

A Happy New Year to all our readers.

It was cheering to have two letters sent and hopefully this will encourage other members to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard). Your thoughts will be welcome I assure you.

Somebody has been busy out there in the club world and Ciara tells me that we have nine new clubs joining us, these being: Devenish (Irvinstown), Dromore, Iveagh (Newry), Kilrea, Limavady, Portstewart, Shorts, Swatragh and Teconnaught. A warm welcome to you all.

After a long investigation into the question of insurance we have come up with proposals for club and officer cover and you can read the details on the website. Please contact Ciara Burns or Michael McFaul for more information.

We now have an editorial sub-committee comprising Michael McFaul, Liz Scott, Pat Johnston and me, so please feel free to contact any of us with comments or suggestions. We are particularly interested to know what you think we should include. Alan Hill has agreed to operate an “Ask Alan” column which will deal with any questions you may have on the Laws, or play or any other bridge related matter. Anonymous queries will no doubt be fine, as long as you are not being rude about anyone!

The NIBU Constitution sub-committee is expecting to complete a draft revision for submission to clubs shortly. There has been a lot of thought given to this so comments from clubs would be welcome.

We have all been shocked by the untimely death of Anne Shannon and the many tributes paid by all who knew her are a testament to her popularity and to the affection all held for her. A full obituary is shown on the NIBU Website.

Yet again, a hearty thank you to all our contributors.

Ken Ginn has produced an interesting discussion on the Theory of Restricted Choice, which I must admit I have followed without really knowing why! Now I do, so no excuses.

Anna and Derick Rooney and I have commented favourably on the mini teach-in which is just one example of the drive by the Council to do something for club members.

Colin Jeffries describes the delights of being part of the Sonya Britton team – thoughts which I can confirm from many years ago!

Brian McDowell tells us about International Matches that we will be hosting in 2014 at La Mon. Please try to attend at least one as support is most welcome.

Rosemary Kilpatrick updates us on the progress of introducing mini-bridge into schools. A very encouraging project.

Pat Johnston refers to the Novice League being run at Derryvolgie – a most interesting development. Why didn't we think of that before? Maybe we did.

Liam McCloskey introduces the new EBU White and Blue books which I am sure most of us were unaware of!

Alan Hill explains where to play bridge if you happen to be passing through Boise in Idaho.

Greer Mackenzie in his own inimitable style describes the play of a hand in the Donegal Congress Teams.

Robin Burns makes his first contribution with an interesting Tale of Two Slams – hopefully not his last.

Ciara Burns details the current excellent position of our team at the Camrose.

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Theory of Restricted Choice - A better explanation?

By Ken Ginn

You sit South and hold

Kxxx opposite Dummy's A10xxx so you are missing QJxx. You play the K to see what happens.

West plays small and East plays the Queen **or** the Jack.

Did East hold a singleton or was he dealt doubleton Queen/Jack? In the latter case he may play either as they are of equal value to him. What is your best continuation?

Throughout Bridge literature the recommended approach for declarer is to apply the rather weirdly named "Theory of Restricted Choice" first coined, I believe, by Alan Truscott in the early 1950's and developed and widely publicised by Terence Reese in his book "The Expert Game" published in 1958.

In a similar example to the above Reese stated "*Since East could have played either card indifferently... the fact that he has played one affords an indication that he does not hold the other*" and "*It comes to this: that a defender should be assumed not to have had a choice rather than to have exercised a choice in a particular way.*"

Larry Cohen words his explanation thus -

"When East (in the example above) plays the Queen, you should assume he played it because he had to play it. (That is where the term "restricted" comes into this discussion.) If he had been dealt Queen/Jack doubleton, he might have played the Jack. When the Queen plops onto the table, it is more likely that it appeared because East's choice was restricted. He had no other card he could have played. If he had been dealt Queen/Jack doubleton, he would have the freedom to play the queen 50% of the time and the jack 50% of the time."

Zia Mahmood concurs-

"If East was dealt QJ doubleton, he will play the Jack half the time and the Queen half the

time. If he was dealt the singleton Jack (or Queen), he has no choice - he must play it. So the actual scenario - say he plays the Jack (or Queen) - will occur twice as often when he has the singleton Jack (or Queen) as when he has QJ doubleton".

Hands up all readers who are now crystal clear and truly convinced, especially those who are new to the concept. No doubts? No fog swirling round?

Every time I read about the "restricted choice" concept I thought it a bit woolly, or it was being poorly explained. What do you think? Is it absolutely clear to you?

Surely we need a better explanation? I have tried to come up with a different explanation/proof which I think explains the concept in a much clearer way, and one which will instantly convince all readers. (Well maybe 99%). Here goes-

Let us rename the Queen and Jack simply as H and H for honour cards of equal value. As they are held by opponents and are of touching rank, as far as we are concerned they are of equal value.

So when East in the above example plays an H (Queen or Jack) what was he originally dealt? There are 3 possibilities-

- i) He was dealt H singleton (Queen or Jack),
- ii) He was dealt H singleton (but the other equal honour)
- iii) He was dealt HH doubleton.

So we have 3 possibilities and if we look up the probability tables we find that the first 2 are from a specific 3/1 break and the third from a specific 2/2 break. The percentages are-

- i) 6.22%
- ii) 6.22%
- iii) 6.78%

The combination of either of the specific 3/1 breaks is therefore 12.44% against the 6.87% for the specific 2/2 break, so we can safely conclude that in the above scenario when an honour (ignoring whether it is Queen or Jack) appears it will be singleton virtually twice as often as from QJ doubleton. Thus we continue with a small card in the hand above and if West plays low we insert the ten, winning almost twice as often as those who now play the Ace, or 65% versus 35%

What if we are missing 5 cards? Do the odds change? Say

Kxxx opposite Dummy's A10xx

Again we cash the King and again the Queen or Jack appears from the East hand.

Are the odds the same?

Not quite. Again we know East was dealt either

- i) H singleton
- ii) H singleton (the other honour), or
- iii) HH doubleton

with the first two coming from a specific 4/1 break and the third from a specific 3/2 break.

This time the book percentages are-

- i) 2.83%
- ii) 2.83%
- iii) 3.39%

and we can conclude that playing East's H as a singleton is a 62½% chance compared to a 37½% chance of it being HH doubleton. Still the best guess though not quite as good as when only 4 cards were missing.

With 6 cards missing the % changes to 60% (singleton) versus 40% (doubleton)

With 7 cards " " 57% (singleton) versus 43% (doubleton)

With 8 cards " " 54% (singleton) versus 46% (doubleton)

So we see that as the number of cards missing increases, the percentages slowly move towards, but never reach 50/50. This is a point overlooked I believe by the bland "restricted choice" parrot cry.

I hope this different explanation sets things out in a much more convincing way.

Of course all these statistics alter if we have any clues about distribution. A 3 level preempt for example will cause us strongly to favour the pre-emptor's partner for any missing honour(s) in any of the other suits as 7 of the pre-emptor's "spaces" are typically taken with only 6 open, whereas his partner has 13 spaces open and is therefore about twice as likely to hold a critical card in one of the other 3 suits.

The John and Ciara Show

By Derek Cannell

As part of a drive to give something back to clubs Ciara Burns and John Murchan ran a mini series of free lessons to Intermediate players. I attended the one held at Kelvin Malone in September where we had seven tables which I suspect is about right. Much more and it would have been difficult to give proper attention to the queries that were raised. After an introduction we were given 12 hands to bid and play from an event that Ciara had played in. During the bidding the warders would walk round and give helpful comments – such as suggesting that I must be on "speed" after some enthusiastic bidding! Afterwards we were given a copy of all the hands and a commentary written by Ciara based on her experience of playing them in the Bray Swiss Teams.

I thought it was nicely presented with a light-hearted approach but serious enough for participants to walk away having learned something. Well worth attending.

SYSTEMS & CONVENTIONS

Have you given your opinion on the allowed systems and conventions. Check out the NIBU Homepage on the website and follow the link. After you and/or your club have discussed it follow the other link to Alan Hill and tell him what you think about it.

Sonya Britton
By Colin Jeffries

"In your wildest dreams do you ever think you'll represent your country?"

Can you see yourself at Ravenhill or Windsor Park?

Could you sing the nation's entry in Eurovision.

I bet your answer's NO.

But there is a golden opportunity to do so via Bridge on the NIBU team for the annual North/South competition, fiercely fighting for the Sonya Britton trophy.

Last August I was lucky to be selected as one of four Inter Bs in the NIBU squad attempting to wrest the Cup from the CBAI. who had believed it could or would NEVER venture northwards, following 17 years continuous "home" down south.

Along with my fellow B partners Cal Jones, June Spiers & Barbara Ewart we played a pivotal part in the trophy's "rescue".

It was probably best that we were all unaware of the weekend's programme. What we believed to be a format of constant play against our respective CBAI B opponents turned out to be battles against not only against their Bs but their As & worst of all their "Officials", a team which included 2 internationals Paul Porteous & Tomas Maccormik (current CBAI chairman).

I have to admit that Lady Luck was on our side that weekend and after wins against their Bs & As and a narrow defeat (18-12) by the Officials. It began to look as if we "four" were beginning to hold the fort !

I say this as I've never seen so much keen interest, from some of our senior girls and boys in each of our scores, the words of encouragement, the pats on the back, all which were most gratefully received. However in the

darkest reaches of our minds the ugly thought pervaded "When will the crunch come"

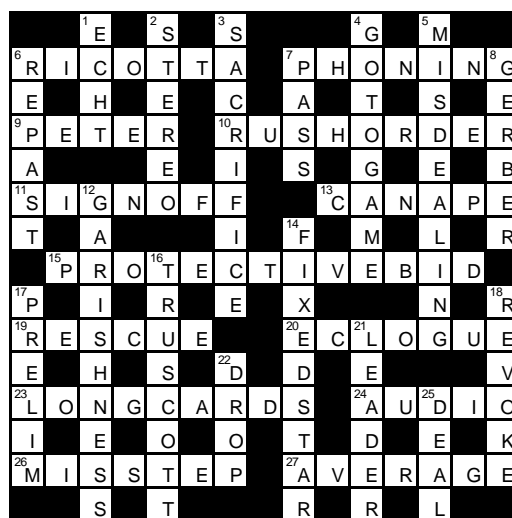
Luckily for us it didn't, and we went on to help lift the trophy, mentally exhausted but elated, that our Int Bs, ably assisted by our Int A's had 'carried the rest'.

To all those Ints out there "go for it", get yourself recognised, enter the NIBU leagues, competitions & congresses and who knows you may get yourself "capped" thus reaching the pinnacle of your career and have your wild dream become a reality.

On reflection it was a little daunting, but once the adrenaline kicks in and those little voices of support become louder, your mistakes become fewer you suddenly realise it's all over and you've contributed a little to the folklore of the NIBU.

Bring it on again next year

Crossword 17 Solution



Oh dear, only four correct solutions received, from *Charles Foster, Gerry Henry, Dymphna Friel* and *Robin Burns* and *Charles's* entry was drawn from the hat. Truscott seems to have caused a problem, 2NT being a Truscott bid with Trust (depend on) covering Cot (Cote, or shelter, with E missing). Difficult I know! Commiserations to those that got just one clue wrong and thanks for submitting an entry.

LETTERS

Dear Editor

I may be in a minority of one here, but anyway...

Would the NIBU consider sparing us the musical 'entertainment' on the Saturday nights of the mixed pairs at congress? For years I have seen the only time at congress which should be truly social spoiled by a depressingly predictable sludge of rock and roll and country (yes, seriously) standards played at a volume so loud as to rule out any normal conversation. I have tried often to converse in this environment, and invariably give up in despair.

I suggest three alternatives -

1. Provide the noise in a separate, sound proofed room. I have already named it The Cloth Ear
2. Find a real musician. By reputation, Derry is full of them
3. My preferred option. Wonderful, glorious silence.

We might actually get people talking to each other. That would be novel.

Michael McIlroy

Dear Editor

I would like to convey our thanks to John and Ciara for the excellent tuition session on Wednesday 18th Sept. There were just 7 tables but that appeared to be the perfect number of people to give the tutors time to deal with the many queries that arose I know the general feeling of those who attended was that it was a very worthwhile exercise and a much appreciated effort by NIBU to encourage bridge players at this level. However what we experienced was just the tip of the iceberg but I'm sure it will have motivated many players to try and improve their skills. Once again many thanks to Ciara and John for their efforts and hopefully NIBU will be encouraged to continue to provide this very worthwhile support.

Anna & Derick Rooney

International Matches 2014

By Brian McDowell

NIBU will be hosting two weekends of International Matches in 2014:-

Junior Camrose & Peggy Bayer Trophies
22nd-23rd February

Teltscher Trophy (Senior Camrose) 16th – 18th
May

Both of these weekends will take place at the La Mon Hotel and Country Club which proved to be an excellent venue when we hosted a Camrose Weekend there in January.

Junior Camrose/Peggy Bayer

The Junior Camrose is contested between England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland with the participants being under the age of 25. Unfortunately this year Wales are unable to participate so the competition is a four-way one. Similarly the Peggy Bayer Trophy will be a four-way contest for players under the age of 20.

This is an opportunity to see the international stars of the future – past events have featured players such as Tony Forrester, Andrew Robson and Michael Rosenberg. Come along and support our young players, there will be the opportunity to view live in the spacious Open Room or to watch a match on Vugraph with expert commentary.

Teltscher Trophy (Senior Camrose)

This is the first year in which the Senior Camrose will be played under its new name of the Teltscher Trophy and is also the first time when it will be hosted outside the mainland. This is possible because of generous sponsorship from two of our senior players. The event is for players over 60 and is contested between teams from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland with a sixth invitational team normally designated as 'GB'.

The event attracts many current and past world-class participants and is an ideal opportunity for spectators to see some great bridge played in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

Details of the matches can be found on our International Match Management website; bridgewebs.com/nibuimm which will include details of the programme and of the participants and their systems when these become available.

Schools' Mini-bridge

By Rosemary Kilpatrick

Increasingly bridge is being promoted in schools in Northern Ireland and NIBU currently has several groups of schools' bridge at post primary level which continue to thrive. To complement this Kelvin Malone Bridge Centre (KMBC) aims to introduce a version of mini-bridge into primary schools in January 2014.

Where the seeds for this idea came from is a bit hazy but following on from some initial discussions the KMBC Committee decided to form a Schools Sub-group in October/November 2012. Since that time this small group of five, ably helped by other members of the Committee and the Club, has drawn on its contacts in the South of Ireland, Scotland and England as well as trawling through a wide range of websites and have gleaned much information on the subject. For example, in all three countries it seems that bridge can be taught in primary school during the school day as part of the curriculum. Additionally, the EBU has funded research to explore the potential benefits of teaching a version of mini-bridge to children in primary school and this has indicated that as well as having a positive impact on numeracy skills mini-bridge also can help develop a range of other skills including understanding, empathy and self-fulfilment.

After several months of preparatory work, and a general understanding that offering mini-bridge as part of the school curriculum was not an option in Northern Ireland, we agreed that we would offer it as an After School activity for P6 and P7 children. Our next step then was to identify schools that might be willing to take

part and after much discussion it was agreed that we should start with just two schools in East Belfast, thus serving the community in which KMBC is based. The Principals of the schools initially identified were both interested and keen on the idea and we are now at the exciting stage of letters being sent out asking parents if they would like their children to take part in this After School activity for eight-ten weeks starting in January 2014. We now have to wait anxiously to see how many positive replies we get – we can only take a maximum of 20 in each group – you never know we might have a waiting list!

In the meantime we have to be sure that we, as a team of 'mini-bridge teachers,' are able to deliver a package that entices and encourages young people to engage in the game of bridge so that they are enthusiastic to continue playing in their post primary education.

Novice League is Back

By Pat Johnston

During the summer Clare Watson, Nuala Mooney & I decided to run an evening of Team Bridge in Derryvolgie Bridge Club to give Novices & Inter B's a chance to experience team playing. It was so successful we had a second evening at which we had 13 teams!!

As a result it was decided to run a Novice League this year. The League is being run on Monday nights in Derryvolgie Bridge Club. We have 8 teams from 4 different clubs. After some initial nerves all seem to have settled down and are enjoying the experience. Hopefully by the end of the Bridge Year they will understand the concept of Team Bridge and they will be encouraged to eventually move on to join the Inter B League.

We wish them all well and hope they enjoy the experience.

The Colourful Laws

By *Liam McCloskey*

[‘White Book 2013 – technical matters’ and ‘Blue Book - Permitted Understandings’ have just been published by the EBU. At the sit-out table West conveys the exciting news to his partner.]

East: “*the EBU?*”

West: “that’s the English Bridge Union; I thought you knew that.”

East: “*OK, OK, so what’s exciting with these White and Blue books. ?*”

West: “Well, they’re updated versions of the Tangerine book and the Orange book. “

East: “*Hold on; excitement ! just cos they’ve changed colour? Orange and Tangerine are nicer colours ”*

West: “Now you’re being silly. These books are important updated adjuncts to WBF’s publication, ‘The Laws of Duplicate Bridge’

East: “ *What do you mean ‘adjuncts’ ? Are they bound together ? ”*

West: Well yes, in a way. The White & Blue books detail lots of procedural and admin matters that The Laws devolve to local Regulating Authorities like the NIBU.

East: *What sort of stuff goes in the White and Blue ?”*

West: - You wanna know more ? “

East: “*Yes, go on; we’ve still got five minutes , ‘may as well hear you out.’ ”*

West: ‘White Book advises on interpretation of many of the laws and even on things like the proper use of bidding boxes and Bridgemates that aren’t mentioned in The Laws. ‘Blue Book’ is important in the world of competitions. Oops ! I nearly said ‘in the more competitive environment’ “

East: “*Not something I’d get excited about; but maybe I could borrow your copy for a day or two?*”

West: “Sorry partner, you’ll have to go Googling. They’re not making printed copies any more. “

East: “*Ah well; I’ll finish reading my new Bridge book first*”

West: “What’s that then ?”

East: “*It’s called ‘How to win at Bridge’; funny, it doesn’t mention the Bridge laws ”*

BOISE

By *Alan Hill*

After several years of visits to Boise Idaho we discovered the Boise Bridge Club was within walking distance. We were able to email the club and found out that visitors were welcome. There were 3 afternoon sessions a week which suited us well so we gave it a try. The club has spacious premises with free snacks but no bar. We paid \$8 each (5 pounds at the going interbank rate.) The standard was much the same as a local club at home with everyone playing strong NT, 5 card majors and weak 2s in diamonds and the majors (SAYC). The club had a manager/TD Bruce Thornburgh who made up partnerships as required and both he and the players made us very welcome. The tables were good-sized so boards remained in the centre throughout. Automatic quarter board penalty for mobile phone ringing. We were expected to fill in a convention card though not everyone had one visible. The club used Bridgemates but not predealt boards (we got them on our third visit). The results are posted on the ACBL website with the boards presumably typed in by Bruce so we could view our mistakes at leisure. We asked about playing multi 2 diamonds and were told by Bruce that he liked to see the players exposed to different systems except when he had inexperienced pairs which he had on the first day we played. We played against a 98 year old (although not a Hon. member of the ACBL). Our experience suggests that when away from home look for the local Bridge Club and enjoy a good game. Did we win? Look up the website if you are that interested.

(ACBL American Contract Bridge League, SAYC Standard American Yellow Card.)

Pressure in Donegal *By Greer Mackenzie*

Micky O’Kane has surely won more main events at the Donegal Congress than any other, and this year managed it again in the Congress Teams. Since Ciara Burns and Mary Finn had already won the Congress Pairs it was well done South Down.

Playing a squeeze is a sort of badge of honour among senior bridge players and it is an important, and interesting part of basic pressure play. Running your long suit can force discards and even the strongest defenders have difficulty finding the exact best combination of cards to keep. So when you have a long suit to cash and a finesse to take, it’s a good tip to cash first and try to read the opponents discards. You’ll be surprised how often it helps. Of course sometimes the defence are powerless to protect all suits. A beautiful example occurred during the Congress Teams when Moyna and I played with Ciara and Mary Finn, serious bridge and even more serious good humour. Playing against one of the stronger teams Moyna and I defended the normal 4S contract on the hand below. After the lead of ♥T, small, small Q the defence always seemed to be on top and we eventually scored up +50 when declarer lost 2 trump tricks, a club and a heart. I had it mentally chalked up as a flat board and after we scored up +10 imps I realised something of interest must have happened at the other table. So I enquired to be told with great glee by Ciara, “Mary played a squeeze”, “more please” I replied and was told the story below:

Dealer S, love all ♠ T93

♥ J43
♦ KT84
♣ KJ8

♠ KJ86
♥ T5
♦ J7
♣ A9542

♠ void
♥ K9872
♦ Q532
♣ QT76

♠ AQ7542
♥ AQ6
♦ A96
♣ 3

South dealt and opened 1S, partner Ciara had a simple raise to 2S, constructive in their methods and Mary promptly bid 4S. West, with such high hopes in the trump suit, kicked off with the ♣A and when partner encouraged with the 7, continued the C. With all suits vulnerable Mary decided to take this with the ♣K and pitch the small H.

A good point here is that defenders are loathe to lead Aces and most unlikely to lead away from AQ when the stronger hand is on their right, so Mary correctly gauged that the C entry was not to be wasted on a fairly hopeless finesse.

Now the ♠T and when East showed out it was clear that there were 2 spade losers to add to the C so avoiding any loser in the red suits was essential. When West appeared to hold long C and 4 spades, there was a very strong possibility that East had the Diamonds controlled and Mary spotted the neat solution. To make the contract East had to have the HK so if he also controlled the D suit.... With careful planning, including the H finesse, ruffing the C defences and cashing the ♥A, Mary engineered this 4 card ending

	♥ J
	♦ KT8
♠ -	♠ -
♥ -	♥ K
♦ J7	♦ Q53
♣ xx	♣ -
	♠ 7
	♥ -
	♦ A96
	♣ -

Now the ♠7 and a D thrown from the dummy left East in the classic squeeze dilemma. Throw the HK and let dummy’s J win or throw the D guard and let declarer’s third D score. Great card reading and entry management by a great player. And the answer to your next question? We were second!! Playing in Ciara’s team is strongly recommended whether you are hunting master points or prizes ☺

NIBU News by Michael McFaul

Autumn Congress

The new season kicked off on September 15th with the NIBU Autumn Congress at its now regular venue, the City Hotel in Derry. As usual the whole event was efficiently organised by Anne Hassan. The Congress Pairs attracted 57 entries and was won by NIBU Chairperson Ciara Burns in partnership with Liz McGowan from Scotland – the latter also going on to win the Mixed Pairs partnering David Ligatt. The Congress Teams (31 entries) saw a popular win with Bill Scott, Ken Ginn, Maureen Murray and Ronnie Morrow finishing well ahead of the ‘usual suspects’.

The Congress began with a trio of presentations, firstly to former Secretary Liz Scott and former Treasurer Norma Irwin who were each presented with an antique necklace to thank them for their sterling service to the NIBU over many years.

A third presentation took a somewhat surreal turn when President Ian Hamilton suddenly became aware that he was unsure what he was presenting or who he was presenting it to. Fortunately the matter was soon clarified and, despite players restlessly fingering their cards on the first hand, a silver tankard was duly presented to Rex Anderson. This was in recognition of his achieving 100 international caps. He was also furnished with a copy of his Camrose record, a somewhat ironic supplementary gift given that Northern Ireland has never actually won the Camrose Trophy. Rex therefore ranks alongside George Best as the province’s top player in his field who has never actually won a Home International trophy playing for his national side. After being handed the tankard and Camrose report, he made the shortest acceptance speech in recorded history while no doubt planning to reveal his innermost thoughts on the matter in print – perhaps “10 things the NIBU needs to do to win the Camrose Trophy”. A best seller in the making?

Structure

The NIBU governing structure was changed in 2012 with a new Constitution and Council elected by the membership delegating its work through a number of committees – Finance & Membership, Laws & Ethics, Tournament & Play and the Selection Committee. A review of how the new structure is working is due to be carried out in the next few months.

Strategic Plan

At its most recent meeting Council agreed to implement the recommendations of a strategic plan commissioned through its Finance Committee. The plan examined the state of bridge in Northern Ireland, finding that - in common with other countries - the dearth of young players coming to the game was a major problem. The intake of new players tended to come from older folk, often retired people who were content to play at home or at their local club but without the aspiration to compete in the higher echelons of the game. Of the estimated 10,000 bridge players in the province, just over 1500 were registered affiliated club members and of those only some 350 ever played in NIBU events.

On the positive side, it was noted that the success over the summer in winning the Sonya Britton Trophy (North/South match) was entirely down to the performances of the Inter A and B teams.

The plan set out a series of recommended actions, two key ones being to carry out:

- A) A marketing drive directed towards attracting as many unaffiliated clubs to the NIBU as possible. A key element of this would involve offering clubs umbrella liability insurance cover against civil claims under the NIBU’s own policy.
- B) A Feasibility study involving all clubs in the greater Belfast area in order to ascertain whether there was ample support for the creation of a Bridge Centre in the city.

Camrose Trials

Camrose trials were completed on October 20th, the final outcome being:

1st. Greer Mackenzie & Hastings Campbell

2nd. Rex Anderson & David Greenwood.

3rd. Ian Lindsay & Robin Burns.

These three pairs will represent the NIBU along with npc. Ciara Burns

Fixtures:

May 16th-18th 2014. The NIBU is hosting the Senior Camrose (Teltscher Trophy) at La Mon Hotel. The event is generously being sponsored by Ian Lindsay.

Finally an instructive point from the Autumn Congress teams. You arrive in 6 Hearts, partner having bid spades on the way. LHO leads the Ace of Spades which holds and switches to a club won perforce in dummy. You can see no other losers providing trumps can be brought in without loss. You hold A9xxx opposite KJ10 in dummy with entries in both hands.

When cards were dealt by hand, perceived wisdom used to dictate 'in 50-50 situations play for the Queen to lie over the Jack'. In this instance however, most players were rightly suspicious of the lead, reckoning that players who lead aces against slam do so because they are confident of making a second trick. Sadly cashing the ace of trumps first 'in case East held a stiff Queen' was not good enough. East held Qxxx making it necessary to come to hand 3 times in order to finesse twice, cash the King and finally return to hand to draw the last trump.

So perhaps the corollary of this is that when you are defending a small slam holding a likely trump trick, don't give the game away by cashing a side ace first?

It's just a conundrum like this that makes bridge such a fascinating game.

Camrose Trophy 2014.

By Ciara Burns

The first weekend of the Camrose Trophy was held in Llandrindod Wells, Wales between the 10th and 13th January. The venue was somewhat remote, requiring a 2 hour drive through deepest darkest Wales after our arrival in Cardiff. Thankfully, weather conditions were relatively benign and apart from a few wrong turns, our journey was fairly unremarkable.

The team selected for the 1st weekend was Rex Anderson, David Greenwood, Hastings Campbell, Greer MacKenzie, Robin Burns and Ian Lindsay. I was the non playing captain. We had a great weekend; winning 4 out of 5 matches and lying 3rd in the table overall. Our only defeat was a narrow one to England on Saturday evening.

Running scores –

Ireland – 58.61

Scotland – 58.25

The mighty Northern Ireland – 55.70

England – 49.88

Ebu – 47.35

Wales 28.25

As you can see, we have still all to play for – being a mere 3 victory points behind. Northern Ireland have never won the Camrose in the history of the event.

The final weekend is in the Park Inn Hotel, Manchester on the 7th to 10th of March. Travelling support would be more than welcome. The hotel rate for 3 nights single is £255, including meals and is £195 for double occupancy. For further details e mail me at ciaraburns24@hotmail.com.

Hope to see you in Manchester!

Note: This article first appeared in the Irish Bridge Journal.

A Tale of Two Club Slams

By Robin Burns

It's very important to have clear partnership agreements. They help to make your bidding (and your bridge life!) easier. Or at least they should, as long as both partners are singing off the same hymn sheet. Witness these 2 club slams where Ian and I were in tune on one but not the other.

OUT OF TUNE

♠ A K Q 10	♠ 6
♥ J 10	♥ A Q 7 5
♦ 9 8	♦ A K 5 4
♣ A K 10 7 6	♣ J 9 5 2

North	East	South	West
	1♥	Pass	2♣
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	3nt	Pass	4♣
Pass	4nt	Pass	Pass

The question : Is 4nt Roman Key Card Blackwood or a sign off in a NT contract? To try and avoid problems like this we have the agreement that unless we agree a trump suit either directly or indirectly 4nt is quantitative or sign off. East thought that he had agreed clubs with his bid of 3♣.

But the minor suits are different from the major suits as even with a fit in a minor suit you may still want to play in a NT contract. Therefore, as 4♦ could have been bid as definite agreement, 4nt was a sign off. We were out of tune so we paid the price as 6♣ was bid at the other table, 10 imps away. What do you think? Who is to blame?

IN TUNE

♠ A	♠ 7 6 4 3
♥ A J 2	♥ 5
♦ K 9 6	♦ A 8 7 5 3
♣ A K J 9 4 2	♣ Q 6 5

North	East	South	West
		1♣	
Pass	1♦	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4nt	Pass	5♣
Pass	5nt	Pass	6♣

Another type of partnership agreement is certain sequences can show certain hand types. As we play an essentially natural system we use certain agreed sequences for this. Here is an example that worked well for us. As a jump rebid of 3♣ has to cover hands from 16 to about 21 points it is very hard to judge as responder, so we play a rebid of 2♠ shows a big hand about 19/20 HCP, an Acoll 2.

This allowed East to push for slam which he would not have done if West had simply rebid 3♣.

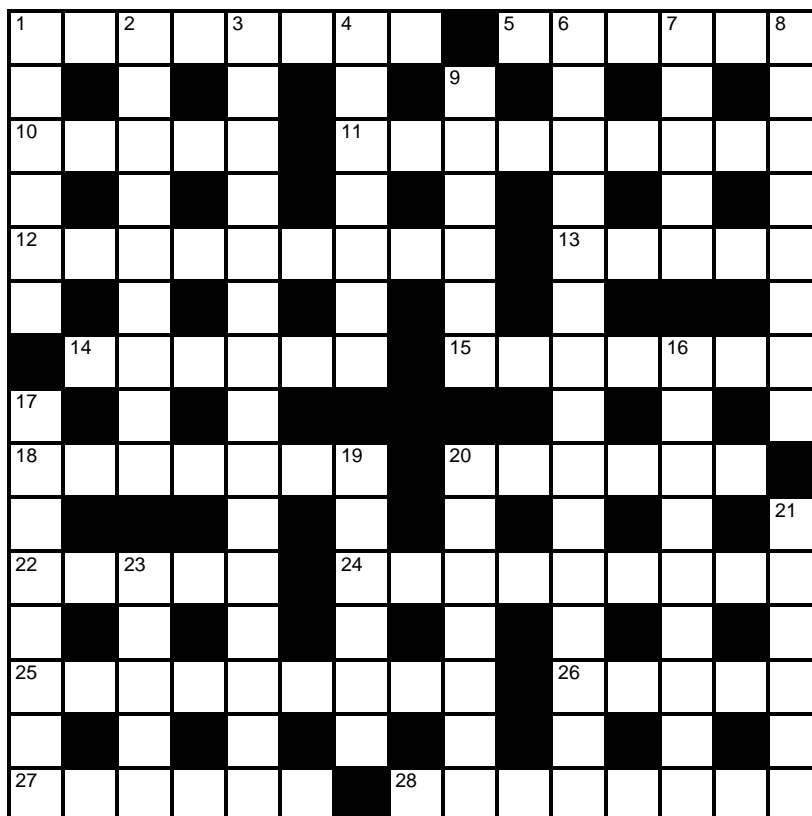
As both partners had cue bid there was no doubt this time that 4nt was RKCB. 11 IMPS in this time as 6♣ was not bid in the other room.

Stop Press

Breaking news - The team for the second Camrose weekend in Manchester (7th – 9th March) will remain the same - Rex Anderson, David Greenwood, Greer MacKenzie, Hastings Campbell, Robin Burns and Ian Lindsay. Very good luck to them. Travelling support is more than welcome.

As part of the NIBU's drive to encourage Inter As and Bs to come to competitions, a Gala pairs event has been organized in La Mon hotel on Sunday 3rd August, starting at 1pm. There will be 3 sections if entries permit – Novice, Inter A and Inter B. There will be generous prizes and the winners of each section will be crowned Northern Ireland Champions. More details to follow.

Prize Crossword 18



Across

- 1 Inca tool assembled on site (8)
- 5 A West Coast agent in a tree! (6)
- 10 Player held by a subtle girl (5)
- 11 Urge ace on revision of high card play (9)
- 12 Mergers formed from mistake over scoring (9)
- 13 Indian totem pole provides rhythm (5)
- 14 Centurions hold article for poems (6)
- 15 Lie in hat (4,3)
- 18 & 20 Entertain twin for a response (7)
- 20 see 18 (6)
- 22 Push back outcast (5)
- 24 Shuffling protects a viewer (9)
- 25 No losers flash around money (5,4)
- 26 Perch about a French tuit shape (5)
- 27 Black suited special police hold minister without right. (6)
- 28 Delete angry batsman (5,3)

Down

- 1 Measurement of English trawler in port (6)
- 2 Return to sender in LA for major find (9)
- 3 Weekender golf to play for good or bad (4,2,9)
- 4 First bids corkscrews (7)
- 6 Cells under worktop oppose the establishment (15)
- 7 First clubs led and immediately make all the rest you say (5)
- 8 Propanones faulty - set on ace (8)
- 9 Power, South in sheep's clothing gets stropo (4,2)
- 16 Red group flower sets fire to a desk I hear! (9)
- 17 Wise men hold top places for keeping (8)
- 19 A wrestle lets us reform (6)
- 20 The German held papers for Gerontius (7)
- 21 At start of Congress review every deal in time for approval (5)
- 23 Square assistant holds the French unknown (5)

Solutions to Derek Cannell, 1 Cranley Road, Bangor, Co Down, BT19 7HE or derekcannell@gmail.com by March 31

