Beckenham Bridge Club

Newsletter *February 2006*

Message from the Chairman

Once again, sadly, my first task is to note the death last Summer of one of our longest-standing and most active members, Jack Hibbert. A short appreciation of Jack appears later in this Newsletter, but I must say here that it is a mark of the respect and affection in which he was held that so many fellow members of the Club attended his funeral. In his memory the Club made a donation to the Princess Alice Hospice, which looked after him so well in the last stages of his illness.

I take this opportunity to express your and my thanks to those members of your Committee and others who have volunteered their time and effort to carry on the several activities that Jack Hibbert used to perform: to Alan Foster for taking on the role of Match Captain; to Roy Creamer and Peter Bentley for looking after the collection and engraving of Club trophies; to the existing (and new) directors and scorers who have taken on an extra load; and to Catherine Draper who directed on a number of Club evenings in the late Summer and the Autumn.

We do need more volunteers to help with the scoring, in order to spread the load more widely. It is not an onerous task, and you will be given some easy-to-use software to download to your computer. Please speak to me or to any committee member if you feel able to help.

Following on from my comments in the last Newsletter about the Sam Russell Championship Pairs, it has been decided that the first session, on Thursday 1 June, should be a qualifying round for the all-play-all final session on Thursday, 8 June. To make this work as intended an initial entry is needed of more than 24 pairs, so I hope we can look forward to a large entry this year.

Accompanying this present Newsletter is the formal notice of the Club's Annual General Meeting to be held on Monday, 13 March (beginning as usual at 7.0pm so that we can play as nearly as possible a full evening's bridge as well). I was encouraged to see such a good number of you attending last year's AGM, and I hope you will maintain the same interest this year. It is, after all, your Club. All the members of the Committee have agreed to continue for another year. We have, however, three vacancies on the Committee, so if any of you would like to stand for election at the AGM you would be most welcome. Nomination forms can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary, Lindsey Lamb.

Finally, may I also remind you that the annual subscription (£12) was due on 1 January and should in any case be paid no later than the Annual General Meeting. If any of you have not yet had the opportunity to pay, the Honorary Treasurer, Paul Fishleigh, or I would be happy to receive your subscription.

David Lightfoot

New Memberships

We welcome the following new members who have joined or rejoined the club since the last newsletter: Jean and Sam Staffurth, Susan Starkey, Howard Surfleet, Loretta Horsman, Grace Foley, Bill Waghorn, Pamela Sutton, Phil Jones, Gerald Tredinnick, and Brenda Cambray.

We wish them a long and enjoyable association with the club.

Sir Jack Hibbert

I first met Jack not at the bridge table but at work – at the Department of Trade and Industry over 25 years ago when he already held the senior post of Director of Statistics. It is a measure of his intellectual prowess and quiet determination that he subsequently went to the top of his profession as Head of the Government Statistical Service. When he first joined the Club, primarily partnering his wife, Joan, Jack's heavy professional duties precluded him from playing as much bridge as he would have wished. But even in those early days he made his mark as a player of stature, and from the start he delighted in developing an intricate and highly effective strong club bidding system. Following his retirement 14 years ago, and in spite of caring for Joan during her long and progressive illness, Jack was able to devote more time to a variety of interests – typically with great assiduity and enjoyment. In addition to his achievements at bridge in club, county and EBU competitions, notably in partnership with Tim Lloyd-Williams and Marie Horlock and, in the national Seniors Pairs, with an old friend, Robbie Kingston, after a late start at the game Jack became seniors champion at his golf club. He even contrived to apply his statistical acumen to betting so successfully that at least one national bookmaker declined to accept further business from him. All of this was alongside the effort he put into the Club in directing, scoring and organising teams for inter-club competitions. Lest this catalogue of achievement should suggest a ruthless man, I must add that Jack was a kindly man with an abiding interest in people and a willingness to share his knowledge. He was, in the words of one of his most regular partners, "a lovely man".

David Lightfoot

Ladder Competition

With four rounds to go, several pairs are still in with a chance of winning this year's ladder competition. The current leaders, Ian Draper and Gerald Tredinnick, are gradually pulling away, so the chasing pairs will need to put in several strong performances if they hope to catch them. The leader board after the January round is:

		Ladder points	
1	Ian Draper & Gerald Tredinnick	118	
2	Pat McBain & Jackie Wotherspoon	106	
3	Bob Bruty & Tony Barker	95	(12)
4=	Catherine Draper & Michael Prior	88	
4=	Placido Rodrigues & Neville Grant	88	
6	Marie Horlock & John Amor	84	
7	Bob Manser & David Hudson	82	(16)
8	John Penwill & Marcel Nalletamby	80	(16)
9=	John Hemington & Jennifer Viles	78	(12)
9=	Steve Burton & Phil Jones	78	

Figures in brackets show points awarded temporarily to an absent pair. Points for absence are used solely to determine qualification for the Divisions and are excluded when calculating the final rankings.

The Haycocks Trophy

This is a cup presented more than thirty years ago by a lady who was a member of both Farnborough Bridge Club and Beckenham Bridge Club to be competed for annually in a team of eight match between the two clubs. It was, and is, intended to be played as a "friendly" free from the pressures that can attend more formal inter-club matches, and is played in the Summer (usually in June). Characteristically, all of last year's Beckenham team – Jean & Paul Fishleigh, Liz Blande & Mike Rafferty, Helen & Richard Gibbons and Jo & David Lightfoot – are, as it happens, also Farnborough members. Not that that is a requirement for selection, and expressions of interest in taking part from any members (preferably as a pair) would be most welcome. We could do with a win this year; last year we lost by 11 imps, having lost 17 imps on the twentieth board when two of Farnborough's pairs bid a slam and neither of ours did.

David Lightfoot

Master Points – two opposing views

The EBU Master Points system has been the subject of debate for many years. We present here, with provocative intent, but in not too serious a vein, the views of a supporter and of an opponent of the current system. Which side of the argument do you support? Let us have your views, or constructive ideas like John Penwill's from the last issue, and we'll print them in the next newsletter.

FOR

Life would be boring without Master points. When I receive my points I am delighted that I have managed to beat all the clever people playing at the time. When I receive promotion from National Office I am walking on air for several days!

Duplicate bridge is a very competitive game, and people who play in bridge clubs enjoy this, otherwise they would be playing rubber bridge or doing something else. Awarding points enables good players who shine at duplicate bridge to be recognised and rewarded. Sometimes on bridge holidays arrangements for rubber bridge to be played are made, but these are very much secondary to the duplicate sessions and usually take place during the afternoons.

When on bridge holidays, or playing in another club with a player one does not know, or when one has a choice of partner, it is helpful to learn the ranking of such player.

If we did not receive points there would be a temptation to play for money as at the Portland Club. I would resist any such proposal. I once played at another London club and lost £8 in the evening playing for 20 pence per hundred and could have lost a lot more!

Although I think that some improvements could be made, what I would find very upsetting would be a system whereby one was demoted if one did not receive a certain number of points, which I have seen put forward. I would feel that I was going backwards.

One alternative which was put forward several years ago (but not proceeded with so far as I know) would be to have two forms of rankings: one like the present one for medium players like myself, and one with super points for really good players which could be more like a golf handicap. However organising such a system would be harder.

So far as I am aware little notice is taken of points winners in selecting county or national teams. I think that such notice should be taken.

Finally, all my relatives would cease to enjoy a topic of conversation in which they can polish my halo!

Norman Osborn

AGAINST

"Ever upwards" seems to be the watchword of those who constructed the absurd edifice of Master Points that masquerades as a ranking system in the world of bridge. It is only natural to want our achievements to be recognised, but we should be honest enough to admit that we sometimes suffer setbacks too. Why is it that bridge players cannot bear the thought of their ranking declining if they play more poorly than hitherto? Isn't it a sign of immaturity that the idea of demotion causes such consternation?

In other games and sports which employ ranking systems, it is taken for granted that a ranking can go down as well as up. A golfer who argued that his handicap should always improve no matter how inconsistently he played would be laughed off the fairway. The same reaction would greet a tennis player who insisted that she could only ascend the national rankings, but never descend. Chess players wouldn't dream of disputing that, if they play worse, their grade will go down. And indeed, laughter is the immediate reaction when you explain to players of other games how the ranking system works in bridge. Some might liken it to a nursery school where children must be constantly encouraged with fresh stars to mark each little accomplishment.

A genuine ranking system should enable valid comparisons of current playing strength to be made throughout the whole community of competitive bridge players, not only the experts. In these terms, the Master Points ranking system possesses no credibility. The unkind might be tempted to call it a farce. It is true that those who do well at Green Point events will rise to the ranking summit more quickly. However, at most levels it shows very little about a player's current playing standard, but a good deal about how long they have been playing bridge and how often they play. The Master Point slips we gather so assiduously are not much better than confetti, or those Green Shield trading stamps we used to collect so avidly. In fact, they are worse than trading stamps, because they can't be exchanged for anything useful or valuable.

So let's grow up, scrap those outworn Master Points, and replace them with a ranking system worthy of the name, which will earn the respect of the whole bridge playing community and of those outside the game.

Chris Lamb

Club members' achievements

Congratulations to the many club members who have achieved fine results in various external competitions during recent months. Here is a list of those we know about, with apologies to anyone whom we've missed. If you do well in a competition away from Beckenham, please tell Marie Horlock or the newsletter editor, so that we can record your achievement in the next newsletter.

KENT EVENTS

Kent Congress, November 2005:

Leonard Trophy (Butler Scored Pairs)	Winners: Marie Horlock & John Amor 4th: David & Jo Lightfoot
Spurway Bowl (Open Pairs)	3rd : Catherine & Ian Draper
Invicta Cup (Championship Pairs)	Winners: Gerald & Stuart Tredinnick
Ray White Trophy (non-qualifiers)	2nd : Bob Bruty & Tony Barker
Swiss Teams	2nd : Phil Jones & teammates
Dyer Smith Trophy (Kent mixed pairs championship)	Winners: Catherine & Ian Draper 3rd : Phil Jones & Christine Kempton
Phillimore Cup (Kent Swiss Pairs championship)	2nd : Marie Horlock & Doreen Charteris 3rd : Gary Wiles and Keith Ashcroft
Hunter Homines (Kent Mens Pairs championship)	Winners: Ian Draper and Michael Prior 2nd : Phil Jones & Brad Featherman 4th : Ossie Saeed & Brian Evans
Kent - EBU One day Swiss Teams, June 2005	2nd : Neil Benn & teammates
Tunbridge Wells Christmas Swiss Teams	Winners: Gary Wiles, Michael Prior, Catherine & Ian Draper

OTHER EVENTS

Sussex Swiss Pairs	Winners: Michael Prior & Keith Ashcroft

EBU Autumn Congress, Bournemouth

2 Star Pairs	2nd : Catherine Draper & Michael Prior
Teams	Winners: Catherine & Ian Draper, Michael Prior + Jeremy Willans from Tunbridge Wells Bridge Club

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A Royal Riddle - a teaser from Placido Rodrigues

Did you notice, when you sit down to a game of Bridge and look at the four Kings, three of them share something that I have. The odd one out is the King of Hearts !
Can you guess what it is? See page 7 for the answer.

Club competitions

Congratulations to those members who have achieved success in club competitions in recent months. Here are the top three placings in the main competitions played since the last edition of the newsletter.

Pivot Teams - Bentley Trophy (July 2005)

		Imps
1	Catherine Draper, Ian Draper, Michael Prior, Gary Wiles	96
2	Placido Rodrigues, David Lightfoot, Roger & Lesley Pechey	93
3	Malcolm McBain, Pat McBain, Tim Lloyd Williams, Dorothy Holland	90

Robertson Cup - Individual Championship (August 2005)

		Imps
1	Peter Crofts	330
2	Gillian Foster	273
3	Anita Freeman	269

Cicely Caro Cup (Mixed Pairs) and Watson Flitch (October 2005)

1. Catherine Draper & Neil Benn	68.37%
2. Carol Hawkins & David Leventhal	59.28%
3. Elisabeth McKeone & Denis Russell	58.14%

Watson Flitch winners: Jackie Wotherspoon & Neil Wotherspoon

Vi Bulman Pairs (November 2005)

1. Michael Prior & Catherine Draper	67.80%
2. Valerie Gunson & Bernard Hodgson	62.60%
3. Pat McBain & Malcolm McBain	61.17%

Masterpoint Promotions

Congratulations to the following club members, who have attained Ranking Promotions since the last Newsletter, or whose earlier promotions have not previously been noted here:

John Amor – Premier Life Master
John Hemington – Premier Life Master
Phil Jones – Premier Life Master
Michael Prior – Premier Life Master
Valerie Gunson – Life Master
Kay Goldsmith – National Master
Eddie Richart – National Master
Pat McBain – 8* Star Premier Regional Master
Norman Inniss – 3* Star Premier Regional Master
Keith Ashcroft – Premier Regional Master

Jennifer Viles – 2* Star Master
Placido Rodrigues – 2* Star Master
John Penwill – 2* Star Master
Susan Starkey – 2* Star Master
Brenda Cambray – 1* Star Master
Barbara Noble - Advanced Master
Oscar Bayley - County Master
Farah Diggens – Club Master
Howard Surfleet – Club Master

For those who have had more than one promotion during this time, only the latest is listed here. If your name has been omitted, please inform the editor, and it will be included in the next newsletter. Special apologies to anyone who has been misidentified with a namesake, and is credited above with a ranking that is too high or too low; if this has happened, a correction will be made next time.

Clever Card Plays at the Table

We have all read books about spectacular card play – such as the exploits of the Hideous Hog as he manages to squeeze his opponents to eventually win the crucial trick with the 2 of clubs. However, in practice such clever plays rarely happen but there are two hands featured here where clever plays were actually made at the table.

The first was from the Autumn Congress at Bournemouth in October. The 2 stars pairs is a prestigious event where there are 2 qualifying rounds during which all but 28 pairs are eliminated leading to an all-play-all final over 3 sessions. The final session is scored on a barometer method where the boards are played & scored simultaneously and a ranking list produced after each 2 boards. This format makes the final session very exciting as you can track your progress up (or down) the leaderboard after each round. Due to the stringent qualifying rounds the final is usually a very high standard, with most of the better pairs getting through although there are some inevitable high profile casualties along the way. The winners of the event are invited to the European Pairs

Michael Prior playing with Catherine Draper had cruised through to the final and were doing very well lying in a clear second place, when in the final session Michael as West picked up:

♠ Q93
♥ T6
♦ JT976
♣ A43

Playing against Ian Pagan and Chris Jagger, Catherine passed as dealer and Pagan on Michael's right opened 1NT. The bidding proceeded between Pagan and Jagger at the standard Pagan/Jagger pace (very, very slow!):

1NT-2D-2NT-4D-4H-4S-5D-6H

1NT was 12 -14, 2D transfer, 2NT any transfer break, 4D splinter, 4S & 5D cue bids.

The spotlight now fell on Michael to find the opening lead. After no thought at all he produced the 3 of Clubs. Dummy hit with KJ5 in clubs and declarer played the jack from dummy which Catherine covered with the Queen and held the trick. A low club was shot back at trick 2 to Michael's ace resulting in 1 off and all the match points to East/West.

What was the reasoning behind this spectacular lead? Michael knew from the auction that the king of clubs was likely to be in dummy as South had cued in diamonds (denying a club control), and then North had jumped to 6H indicating a club control. North had moved over the 4H sign off and therefore was likely to be very strong so a passive lead would most likely not defeat the contract and the best shot was probably a club 'guess' at trick 1. He also had the benefit of time to think during the slow auction. Many of us may have thought about this lead but how many would have the bottle to actually do it at the table – you can just imagine the post-mortem if this lead had given them a bottom - 'never underlead an ace against a suit contract'.

With this result Michael and Catherine moved into the lead but could not quite hang on and finished in 2nd place with a score of over 59%, just behind the leaders and well clear of third place - a fine effort.

The complete deal was:

BOARD 14	**Dealer E**	**Neither Vulnerable**
	N	
	♠ **A542**	
	♥ **AKQ72**	
	♦ **2**	
	♣ **KJ5**	
W		**E**
♠ **Q93**		♠ **J876**
♥ **T6**		♥ **93**
♦ **JT976**		♦ **854**
♣ **A43**		♣ **QT98**
	S	
	♠ **KT**	
	♥ **J854**	
	♦ **AKQ3**	
	♣ **762**	

The second hand featured is along a similar line but not as spectacular. This hand occurred in the Tollemache (inter county teams of 8 championship) held in November at the new Kettering venue.

Playing against Bedfordshire as South I picked up:
♠ Void
♥ T85
♦ 932
♣ AKQJ965

The Bidding

N	E	S	W
			1H
1S	Dbl	2C	4H
P	P	P	

Catherine led the King of spades and dummy went down with.
♠ AT4
♥ J6
♦ AQ8764
♣ 83

Declarer played the ace which I ruffed. My dilemma was now how can we beat this contract. The diamond layout looks very promising for declarer as either he has the King or any finesse is working and with the jump to 4H the trump suit appears solid. It looks as if we certainly need one more ruff and either another spade or club trick, but how do I get partner in for my second ruff. I decided the best chance was for her to hold the 10 of clubs and at trick two I played the 9 of clubs (the correct card in view of dummy's 8) which Catherine did win with her 10 and then duly cashed a spade before giving me a ruff to defeat the contract. Underleading my club honours at trick two might have let it through, but you can see from the actual layout that it was the only way to beat the contract. Credit should also be given to the opening lead, since a club would give declarer the contract.

The complete deal was:

BOARD 24	**Dealer W**	**Neither Vulnerable**
	N	
	♠ **KQ8753**	
	♥ **9**	
	♦ **KJ5**	
	♣ **T74**	
♠ **J962**		♠ **AT4**
♥ **AKQ7432**	**W** **E**	♥ **J6**
♦ **T**		♦ **AQ8764**
♣ **2**	**S**	♣ **83**
	♠ **VOID**	
	♥ **T85**	
	♦ **932**	
	♣ **AKQJ965**	

Ian Draper

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A Royal Riddle - The answer to the teaser is – A Moustache !!

So what happened to his moustache? Curiosity led me to probe for the reason. Legend has it that when the Kings played a game of cards (not as partners!) the King of Hearts would twirl his moustache in different ways in order to indicate to his partner which suit to lead. When the other Kings discovered his cheating secret, they wanted to end it, so they pinned him down and clean shaved off his moustache! Surely the King of Hearts has now learnt his lesson and should be granted a reprieve – that is, his moustache should be allowed to shoot up again and stay put?! What do members think? Have a heart! – Petition the EBU?

Placido Rodrigues

What we're doing with the website: www.beckenhambc.co.uk

It is just over a year since Neil Wotherspoon and I took over responsibility for the website from Rachel Bingham. For me it has been a steep learning curve and I am grateful for Neil's help and support.

What is the advantage in having a website and who uses it? The content is largely dictated by the nature of the Club. The main purpose is to provide information that our members want and to make that information easily accessible. Another important function is to advertise our club and encourage new members. We are keeping both these points in mind as we plan improvements and developments

To date the major change that has been made is in the way results are uploaded to the website so that individual score cards and travellers can be accessed quickly and easily. We have also added links to the Ecats site for results of Simultaneous Pairs Competitions and to the London Metropolitan Bridge Association for results of the Rotter Cup and tables for the South East Bridge League matches.

We have removed old newsletters and will be removing results from previous years in due course. Another casualty has been the Guest Book, removed after a spate of fairly pornographic spam. In 2005 there had only been three genuine entries so it was obviously not important to keep it. It is easy to contact either of us by clicking on our names on the Welcome page and sending an email.

So what plans have we for the future? We have talked about including the Duty rota and perhaps also the rota for Tournament Directors. A suggestion has been made that updated pages could be flagged in some way to save time looking for what's new. The News page needs to be redesigned so that the content is as clear and concise as possible. I would really appreciate receiving items of interest to post on it. Photos would add interest… We would welcome other ideas.

We have also discussed redesigning the site from scratch, but that is a major undertaking and very much in the future. The present site is clear and unfussy and as long as it fulfils its functions there is no real need for change, though it would probably be easier to work with something we had designed ourselves.

For those more technically-minded the following information may be of some interest:

The website was designed by Rachel Bingham using Dreamweaver and we are currently working within the parameters she set up. Our host server is Redstation and we have one gigabyte of web space available. To give you some idea of how enormous this is, a typical set of results, including travellers and individual score cards, occupies between 50 to 70 kilobytes. We use direct HTML with Microsoft FrontPage 2000 as our editor but often hand code using Notepad. Some parts of the Results pages require a bit of coding as they were set up by Rachel using PERL (Practical Extraction and Report Language). Neil deals with that part as PERL is a foreign language to me! Newsletters are emailed to me as Word files and I convert them to Adobe PDF using ScanSoft PDF Professional. We both use Terrapin as our FTP for maintaining the site. The scoring program written by Neil Wotherspoon generates a web page and results are posted easily with a couple of mouse clicks.

Dorothy Holland

A note from the Editor

I'd like to thank everyone who sponsored me, and thus supported the Stroke Association, during my 1100-mile walk from Lands End to John O'Groats last summer. I am happy to have completed the trek, only slightly footsore, and delighted to get back to the bridge table again, though mostly in Brussels, where I'm now based during the week. Although my appearances at Beckenham are rare at present, you can e-mail your contributions for the newsletter to me at chris7lamb@yahoo.com, or you can give them direct to Lindsey. I'd particularly like to increase the bridge content, so please make a note of any interesting hands that you play, as Ian Draper has done for this issue, so that others can share your pleasure in them. Contributions for the next issue should reach me by the end of May.

Chris Lamb, Editor