all the BBO operators are tooled up and ready to rock and roll. Once all that's sorted, my job's done until the eve of the tournament. Nigel Freake has

been the scorer for the event since the Year Dot. I probably don't have any contact with him from one year to the next, but I know that at the appointed hour I'll turn around and he'll be walking in the door.



When Zia said he'd get to grips with Israel's Migry Campanile...

By which time the real work is being done by Kath Stynes, who enlists helpers, gets printing done (trying to get biographical details for the programme makes getting blood from a stone being trivial. Then everyone complains about theirs being out of date!), sorts out the BBO schedule – indeed, she does

everything that might be described as hard graft. I do everything that might be described as "poncing around". It seems to work better that way: I'm sure that given half a chance Kath would take to poncing around like a good 'un, but I don't think I'm really cut out for the hard graft side of things. Best leave things as they are, eh?

This year, on the Friday evening before the event I'd arranged to meet the Israeli team in the bar to welcome them to London. Joe Fawcett came along to keep me company, and old friends Rory Boland and Tommy Garvey from the Irish team happened to be in the same bar (not much of a co-incidence as most of the Irish team were staying at the RAC). The Israelis weren't much in evidence but they eventually turned up, and when they did they gave me some Israeli chocolate and some Israeli tea, which was nice of them. When I got the chocolate home my wife Anne commandeered it, so that was the last I saw of that, but the tea was very nice.

The event itself went as the event goes. At the beginning I stand up and welcome everybody (more poncing around) and then I stand up at the end and dole out the prizes. I do all that despite roughly half the people there having no idea of who I am, but I can take it. This year, for the reception at the end, the wine hadn't been ordered. I



*Sarah O'Connor (now Sarah Bell)
seeks guidance from above...*

mentioned this to Colin Freeman with about half an hour to go before the end of the event. He said "leave it with me" and disappeared. Not only was everything laid on (and out) in time, but also a waiter appeared out of nowhere and stood at the door offering a glass of wine to anyone who walked in. Try getting that sorted out in less than thirty minutes at the West Bromwich Moat House.

Alas, our new friends from Israel only managed third place. Never mind. They'll be back. Well done everybody, and thanks to everyone who helped, too numerous to mention in these pages.

Before I sign off, the editor has demanded that I include a bridge hand (in a bridge magazine! The very notion!). So, courtesy of Tom Townsend of the Daily Telegraph, unlucky runner-up, here goes.

Game All. Dealer West,

♠ 9	♠ J1062
♥ 10975	♥ J
♦ 8654	♦ J1092
♣ A1062	♣ 9873
♠ AK754	
♥ Q632	
♦ 73	
♣ Q4	

Zia might have won the event (for the eighth time) but he rather unluckily came a cropper on this hand. He found the only lead to concede a doomed slam!

At every table but one, this hand was played in 6♥. No declarer cashed the ♥Q, felling East's Jack, then picked up the suit by playing small to the 8. Of course, you or I, reader, would have been on top of that one. Zia, alas, was on lead against 6NT by South (a rather better contract than 6♥ as it only needs one major to behave – they both

do in a similar manner, if you can see through the backs of the cards). The auction at Zia's table had been unrevealing (so unrevealing I haven't the faintest idea of what it was) and Hearts hadn't got a look in. Consequently you can hardly blame Zia for plonking 9♥ on the table.

Jan Jansma (who'd come all the way from Holland for this) played his Jack. Declarer won with the Queen and after cashing a top Heart in the North hand was able to pick up an unlucky Zia's ♥10, for +1440.

Still, *nil desperandum*, eh? It didn't cost them the event...

1st: **Zia:** Peter Crouch, Simon Cope, Jan Jansma, Anita Sinclair, Zia. (NPC Allison Green)

2nd: **de Botton:** Peter Bertheau, Janet de Botton, Thor Erik Hoftaniska, Artur Malinowski, Nick Sandqvist, Tom Townsend

3rd: **Israel:** Ilan Bareket, Michael Barel, Migry Campanile, Assaf Lengy.

Forthcoming competitions

*Unless otherwise indicated, all competitions are played with permitted conventions at EBU Level 4. Membership requirements for each competition are specified in the competition description. **Details of how to enter events and make entry payments are at the end of this section.***

London League

Entries close **1st October 2017**

Holders:	Division 1	<i>Tartan</i>	Capt: <i>Uday Hegde</i>
	Division 2	<i>Dhondy</i>	Capt: <i>Heather Dhondy</i>
	Division 3	<i>Napier Scinde</i>	Capt: <i>Malcolm Mclvor</i>



These league competitions are for teams-of-four, although up to 8 people may play for any one team during the season. Matches are played in home or away venues, which may be homes, clubs or other suitable premises. There are currently three all-play-all divisions with end of season promotion and relegation.

In Division 1 only, any systems are permitted, provided reasonable notice is given. The lower divisions of the London League are played at Level 4. All players in the London League must be EBU and LMBA members.

New teams are always welcome and will be considered for entry at any level, although it would be exceptional for a new team to enter Division 1 directly. Participants in the now-ceased London Trophy are particularly welcome to enter the London League, and if sufficient teams do join in, Division 3 will be divided geographically to help minimise travelling distances to matches.

Entry fee: £25.00 per team.

Entries should be made to **Imbaentries@gmail.com**, quoting **London League** in the subject line, or may be sent by post to **Dominic Flint** at Flat 3, 3 Marylebone High Street, W1U 4NG.

Enquiries may also be made to Dominic on 07763 845457. Every effort will be made to accept late entries if necessary.

Home Counties League

Entries close **1st October 2017**

Holders: *Surrey Purple – Capt: Richard Millard*

This is an inter-county teams-of-eight competition for London and the Home Counties. It is aimed at county second team players who would not normally be expected to represent their counties in events such as the Tollemache Cup. Teams are allowed to field at most two Grand Masters in any one match.



Matches are of 24 boards and are normally played at the YCBC on weekday evenings starting at 7.00 pm. Players must be members of the county that they represent but allegiance is not required. Green points are awarded.

Current participants are Middlesex, Surrey and London (each with two teams), so there is room for additional counties to join in – anyone interested should contact **Dominic Flint** at Dominic.Flint@clara.co.uk or on 07763 845457 for more details.

Entry fee: £20 per team.

Café Bridge Drive – Brook Green

Tuesday 12th September 2017

starting at **10.30 for 11.00 am**

Holders: *Susi Berhmann & Malcom Morris*

This year will be the sixth late-summer Café Bridge event but the second in the Brook Green area of Hammersmith. The tournament will be played in a number of different cafés/bars/restaurants in the area, each round of the competition being played in a different venue. The charity to be supported this time is Mind, the mental health charity.

Players should report to The Jameson, 43 Blythe Road, W14 0HR to register on the morning of play. The nearest station is Olympia on the Overground network. Numerous buses also serve the area going along either the Shepherd's Bush Road or the Hammersmith Road.

All are welcome – EBU membership is not necessary.



Entry Fee: £25.00 per player, which includes lunch at whichever venue you find yourself in at lunchtime!

Advance entry is **essential**. Entries and enquiries should be sent, to arrive no later than 29th August 2017, to **Imbaentries@gmail.com**, quoting **Café Bridge Brook Green** in the subject line. Please note that Café Bridge events are very popular and numbers are restricted, so entries should be submitted as soon as possible, and will be accepted on a first-come first-served basis.

Enquiries may be directed to **Chris Duckworth** on 020 7385 3534 or at chris.duckworth@lineone.net.

Mixed Pairs Championship

Sunday 1st October 2017 starting at **2.00pm**

Venue: Young Chelsea BC, 54 Goldhawk Road, W12 8HA

Holders: *Gilly Cardiff & Corneliu Rimboiu*

The Mixed Pairs Championship is played as a single extended session, match-pointed, mixed pairs event, to be held at the Young Chelsea Bridge Club.

All players must be EBU members, but LMBA membership is not necessary.

Entry fee: £26.00 per pair.

Advance entry is not absolutely necessary but would be helpful, and should be made to **Imbaentries@gmail.com**, quoting **Mixed Pairs** in the subject line.

Queries may be directed to the organiser, **David Muller** on 07847 618105.



Men's & Women's IMP Pairs

Sunday 15th October 2017 starting at **2.00pm**

Venue: Young Chelsea BC, 54 Goldhawk Road W12 8HA

Holders: **Men:** *Corneliu Rimboiu & Ting To*
Women: *Nevena Senior & Brigid Battiscombe*

This will be the fourth year of the Men's and Women's IMP Pairs. Each event will comprise a single extended session, played at the same time in the same venue as each other, using the same hands.

Scoring will be by cross-IMPs, a form of scoring that is similar to teams-type scoring. That means the emphasis is on bidding and making your games, not on



worrying about the extra few points from playing in no-trumps or from overtricks. In other words, a more relaxing form of the game than ordinary pairs, so something that we hope will appeal to many of our regular club and social players. All players must be EBU members, but LMBA membership is not necessary.

Entry fee: £26.00 per pair.

Advance entry is not absolutely necessary but would be helpful, and should be made to **Imbaentries@gmail.com**, quoting **Men's Pairs or Women's Pairs** in the subject line. Queries may be directed to the organiser, **Michael Hill** on 01732 863283 or at michaelrd.hill@btinternet.com

Palmer Bayer Trophy

Sunday 3rd December 2017 starting at **2.00pm**

Venue: Young Chelsea BC

Holders: *Chris Townsend & Sam Oestreicher*

This single extended session, match-pointed, 'No Fear' pairs competition is for those who like to play tournament bridge under more relaxed conditions than often apply, and for those who particularly want to enjoy a social atmosphere when playing. Please note the new start time.



Improvers and tournament novices are most welcome and more experienced players may find this an ideal way to introduce family, friends and colleagues to organised bridge. Players need not be members of the EBU or LMBA.

The principal aim of this event is enjoyment, so the pace of play is a little more leisurely than usual. Simple systems only are allowed, but including weak two opening bids and transfers in response to 1NT openings. (A full description of allowed systems and conventions can be found at www.metrobridge.co.uk and will be made available at the event.) A complimentary glass of wine awaits you at the end of the session to be enjoyed whilst discussing the hands that you have just played with an expert, who will be happy to answer any questions.

Entry fee: £20.00 per pair.

Advance entry is not absolutely necessary but would be helpful, and should be made to **Imbaentries@gmail.com**, quoting **Palmer Bayer** in the subject line.

Queries may be directed to the organiser **Chris Duckworth** on 020 7385 3534 or at chris.duckworth@lineone.net.

Ian Gardiner Trophy

Sunday 4th February 2018 starting at **11.30am**

Venue: Young Chelsea BC

Holders: *Brian Callaghan, Chris Duckworth, Ian Payn, Frank To*

This is the major London Teams of Four Championship, which is played as a one-day two-session multiple teams event from which the leading two eligible teams qualify for a head-to-head 48-board match to determine the winner of the Ian Gardiner Trophy.

Green-points will be awarded for both stages of the event, and the winners will be eligible to represent London in the Pachabo Cup, the national inter-county teams championship, on 9th - 10th June 2018 in Daventry. The qualifier is scored using the same method as the Pachabo – a combination of IMPs and point-a-board.

Note also that all players must be LMBA members and, in order to be eligible to go through to the final, all players in a team must have London as their primary County of allegiance before playing in the event.

Entry Fee: £72.00 per team.

Entries should be sent to **Imbaentries@gmail.com**, quoting **Ian Gardiner** in the subject line, to arrive no later than 28th January 2018.

Enquiries may be directed to the organiser, **Ian Payn**, on 07713 322420.



Lederer Memorial Trophy

Saturday-Sunday 24th - 25th February 2018

Holders: *Zia – Zia Mahmood, Jan Jansma, Anita Sinclair, Simon Cope, Peter Crouch, Allison Green (NPC)*

This prestigious invitational teams event will again be held at the Royal Automobile Club in Pall Mall. Although still several months away, a number of excellent teams have already confirmed their participation and the competition will provide a real treat for those who would like to watch all the excitement of live play at the very top level.



Full details of the teams, and of how to obtain your spectator tickets, will be published in the next issue of MetroNews. In the meantime enquiries may be directed to the organiser, Ian Payn, on 07713 322420.

Advance notice

London Championship Pairs

Sunday 11th March 2018 at 11.30 am.

Two session pairs at the Young Chelsea BC. This event is the qualifier for the national Corwen Trophy and the leading 4 pairs with London allegiance will qualify to play. The Corwen will be held on 2nd – 3rd June 2018 in Northampton.

Garden Cities Heat

Thursday 22nd March 2018 at 7.00 pm.

Inter-club teams of eight at the Young Chelsea BC



Fox Shammon Trophy

Sunday 29th April 2018 at 2.00pm

Seniors Pairs Championship at the Young Chelsea BC

Café Bridge Wandsworth

Tuesday 24th April 2018 at 10.30 for 11.00 am

Café bridge in the Tonsleys area of Wandsworth



London Congress

Saturday-Sunday 14th-15th July 2018

Venue to be confirmed. The congress will comprise Swiss Pairs on Saturday and Swiss Teams on Sunday.

More details of all these events will be in the Spring 2018 issue of MetroNews.



Competition Information & Regulations

Membership requirements for each competition are specified in the description for each event. Where LMBA membership is required, players who are members of counties other than London can become LMBA dual members to meet this requirement by the payment of our dual membership subscription, which is £5 per annum. Subscriptions may be paid along with competition entry fees, making sure that full contact details for the individual are provided, including email address and existing EBU membership number if appropriate.

Seating policy. Players may be allocated a starting position by the TD on arrival at a venue, or may be required to draw a starting position or cut for North-South. Players who need a stationary position for medical or mobility reasons should if possible notify the organiser or venue in advance.

Competition regulations. The Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge (2017) apply to all competitions as do, where appropriate, the regulations and directives of the EBU Laws & Ethics Committee. Full LMBA competition rules for individual events may be found on the LMBA website at www.metrobridge.co.uk.

Payment of entry fees

Payment on the day is generally acceptable for most competitions, but pre-payment is necessary for the Café Bridge and London Congress events, both to avoid excessive registration times and because numbers are limited.

Payments may be by cash, by cheque made payable to LMBA, or by bank transfer. Debit and credit card payments are not possible.

Electronic transfer of funds should be made to the following LMBA account:

Sort Code: 09-06-66 Account No: 41838562

Please use your surname as a reference.

London Trophy Finals 2017

by Michael Hill

On 11th June, the finals of the 39th – and, sadly, the last - London Trophy were held in the elegant surroundings of the Oriental Club, just off Oxford Street.

This LMBA competition has remained essentially social to its end – aggregate scoring is used, conventions are strictly limited and no team may have more than one player ranked at national master or higher level. Finals day has traditionally had three head-to-head matches but this year, the losing semi-finalists in the Trophy were unable to attend. So there were only two matches - the final of the London Trophy itself and the final of the Della-Porta Plate, the competition for first round losers in the London Trophy. These were played simultaneously using the same boards.

The main Trophy final was between CMS Alumni and MCC, whilst the Della-Porta Plate final was between Coolhurst 2 and Sunningdale Golf Club.

The start was far from tame. This was Board 1.

Love all. Dealer North.

♠ A103	
♥ Q10986	
♦ 4	
♣ AK52	
♠ Q8652	♠ J94
♥ AK7	♥ J532
♦ Q32	♦ A8
♣ 94	♣ QJ76
♠ K7	
♥ 4	
♦ KJ109765	
♣ 1083	

Every North opened 1♥ and two Souths (one in each match) made the routine response of 1NT. However, the other two over-reached somewhat, responding 2♦. After both players then rebid their suits, this led to a hopeless 3NT contract that ended up five-off. Even after the 1NT response, one north-South pair still found their way to 3NT. Only the Coolhurst pair in the Plate match stopped safely in 3♦, so gaining a swing of 360.

Board 3 generated the first real excitement.

EW Vul. Dealer South.

♠ –
♥ K10942
♦ QJ108
♣ 6543

♠ Q8642	♠ AKJ953
♥ AQ5	♥ J8
♦ 742	♦ K963
♣ 108	♣ 7

♠ 107
♥ 763
♦ A5
♣ AKQJ92

The auctions were different at each table. At three tables, South opened 1♣ and, at two of them, North responded 1♥. In the Plate, the Coolhurst East overcalled 1♠, South rebid 3♣ and, with both partners showing their support, the auction quickly reached 5♣ where it ended. In the Trophy, the MCC East chose to jump to 2♠ after which South showed his heart support (!) but they, too ended in the cold 5♣ after West jumped to 4♠. The Sunningdale West overcalled 1♠ despite the poor suit quality but this meant that North could not show his heart suit and had to bid 2♣. East, of course jumped to 4♠ and South continued to 5♣. But things did not end there. East pushed on to 5♠ (whether intended as a sacrifice or expecting to make we shall never know) and South then bid 6♣. No-one found a “double” card, so that was only –50, but a swing of 450 to Sunningdale. At the fourth table, the MCC South had chosen to open a slightly off-centre 3NT, silencing West and North. East, however, thought the hand still worth 4♠ and, over 5♣ from South, West raised to 5♠. Again, no-one found the “double” card – which

was just as well as, when North got in with the ♥K and switched to the ♦Q, declarer chose to cover, so losing three diamond tricks and going 3-off. So the swing to MCC was only 700.

A number of boards with only small swings followed. Board 8 should have been flat with 10 tricks available in a straightforward 4♠ contract but MCC over-stretched to 6♠ going 3-off for a swing of 600 to CMS.

Board 9 was the next one of interest:

EW Vul. Dealer North.

♠ 105	
♥ J53	
♦ J1097	
♣ Q764	
♠ QJ8763	♠ 94
♥ A8	♥ Q1094
♦ 3	♦ A84
♣ KJ103	♣ A985

♠ AK2
♥ K762
♦ KQ652
♣ 2

At every table, South opened 1♦ and West overcalled in spades. But at both tables in the Trophy, that overcall was a jump to 2♠ whilst, at both Plate tables, it was 1♠. The auctions then diverged even more. When MCC were East-West, the 2♠ overcall was passed out but the CMS East found a raise to 3♠ and West, with a maximum for his jump overcall, raised to game. Ten tricks were made at both tables for a swing of 450 to CMS. In the Plate, after the 1♠ overcall the Sunningdale North bid 2♦ and East doubled. South, not unreasonably bid 3♦ and West’s 3♠ ended the auction. Somehow, West contrived to make an 11th trick – but

+200 did not look promising. However, at the other table, North passed over 1♠ and East reasonably enough bid 1NT and then raised West's 2♣ rebid to 3♣, which ended the auction. This West also managed to create an 11th trick from nowhere so, in the end, the swing was just 50 to Coolhurst.

Board 11 saw the MCC over-reaching to a failing slam as they had on Board 7 but this time there was no hope as the defence had AKQ of spades to cash! But Board 12 ensured that the first half ended with some variation.

NS Vul. Dealer West.

♠ 1086532	
♥ Q87	
♦ KQ106	
♣ –	
♠ AJ	♠ KQ974
♥ 3	♥ J96
♦ A532	♦ 97
♣ AK10943	♣ J82
♠ –	
♥ AK10542	
♦ J84	
♣ Q765	

West opened 1♣ at every table and East responded 1♠ – except at the one table where the Coolhurst North had already intervened with a 1♠ overcall! South, of course, competed in hearts but the ongoing bidding was different at every table. In the Trophy, the final contract at both tables was 4♣ but MCC defended accurately to hold CMS to 9 tricks whilst they were allowed to make 10 tricks at other table. In the Plate, Coolhurst bid freely to 5♣ and were lucky to escape for only one off when North pitched the ♦10 on the clubs and was end-played to give dummy a spade at trick 13. At the

other table, they were allowed to play in 3♥, making 12 tricks and gaining a swing of 280.

At half time, CMS Alumni led MCC in the Trophy by a comfortable 1190 points but things were closer in the Plate, Sunningdale being ahead of Coolhurst 2 by just 310.

The second half began rather quietly in the Trophy with Boards 13 and 14 flat (albeit with both teams missing a cold, if thin, game on Board 14). However, there was a part-score swing in the Plate on Board 13 and a game swing on Board 14 when Sunningdale did bid the game. Board 15 was flat in the Plate, both teams making 11 tricks in hearts but, in the Trophy, it was CMS' turn to overbid to the failing slam – perhaps slightly clumsy missing AK of trumps!

Things got more interesting on Board 16.

EW Vul. Dealer West.

	♠ AQ73
	♥ AJ6
	♦ 1052
	♣ A85
♠ 10842	♠ K965
♥ 107	♥ KQ532
♦ A984	♦ 7
♣ 972	♣ K43
	♠ J
	♥ 984
	♦ KQJ63
	♣ QJ106

When CMS were North-South, the bidding seemed reasonable, North opening 1♠ and passing South's 1NT response. At every other table, they were more aggressive. The MCC South responded 2♦ to the 1♠ opening and then decided the hand was worthy

of raising the 2NT rebid to 3NT. In the Plate, after the 1♠ opening the Sunningdale East overcalled 2♥ and South felt worthy of 3♦, leading to a final contract of 3NT. The Sunningdale North-South pair were playing a strong no-trump, so North opened 1♣ (might be only 3 cards). Over the 1♥ intervention, South raised to 2♣ and then pushed on to 3NT over the 2NT rebid. So we had three tables out of four bidding what should have been a failing 3NT – except that Coolhurst actually made 3NT (played by North). East led the ♦7 rather than a top heart and West won to switch to the ♥10. East won the ♥Q and switched to the ♣3. Declarer won in dummy and set up a ninth trick by running the ♠J.

For one board, sanity was restored as each table bid and made a routine 4♥, then came Board 18.

NS Vul. Dealer East.

♠ A108	
♥ AK95	
♦ A5	
♣ KJ32	
♠ K	♠ QJ954
♥ J762	♥ 10
♦ KJ1076	♦ 98
♣ Q87	♣ A10964
♠ 7632	
♥ Q843	
♦ Q432	
♣ 5	

In the Trophy, the CMS North opened 1♣ and reached 2NT after East had bid spades and West had bid diamonds. After the lead of the ♦6, this could have been made by the good guess of an immediate play of a club to the jack. But declarer did not find this and in due course, drifted one off. But

worse was to come. At the other table, the MCC north opened 1♥ and the CMS East showed a 2-suiter (spades and a minor) with a Michaels cue bid. After South jumped to 4♥ West was moved to sacrifice in whichever minor East held, so bid 4NT. North had no hesitation in doubling that and the ensuing 5♣ which duly went 3-off for 800 – and a swing of 700.

There was also a swing in the Plate when the Sunningdale South made 2♥ while the Coolhurst North lost his way in 1NT, first by cashing ♥AK, so losing the fourth heart trick and then by discarding the ♠7 when winning the second round of clubs, so allowing East to cash the long spades in due course. Only 210 swing to Sunningdale but important when you're already behind at this stage.

At this point, neither lead had changed hands but things were close in both matches. Little happened on the next couple of boards but MCC's chances of a recovery were severely dented on Board 21 when they went off in a difficult but cold 4♥ contract, duly made by CMS. Interestingly, in the Plate, Sunningdale also failed to make 4♥ but were saved when the Coolhurst East, having opened 1♠ with a 6421 12-count rebid his spades, rather than showing the heart suit, and so ended in an unmakeable 3NT contract.

Board 22 rather finished things off. *(See top of next column)*

In the Trophy, the MCC East opened 1♠ and South overcalled 2♥. When West's raise to 2♠ was passed back to South, she competed with 3♦, raised to 4♦ by North after West's 3♠ bid. This went 2-off (although declarer

should probably have made a ninth trick).

EW Vul. Dealer East.

♠ K8	
♥ 7	
♦ Q852	
♣ Q108653	
♠ Q1097	♠ AJ532
♥ Q108	♥ 642
♦ K6	♦ 974
♣ J742	♣ AK
♠ 64	
♥ AKJ953	
♦ AJ103	
♣ 9	

Meanwhile, at the other table, the CMS East opened 1NT and South's 2♥ overcall ended the auction. The defence lost a trick in the wash so declarer emerged with an overtrick and a swing of 240 – but probably too little too late.



*Della-Porta Plate Runners-up
Coolhurst 2 - Ian Kaye, Sandie Grant
(captain), Jeff Lewis, Ken Kentea.*

In the Plate, the Coolhurst East also opened 1♠ and, after South's 2♥ overcall, West pre-empted with 3♠. That became the final contract and could not be beaten. At the other table, the Sunningdale East opened 1NT and, as in the Trophy, South's overcall of 2♥ ended the auction. That contract, too, could not be beaten, so Sunningdale gained a swing of 250. When all the scores had been totted up, in the London Trophy CMS Alumni had beaten MCC by 400 points, while in the Plate Sunningdale Golf Club beat Coolhurst 2 by 220 points.

Pat Brotherston, daughter of Freddie Della-Porta who created the event in 1978, was once again able to attend and present the prizes. She is on the left in the pictures below.



*London Trophy Runners-up MCC -
Russell Tenzer (not pictured) Gary
Diamond, Harvey Laurance, Nigel*

Puzzle Solution (See page 29)

The table costs £45, the cloth costs £15, the bidding box £6, and the pen £1.

The total cost of setting up and equipping a table is therefore £88.



Interference over our 1NT

by Mike Graham

Mike's article this time describes the methods commonly used to cope after opponents overcall your 1NT, and recommends one particular approach that is not so widely known

We pick up a moderate hand: ♠K107 ♥107 ♦Q109763 ♣Q7. Partner opens 1NT, 12-14 balanced. We would probably pass this, given a free run; we have a long suit that partner may be able to set up for a few tricks, and a couple of putative entries. And if partner has long clubs, for example, the queen may prove useful.

If we are playing transfers, we could also decide to play in diamonds. There are a number of ways in which we can do this:

- ♦ Bid 2♠ as a minor-suit take-out. You can have various continuations after this – one possibility is for partner to bid 2NT with a minimum hand (over which you bid 3♦) and 3♣ with a maximum (again, you are not particularly interested and will sign off in 3♦). In this style, a raise to 2NT is natural – almost a heresy in the convention-filled modern world.
- ♦ Bid 2NT as a minor-suit take-out, which acts as a puppet to 3♣ by partner. If you had clubs, you would pass; here, holding diamonds, you bid 3♦, which partner will pass.
- ♦ Play four-suit transfers. In this method, 2♦ and 2♥ are the normal heart/spade transfers. 2♠ is a transfer to clubs, and 2NT is a transfer to diamonds. Due to the presence of the 2NT step, however, there is a spare bid between the transfer bid and the transfer suit. This can be utilised to show either a good fit for the transfer suit or a lack of it. Some partnerships play that bidding the indicated suit shows a decent fit; other play it the other way round. This means that 1NT-2♠ (clubs)-2NT can mean yes, I like clubs or no, I don't like them. Or vice-versa.

On our actual hand, though, we do not get a free run. Our right-hand opponent (RHO) overcalls 2♥. Some pairs play this as natural, and some a heart/minor suit combination; some play 2♥ as both majors.

Well, whatever 2♥ is, it would be supine in the extreme to pass. The high cards are pretty much evenly divided, so who can make what will depend on the degree of trump fit and whether the cards lie well or badly. We should be intending to compete in diamonds, but how we can do this will depend on our agreements.

We could bid 3♦, natural. On our actual hand, this would be ok. However, add the king of diamonds - ♠K107 ♥107 ♦KQ10976 ♣Q7. We are not quite strong enough to insist on game – not that that will deter everybody – but 3NT could be close if partner has a decent opening. And if partner thinks that this hand is what we might have for our 3♦ bid, then we might see 3NT next anyway – and if we put down our original hand, 3NT will be going down several.

In order to distinguish the “I want to play 3♦” hands and the “Might be close to 3NT” hands, many pairs have the agreement that a three-level bid after

interference is natural and forcing. This is obviously no good on the hand in question.

So, what can we do? One answer is to play a method called Lebensohl. The heart of the method is an artificial bid of 2NT that shows one of a number of hand-types:

- ♦ a one-suited hand that wants to compete to the three-level (as in our example hand here).
- ♦ a quasi-balanced hand that contains the values for game but does not possess a stopper in the opponent's suit
- ♦ a balanced-ish hand with game values that wants to use Stayman (in case the partnership has a fit in the other major).

Note that over a 2♥ overcall, we have a 2♠ bid available if that is where we wish to play.

Over our 2NT bid, partner is forced to bid 3♣. Digressing slightly, on a bridge holiday several years ago a player was coerced into playing this method. Unlike most things that you discuss before a session, this actually came up. However, over 2NT he rebid 3NT, and went several down. "But partner, you're supposed to bid 3♣", wailed his partner. "Nonsense," came the spirited reply. "No-one's going to force me to bid anything".

Assuming that our partners are more co-operatively minded, they will bid 3♣. Now our actions depend on what the overcall was.

- ♦ *Bidding at the 3-level in a suit below overcaller's*: To play.
- ♦ *Bidding at the 3-level in overcaller's suit*: Stayman, game values. So if the overcall was 2♥, then 3♥ now is game values and four spades.
- ♦ *Bidding at the 3-level in a suit above overcaller's*: natural, game-forcing.
- ♦ *Bidding 3NT*: Balanced game values but without a stopper in overcaller's suit. If we had a stopper, we could just bid 3NT directly. Some pairs like to invert these meanings.

You can develop further structures on top of all this, but that is possibly for (or, possibly, not) another time.

Let us return to our original hand: ♠ K107 ♥107 ♦Q109763 ♣Q7.

Partner opens 1NT and RHO bids 2♥. No problem – we have agreed to play Lebensohl, so we bid 2NT. Over partner's 3♣ we will bid 3♦. However, our left-hand opponent (LHO) bids 3♥, and this comes back to us.

How infuriating! Does partner have ♠AJ84 ♥63 ♦KJ84 ♣AJ8 or ♠AQJ6 ♥K63 ♦84 ♣K973? Four Diamonds is certainly not laydown opposite the first hand, but it has play. Opposite the second hand, 4♦ is silly and might even get doubled. And we have no way of knowing. We are pretty much constrained to pass, and it would not be a surprise to find that 3♥ and 4♦ both make, or that both contracts are one off. All in all, a difficult decision.

This is one aspect of Lebensohl that aggressive opponents can take advantage of - opener does not know the nature of the 2NT bid. This means that after a raise by advancer (and old term for overcallers' partner) our side is in a parlous state for future competitive bidding, as, if the 2NT bid is intended to merely compete the part-score, opener does not know the nature of any fit. This is especially true if the opponents are bidding spades, where 2NT can cover three suits.

Some time in the 1980's (gosh, that seems a long time ago now) the Cambridge University player Jim Niblett came up with a way of solving this dilemma. Inevitably, it became known as Niblensohl (it is curious that the original Lebensohl convention was attributed to someone called Ken Lebensold, who denied all responsibility for it).

Using Niblensohl, you basically transfer into the suit you want to compete in. So on our original hand we bid 3♣ over 2♥, showing diamonds. Now partner is in a much better position over a competitive raise. On the first hand above 4♦ is reasonable (we have a super diamond fit) and on the second partner can safely pass. And if the competitive raise comes back to us, we have another bite at the cherry, as we can double to show extra values (that is, concrete competitive values) with the bonus of having already shown our main suit along the way.

As bids are transfers, there is the question of what a transfer into the enemy suit should be. Probably the simplest solution is to play it as game values, usually balanced, but without a stopper in the opposition suit. A direct 3NT guarantees a stopper.

There are two other positions where Niblensohl can be played:

- ♦ LHO opens a suit, partner doubles, RHO raises
- ♦ LHO opens a suit, partner bids 1NT, RHO raises.

Obviously, these are optional – they are not part of the original design.

I can thoroughly recommend this treatment – with one of my regular partners we have played this for over thirty-five years, and trust me, it works. Note that as 2NT is a transfer to 3♣, double over the raise in the auctions above is take-out, showing at least two places to play.

♠ AJ9	
♥ 10975	
♦ K4	
♣ AKJ3	
♠ K8632	♠ Q5
♥ K3	♥ 4
♦ J98	♦ AQ10763
♣ 1086	♣ 9742
♠ 1074	
♥ AQJ862	
♦ 52	
♣ Q5	

In a match years ago this deal came up (*see left*):

Both Norths opened 1NT (15-17) and, curiously enough, both Easts had a natural 2♦ overcall available.

At one table South simply bid 4♥. West led a diamond, and the defence cashed two rounds. East then switched to a spade to the king and ace. Perhaps assuming that East had to have the king of hearts for his bid, declarer ran the ten of trumps, and was

soon a sadder, if not particularly wiser, man.

At the other table North-South were playing Niblensohl and South had an easy 3♦ bid – invitational or better in hearts. This is logical, as a 2♥ bid would be simply to play. North jumped to 4♥ and got the lead of the spade queen. He made no mistake, winning the ace of spades, cashing the ace of hearts and then running four rounds of clubs.

As it happened, the methods played should have had no real outcome, as 4♥ should always have been made, but the first declarer was under more pressure as the hand with two small diamonds became declarer.

In this case, the overcall was 2♦. This left 2♥ and 2♠ available as natural, I-want-to-play-here bids. So the Niblensohl transfer had to be a stronger hand than that, hence at least invitational. So North at table two was fully justified in jumping to game.

However, where the overcall is 2♠, the inference about strength is not quite there. You may have a hand where you have a long suit that you want to play in, but you do not wish to be in game. Sure, you can make a transfer, but partner should generally assume

that the bid is competitive only. Of course, if you intended to bid game anyway, you can still do so after the transfer. In the Essex Pairs years ago the following distributional hand was dealt:

♠ KJ65	
♥ AQ5	
♦ KQ65	
♣ 108	
♠ 32	♠ AQ10874
♥ 432	♥ 7
♦ 103	♦ 8
♣ AJ6532	♣ KQ974
♠ 9	
♥ KJ10986	
♦ AJ9742	
♣ –	

As can be imagined, the scores on the traveller made interesting reading, with large scores recorded in both directions. One lucky East-West pair were doubled in 5♣, but mostly North-South stopped in 4♥. My partner and I were lucky – North opened 1NT and East bid 2♠. South bid 3♦ (Niblensohl transfer for hearts), and North duly bid 3♥. East now bid 4♣, and South could safely bid 4♦. West raised to 5♣, North bid 5♦, and South went on to 6♦, doubled by West. There was no defeating that contract.

Puzzle Corner

A simple mathematical poser this time.

One each of a bridge table, a table cloth, a bidding box, and a pen cost £67 in total.

Two tables plus two cloths cost £120.

Two tables plus one table cloth plus one pen cost £106.

Three bidding boxes plus one table cost £63.



How much does it cost to equip a bridge room with one table, one cloth, 4 bidding boxes and 4 pens?

The solution, if you get stuck, is on page 25.

Meet Victor Lesk

by Chris Duckworth

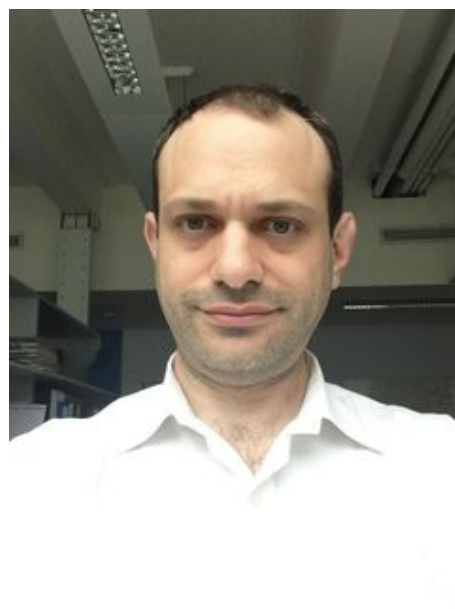
My guest interview this time is not with a top player, bridge professional or official. But he is someone who is quietly making a big impact on bridge in London and who commands a large and loyal band of followers at the lower end of the pyramid of bridge players.

Victor Lesk started to play bridge at school, in common with many others. Initially he just played socially, but then his maths master started up a bridge group and he played in a few inter-school matches and the like. He went to Trinity College, Cambridge, to study for a Physics degree and he did try playing at the Cambridge University Bridge Club. But Victor found the club daunting. At that time – in the early 90s - the players were serious and mathematically analytical about their game and he wasn't interested in the precise percentage odds for an abstruse squeeze play or similar. So Victor stopped playing for a while. After graduation he did his doctorate at Southampton University and played occasionally there, but then a spell of working in Japan meant another stoppage.

A while after his return Victor came to London and he ran across one of Ned Paul's supervised play sessions. He was soon playing bridge again on a regular basis. Whilst Victor's NGS rating is a very respectable Queen, his interest is focussed on the social side of the game and encouraging others to enjoy their bridge.

His technical expertise, however, is in writing apps, and he was persuaded by Ned to try writing an app for bridge scoring. And so BriAn – short for Bridge for Androids – was born. Anyone can download the app to their phone – including now an iPhone or iPad - and when playing in an event scored using BriAn, you can input your results, see how you are doing, find out who your next opponents will be, which boards you will be playing, and see the whole deal after playing it.

BriAn was first trialled in the Sunday afternoon social duplicates that were held at the Young Chelsea BC in 2012 and has been developed and tweaked ever since then. The app is now used instead of BridgeMates for scoring in 30 or so clubs and social bridge groups in and around London and it will currently do pretty much every type of movement except for Swiss events. Whilst it is limited to the extent that all scoring devices need to be somehow connected to the internet, BriAn has



many advantages over other scoring methods. The server is in the cloud so can be accessed anywhere – there is no need for localisation – and it can be used like BBO to spectate on other BriAn-scored events. Victor pointed out that this aspect of the system could have its drawbacks – if you tell your spouse you are off to play bridge, your spouse can check up on you and see whether you actually are – and with whom! *(If you would like to know more about BriAn, visit the website brianbridge.net).*

The flexibility in BriAn makes it especially useful for scoring Café Bridge events, which have become very popular in the last few years. BridgeMates are difficult to use in an event played in multiple locations, so without the app these had to be scored using old-fashioned travellers. Victor now scores for almost all Café Bridge events and has set up another on-line site to promote and advertise them – see <https://www.brianbridge.net/cafe/>. Café bridge is wide-spread in Belgium and the Netherlands and Victor takes groups to Antwerp each September to take part in the annual event there. These event are primarily enjoyed by social players, so this activity fits in well with Victor's main area of interest.

Victor also does some bridge tournament direction, and arranges meet-up sessions aimed at non-expert bridge people – see meetup.com for more details. Through the meet-up groups he encourages teams to play in various events – one of the most recent was in the



Swiss Teams at the London Congress – see the picture of the happy participants (*right*). You might think his time was already fully occupied with all this, but he does also have a non-bridge job – he works for Imperial College writing apps for medical applications.

I asked Victor about his aspirations for the future. He doesn't seek great heights as a player, but he would like to develop BriAn further. He has already translated it into Spanish. Polish, Dutch, German and French and he is hoping to continue to add languages. In the process, he has discovered that all sorts of strange words are used for bridge terms in different languages. As an example, he was in Strasbourg one time and looked up the local bridge club. He emailed enquiring about the details of the game, and the reply said "Nous n'avons pas de jokers." He took this to mean he should play a serious game, not be frivolous, but when he turned up he discovered that the club had no host – as he had been already been told! Having no partner, he didn't get his game.

Finally, I asked Victor for a memorable hand, and typically, he gave me one that he described as a comedy of errors.

He was North holding:

♠—
♥AQ
♦AKQ762
♣AKJ74

and the auction, as he saw it went:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
2♠ ¹	4NT ²	Pass	5♣ ³
Pass	6♣ ⁴	Pass	6NT ⁵
Pass	7NT ⁶		

Notes:

- 1 Weak
- 2 Two-suited
- 3 Club suit
- 4 OK we'll play in a small slam
- 5 I have spades covered
- 6 OK we'll play in a grand slam

From his partner's point of view, however, holding:

♠KQ
♥1064
♦J843
♣Q865

the auction was seen as:

- 1 Weak
- 2 Ace-asking
- 3 No aces
- 4 Oh dear, he thinks I've got a club suit, and I haven't...
- 5 so I'll try 6NT
- 6 I hope he knows what he's doing.

This was the full hand - the grand didn't make!

♠—
♥AQ
♦AKQ762
♣AKJ74

♠ A108763	♠ J9542
♥ KJ872	♥ 953
♦ 9	♦ 105
♣ 10	♣ 932

♠ KQ
♥ 1064
♦ J843
♣ Q865

Congratulations

to the following LMBA members who have done well in national and international events over the last few months.



Many congratulations to those London members who have recently represented England in various international events.

Heather Bakhshi and **Claire Robinson** (left) came second in the Lady Milne trials in January and went on to win the Lady Milne in April.



In the European Youth Championships, **Toby Nonnenmacher** was a member of the England Under-26 team which came 6th.

Sam Behrens and **Liam Sanderson** won Bronze medals in the Under-21 team (*right*).

Oscar Selby and **Alex Pemberton**, along with captain and coach **Mike Bell** and **Sarah Bell**, came 4th in the Under-16s.

All the teams qualified for the World Championships next year.



At the ACBL Summer Nationals in Toronto, the Mixed Board-A-Match teams was won by **Alex Hydes**, **Marusa Basa** and **Sarah Bell**, in a team captained by Tom Paske.

In the prestigious Spingold KO Teams also in Toronto, **David Gold** and **Mike Bell** were members of one of the two losing semi-finalists teams.



At the PAB teams in January **Robert Sheehan** was third in the main event, whilst the consolation final was won by **Andrew Black's** team, with **Gunnar Hallberg** and **Phil King**. In equal second place were two teams, one with **David Gold** and one with **Mike Bell** and **Sarah O'Connor (Bell)**.

At the Harrogate Spring Congress **Heather Bakhshi** and **Claire Robinson** were second in the Open Pairs, and **Mike Bell**, **Sarah O'Connor (Bell)** and **Kiril Delev** were third in the Swiss Teams.



At the Jersey Congress **Mike Bull** (*holding the trophy, right*) won the Swiss Teams. He was also second in the Multiple Teams B final and in the Seniors Teams.





At the EBU Overseas congress in Lisbon in February, **David Wing** (*on right of picture, next to Anne*) won the Swiss Teams with **David Schiff** and **Anne Catchpole** – his third consecutive overseas teams event win!

David was also second with **David Schiff** (*second left in picture*) in the Pre-Congress Pairs and third in the Men's Pairs.

Also in Lisbon, **Nick Dean** (*on right in picture*) won the Men's Pairs, was second in the Swiss Pairs and third in the Pivot Teams.



At the Young Bridge Challenge weekend in March, the Schools Cup was won by the team from Westminster School including **Oscar Selby**, **Liam Sanderson** and **Theo Gillis**. **Nick Heymann** representing St Paul's School was in the runners-up team.



The Harry Scully Trophy for teams with players from different schools was won by **Alex Pemberton**, while **Jasmine Bakhshi** was in the second-placed team and **Quentin Gueroult** in third.



At the Ranked Masters Pairs, **Richard Creamer** won the Life Masters. **Shahzaad Natt** (*left in picture*) won the National Masters and **Lars McBride** won the Masters. **Mary Gordon-Smith** and **Szczepan Smoczynski** were third in the Regional Masters.



The National Swiss Teams was won by **Toby Nonnenmacher** and **Kieran Dyke**, with **Ben Green** third

Ben Green won the National Pairs Regional Final.



At the Easter Festival, **David Bakhshi** won the Championship Pairs (*left*).

The Swiss Teams was won by the all-London team of **Shahzaad Natt**, **Kiril Delev**, **Stefano Tommasini** and **Szczepan Smoczyński** (*below*), with **Janet de Botton**, **Thor Erik Hoftaniska** and **Tom Townsend**



in third place.

The Swiss Pairs A flight was won by **Ben Green**, with **Brian Callaghan** and **Chris Duckworth** third.

Oscar Selby came second in the Under-21 Pairs.



At the Spring Foursomes, the winners were **Andrew Robson**, **David Bakhshi**, **David Gold** and **Mike Bell** in the Allfrey team (*left*).

The losing semi-finalists included **Andrew Black**, **Gunnar Hallberg** and **Phil King**.

Quarter-finalists included **Janet de Botton**, **Thor Erik Hoftaniska**, **Tom Townsend** and **Nick Sandqvist**, along with **Marion Robertson** and **Kieran Dyke**.

John Matheson won the Punchbowl while **Brian Callaghan** and **Heather Dhondy** were runners-up.

In the Hamilton Cup the team of **Mary Gordon-Smith**, **Szczepan Smoczyński** and **Stefano Tommasini** were equal second.



At the Riviera Congress, **Shahzaad Natt** and **Stefano Tommasini** (*right*) won the Swiss Pairs., **Shahzaad** was also third in the Swiss Teams along with **Niall Igoe**.

At the Spring Bank Holiday Congress, the Championship Pairs was won by **David Gold**, while **Shahzaad Natt** and **Stefano Tommasini** were third.



Richard Bowley was third in the Pairs B final. In the Swiss Teams, **Heather Bakhshi**, **Claire Robinson** and **David Bakhshi** were second.

♣♦♥♠

At the Scarborough Summer Congress, the Pre-Congress Pairs was won by **Rowena Clow** and **Claire Robinson** (right). **Claire** was also second in the Main final of the Teams while **Rowena Clow**, **Hannah Cornfield** and **Kath Stynes** were third in the Open Teams.



Grimm's Tales

by Barry Grimm

In which, for reasons of tact and propriety, we use the third person for the first, and the last time, as we are privileged to witness...

The Battle of the Titans

A “friendly” bridge match between some old friends and acquaintances.

- Shirley Harlow: Hard-working proprietor of the Brentford Bridge Club
- Barry Grimm: Her life partner. A layabout, who occasionally proffers his expert advice at the Brentford Bridge Club, whether anyone asks for it or not. Still smarting from being let go by Dalton's Weekly and the Farmer's Gazette, when both periodicals decided that a Bridge Correspondent was surplus to requirements, especially if it was him.
- Phylis-Doris Madoc: A Welsh lady of a certain age. Full of figure, and bursting with vigour. Having flirted with Barry Grimm for some years, she has now turned her attentions to...
- Christopher Plummer. Not the actor, a butcher. What he lacks in looks, charm, personal hygiene and ability at the bridge table is easily compensated for by his unlikely, but extreme, wealth.
- Veronica Thicke. More properly, Lady Thicke, quondam doyenne of London Bridge Society. She has now retired to the country with her husband, Sir Mr. Thicke, but is occasionally tempted back to the capital for a game with...
- Titus ap Llewelyn, a feckless Welshman and reliable drinker, rumoured to be an old flame of Phylis-Doris.
- Mr. Pinner and Mrs. Pinner (not their real names). A blameless couple from Pinner (not their real home town) whose sole purpose here, as on a previous occasion, is to make up the numbers. But they mean well.

The Brentford Bridge Club isn't usually open on a Saturday afternoon, but we can see lights on in the playing area. If we look through the window we can see Barry Grimm wrestling with a dealing machine. Shadows in the kitchen doorway suggest someone is in there. Someone is. Shirley Harlow comes out, a large knife in her hand, and our story begins.

"Come on, Barry," said Shirley Harlow, "it can't take you that long to deal twenty-four boards." Barry scowled.

"It's this machine. I'd have been better off dealing by hand. What time are they coming, anyway, oh my Jewel of the Nile?"

"They're all supposed to be here by two. I don't know why you're moaning, it was your idea."

"Hardly," said Barry. "I just said that it would be nice if we invited the Pinnars over after the cruise. They seemed nice enough. I didn't expect it to turn into a fully-blown extravaganza."

Shirley frowned. "It's hardly that. Phyllis-Doris and Christopher said they'd like to join us and since Veronica was in town we thought we'd have a friendly match. Twenty four boards won't kill you. We'll be in the pub by six and we're not booked into the Brentford Tandoori until eight, so you and Titus can cry into your beer for a couple of hours before we have to sit down to eat." She turned, and returned to her labours in the kitchen. Barry picked up a deck of cards, patted them into shape and then gingerly moved them towards the dealing machine. Alas, a fraction too much pressure from his chubby fingers, and they flew all over the place. He cast his eyes up to the sky, and then bent over to start picking them up, muttering about his sciatica. He doesn't actually suffer from sciatica, but he likes to think he does.

...Phyllis-Doris Madoc looked admiringly at herself in the mirror. She never thought she'd get into those leopardskin trousers again, but hanging around Christopher Plummer had quite put her off eating meat of any kind, and the pounds had dropped off. That leopardskin trousers might have been a little outlandish for a two o'clock start didn't occur to Phyllis-Doris. She grabbed her handbag and went downstairs. Christopher was due to pick her up at twenty to, and whatever his faults (and they were legion) he was punctual.

...Veronica's chauffeur was getting bored with banging on Titus' door. He didn't like that little Welsh twerp anyway. It was bad enough putting up with him in the country (where he had a cottage on the borders of the Thicke estate) but having to ferry him around in town was the giddy limit. The chauffeur turned around to face Veronica, and shrugged. At that very moment, the door opened and Titus stumbled out. Never a picture of sophistication, he had at least managed to dress himself reasonably smartly, although the paisley shirt had seen better days.

But haven't we all?

Veronica smiled indulgently. The chauffeur opened a door for Titus, who got in. The chauffeur might have been muttering something like "Get in you Welsh berk", but it could have just been the wind.

...The Pinnars had strict rules about drink-driving, so they travelled to Brentford on public transport, planning to get an Uber home. Travelling to Brentford from Pinner by public transport is not as easy as it sounds. As the crow flies, it's no distance. But crows play no part in determining London's transport infrastructure, more's the pity. The Pinnars left Pinner at eleven in the morning, which was cutting it a bit

fine, but they made it to Brentford High Street at a quarter to two, plenty of time to take in the sights before strolling along to the bridge club, arriving at ten to.

When everybody had settled down and given tea, coffee or, in the case of Titus and Barry, something more predictable (Barry may not have been able to work the dealing machine, but he knew how to turn the lager on) the line-ups were arranged. Barry and Shirley teamed up with the Pinner, and Veronica and Titus with Phyllis-Doris and Christopher.

At Shirley's table nothing much happened for a few boards (other than a bit of muttering from Barry about Christopher's personal hygiene and Phyllis-Doris's leopardskin trousers, which seemed in some danger of coming under just a little too much pressure at the seams).

<p> ♠ KQJ93 ♥ QJ983 ♦ Q3 ♣ 10 </p>			
<p> ♠ 8764 ♥ 7 ♦ AK104 ♣ KJ54 </p>		<p> ♠ 1052 ♥ 10542 ♦ 9752 ♣ 93 </p>	
<p> ♠ A ♥ AK6 ♦ J86 ♣ AQ8762 </p>			
West	North	East	South
(Shirley)	(Phyllis-Doris)	(Barry)	(Plummer)
			1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

Christopher Plummer dealt, with both sides vulnerable. He opened One Club. This silenced Shirley (who probably wouldn't have bid anyway) and Phyllis-Doris responded One Spade. Barry glanced at his nought-count, took a gulp of his pint and passed. Christopher Plummer, being Christopher Plummer, had no idea

what to do next. He was far too strong for Two Clubs but the suit didn't seem good enough to bid Three Clubs. Far from happy, he bid Two No-Trumps as the least bad option. When Phyllis-Doris bid Three Hearts he didn't know what to do again, so he bid Three No-Trumps. Phyllis-Doris was far from happy about this, feeling she hadn't quite got her hand across, but to bid again would be a bit presumptuous, so she passed.

Unfortunately, although Shirley had been listening to the auction, she hadn't really heard it, otherwise she might have done something different. As it was, she led out the fourth highest of her longest and strongest suit, the Four of Diamonds. As the hand progressed, the awful truth began to dawn. After carefully unblocking the Ace of Spades (it took him about five minutes to work that out) Christopher ran five rounds of Hearts and then the remaining four Spades in dummy. Shirley was struggling for discards. The Diamond Queen was a menace against her Ace (she'd already jettisoned her King: even Christopher would notice if she threw away both) so she had to bare her King of Clubs, hoping against hope that Christopher had overbid, and that Barry held the Queen. Christopher called for Dummy's Club at trick twelve. Barry played low and Christopher agonised. "Well," he said, "I've already got two over-tricks in the bag. Mustn't be

greedy!" He fished out the Ace, and the King fell under it. To his surprise, he'd notched up all thirteen tricks.

"I know, I know," said Shirley, "I should have cashed out. You can't have anything on that auction."

Barry shook his head. "It's actually worse than that, oh Cream in my Coffee:. When he won the first trick in his hand with the Jack it was actually a Vienna Coup. Usually you play an Ace to free up a Queen as a menace. This time it was a Jack!" Everybody looked at Barry suspiciously. This was a bit erudite for him, but they all looked at the cards again, and it turned out he was right. "Well," thought Shirley, Phyllis-Doris and Christopher simultaneously, "even stopped clocks..."

In the other room, the Pinner's were North/South, and by their standards had a very pushy auction, especially as they were vulnerable. Titus, sitting East, dealt.

<p> ♠ 85 ♥ 1062 ♦ AQ9842 ♣ 86 </p>			
♠ A10962 ♥ 953 ♦ 103 ♣ 432		♠ KQJ743 ♥ KQJ7 ♦ 5 ♣ AJ	
<p> ♠ – ♥ A84 ♦ KJ76 ♣ KQ10975 </p>			
West	North	East	South
(Veronica)	(Mr Pinner)	(Titus)	(Mrs Pinner)
		1♠	2♣
3♠	Pass	4♠	4NT
Pass	5♦	Double	All Pass

Over Mrs. Pinner's Two Club overcall, Veronica raised Titus' One Spade opening to Three. Mr. Pinner passed happily, and Titus, despite knowing that Veronica had little by way of high cards, awarded himself a Fourth Spade, based, one imagines, on his notion that his card play was superior, and the defence of the Pinner's markedly inferior.

As it happens, Titus would indeed have made Four Spades, but the Pinner's had a partnership agreement. They didn't have many, but those they did, they remembered. Trembling slightly, Mrs. Pinner placed the Four No-Trump bidding card on the table. This showed the minors but with better Clubs than Diamonds. Would Mr. Pinner remember? Mr. Pinner did. Titus doubled, suddenly less keen on his hand. He eventually lead the King of Hearts/ Now even Mr. Pinner wasn't going to lose more than two Heart tricks and the Ace of Clubs. "Sorry," he said to his wife. "I don't think I can make it. Minus 200 – I bet they make it in the other room."

"Not at all," said Veronica, it can't be done. You did well to bid it, we make Four Spades. Not often you see a vulnerable sacrifice against a non-vulnerable game. You both did well."

"Oh," said Mrs. Pinner. "Were we vulnerable?"

Titus opened his mouth. Veronica glared at him. Titus shut his mouth again.

Of the second half of the match there is little to tell. Despite their bonding over cheap lager, there remained at the bridge table a grudge between Barry and Titus that had been festering for some decades. The remaining

boards, alas, provided no material for one to score a cheap jibe off the other, and the presence of both Veronica and Shirley, whilst not being able to guarantee good manners, ensured that things didn't get too abusive.

So, having lured you, dear reader, in, with a promise of a Battle of the Titans, nothing of the kind occurred.

The match ended in a draw, much to the relief of the Pinners. Everybody adjourned to the Greyhound and Tipster on the High Street. Two tables were pushed together, and Shirley went to the bar to get the drinks, Barry's sciatica suddenly rendering him unable to stand again after the marathon two hundred yard walk from the Bridge Club.

When everyone was seated Veronica proposed a toast to Shirley for hosting the afternoon's proceedings, belatedly thanking Barry for his support. Barry in turn thanked Veronica, and mentioned that the hand that Christopher Plummer had played so well would feature in his newly-revived Bridge Column in Dalton's Weekly, the publishers having finally come to their senses (or not, according to point of view). "I will, of course," said Barry, "have to make myself the hero of the piece. After all, it is my column and in a way it's a bit of self-advertising."

"Be my guest," said Christopher Plummer, who, notoriously, couldn't hold his drink, and after a few sips of craft ale was already beaming with uncharacteristic mellowness. "After all", he said, "the only other way you're going to get your name in the paper is if Shirley advertises your body for sale for medical research." There was silence. Barry looked at Christopher. Christopher looked back at him, and winked. Then something happened. At first everyone thought it was some sort of seizure: Barry's shoulders started shaking, and then his head started moving up and down. Then then did something he hadn't done all day. He threw his head back and laughed. And Christopher laughed, and so did the rest of the company. The laughter was infectious and soon everyone in the pub was laughing. The sound of laughter drifted on the air, out through the window, up into the night sky and beyond to the stars, where it bounced around gaily forever and ever, because that's what laughter does.

And so we leave Brentford for the last time, saying goodbye to our old friends in the process, secure in the knowledge that they are safe, and happy. Who knows what the future holds in store for them, but I think we know that it's unlikely that any of them will ever, ever change...

After fifteen years, in one form or another, that's all from your correspondent. It only remains for me to wish all the readers of MetroNews their very good health. If you have enjoyed the last fifteen years half as much as I have, then I've enjoyed them twice as much as you.

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