

OXFORDSHIRE V LEICESTERSHIRE **19TH September 2004 at Oxford Bridge Club**

There were mixed results for us in our second outing of the season, as follows:

A team: Landy/Hayes with Williams/Wilson +26 IMPs

Slater/Stephens with Nicholas Roberts – 13, = +13 (12-8 VPs)

B team: Brown/Keep with Flower/Stead –55 IMPs

Bygotts with Duttons +29, = -26 (6-14 VPs)

C team: Clifford/Lonsdale with Dickinson/Southcombe +98 IMPs

Constable/Jalie with Kazmierczak/Nicholson –52, = +46 (16-4 VPs)

Congratulations are due to John Clifford and Gillian Lonsdale who made a very satisfactory debut (it must also have been confidence-building to IMP up with Tim Dickinson and David Southcombe, who produced another fine card). The A team has made a much improved start to the season, with 30 VPs after two matches. The C team has made a determined start to its defence of the Markham Trophy, with 36 VPs. Only the B team has faltered, with 17 VPs from two outings (still only just below average).

The cross-IMPing was rendered difficult and at least partially meaningless by the C team sitting in the wrong polarity for the second half – well, they have to be bad at something! Thanks to Jeremy Bygott for producing the following results:

Tim Dickinson/David Southcombe (EW C)	+87.00	+91
Lynne Hayes and Sandra Landy (NS A)	+45.50	+38
John Slater and Nelson Stephens (EW A)	+27.33	+32
John Clifford and Gillian Lonsdale (NS C)	+26.33	+26
David and Jeremy Bygott (NS B)	+18.83	+10
James and Shirley Dutton (EW B)	+14.67	+16
Krys Kazmierczak and Sandra Nicholson (NS C)	-08.67	-10
John Williams and Chris Wilson (EW A)	-11.50	-10
David Flower and David Stead (EW B)	-12.50	-08
Mike Brown and Clive Keep (NS B)	-27.33	-44
Geoff Nicholas and Debbie Roberts (NS A)	-29.00	-41
Sandy Constable and Krishan Jalie (EW C)	-37.33	-49

It will become apparent that the hands were more than usually awkward to both bid and play, and all three matches were littered with errors on both sides. I suspect that with the exception of Nicholas/Roberts and Brown/Keep, Oxfordshire pairs enjoyed the majority of what luck was going.

As an example, witness the very first board, for which I'll hand over to my esteemed partner Chris Wilson.

Board 1: love all, dealer N

	♠KJ954	
	♥Q65	
	♦98	
	♣Q96	
♠Q8		♠10763
♥KJ97		♥1082
♦53		♦KJ1072
♣J10875		♣K
	♠A2	
	♥A43	
	♦AQ64	
	♣A432	

“By way of background, the elderly gentleman I have the privilege to partner had admitted to consuming a bottle of champagne the previous evening (surely an everyday occurrence in the Williams household?) whilst I had returned from a week in China, arriving at 5.00 am the previous morning after a 13 hour flight and a 7 hour time shift and was not quite sure of the date, time or continent I was presently in. So our partnership was even shorter than usual on active brain cells. Here I made the obvious lead of ♣J against South’s 3NT, which went to the Q, K and A. Declarer played four rounds of spades, discarding a club and a diamond. Partner switched to ♦J and declarer won this with the Ace, with only enough thought to suggest wondering which top honour to win with, before leading a small club. I won with the 10, partner discarding a diamond. Thinking the hand through, I remembered the advice in a distinguished tome on defence which urged ‘observe declarer’s line of play to deduce his hand’. Declarer had shown 14 points (3 Aces plus ♦Q by inference) and had room for either ♥A or ♦K. Following the book’s advice I deduced that he held ♦K and so needed only a second club trick to come to nine. I therefore switched to ♥J, confidently expecting dummy’s Q to be covered by partner’s A, with a return of the suit guaranteeing two tricks for my K9. I even looked forward, naively, to a complimentary remark. But declarer thought for ages before playing low from dummy - foregoing a winning finesse for the second time, as I soon discovered – and winning with the Ace. He now played a club to dummy, cashed a spade and led a diamond. Partner won with the King and gave me a heart and a club for the setting tricks. I suppose the moral is not to read too many bridge books....” No one else in the field managed to go down on this one.

Board 2: NS game, dealer E

North ♠K63 ♥KJ10 ♦AQ2 ♣Q1093 South ♠954 ♥Q7652 ♦8 ♣AK72

East opens a weak NT. If you (South) have 2♣ available to show hearts and another, do you risk it, at red? Well, fortune would favour the brave here as you would make 4♥ (or 3NT by North). Suppose you’re in 4♥ on the lead of ♠J? You’d play small, of course you would, and gather in your reward when East proved to hold ♠AQ bare and just about everything else. The Bygotts and Nicholas/Roberts were no doubt cursing themselves for reaching only 3♥ and making 170. Me, I opened 1NT as East, partner transferred me to 2♠ and I made it on a misdefence (or two).

Board 4: Game all, dealer W

West ♠AK2 ♥K753 ♦K92 ♣A95 East ♠108543 ♥Q ♦Q104 ♣Q1042

If you're playing a weak NT this is a good hand for 1NT rebids showing 15-17. Even if playing 15-16, John Slater suggests that a 1NT rebid is enough here. Chris rebid 2NT (17-18) as normal, and I passed. This is probably off on a heart lead but the 1♥ opening puts them off and 8 tricks result. Winning part-scores in NT or spades were the order of the day but one Oxfordshire pair pushed to 3NT-2 and another conceded 600 when Jeremy Bygott decided, unluckily, to play West for ♥AK at a critical point in the play, and mangled the club suit as a result – an odd echo of Chris's account of board 1, without the happy ending.

Board 6: EW Game, dealer E

West ♠AQJ1073 ♥AK109 ♦AQ ♣A East ♠65 ♥J7 ♦109643 ♣10643

There is always one hand in these reports where I have to reveal myself as a complete buffoon, and this is today's. Forget my partner's inaccurate and disloyal reference to alcohol abuse (my wife had her fair share of the champagne – about one third). Consider instead the state of a man who some days earlier had joined a lengthy queue in the doctor's surgery in order to return his library books. Our auction here, starting with Chris (West) was 2♦ (Benji)-2♥-2♠-2NT-3♥-3♠-4♣-4♠-4NT-5♣-5♠-P. You might think partner had done too much in the bidding. I feared so as well, whilst waiting to table my hand, until North enquired about the bidding and partner patiently explained. For my first response, 2♠ would have shown 0-5 HCPs and no control, 2NT or 3NT would have shown 8-9 or 10-11 balanced, 3 level suit bids would have shown a 5-card suit headed by 2 of 3 top honours, so 2♥ was a semi-negative promising 6+ HCPs or one control. Furthermore, in this context, 3♠ was stronger than 4♠. Of course, I knew all this. I'd merely misplaced the knowledge momentarily, having played different methods all summer with different partners, due to holidays etc – not that that's any excuse. Chris could still have made 5♠, when in dummy for the only time with a heart ruff, by finessing in spades rather than diamonds, because South held ♠KX, but he had to take the correct 50% (but failing) chance, just to show me up. Slater/Stephens were the only other pair to cock this hand up, but at least they achieved a successful part-score.

Board 7: Game all, dealer S

West ♠Q103 ♥AQ95 ♦J86 ♣976 East ♠A4 ♥KJ4 ♦94 ♣AQJ853

South opens 1♠, which is passed round to East. At my table I didn't have a strong or intermediate 3♣ bid available, considered and then discounted a double, so settled for 2♣. Partner considered 2♠, or a raise to 3♣, but finally passed. I imagine there was equally heavy breathing at most tables, if not all. On balance, game is just against the odds, however tempting. Diamonds are 4-4, luckily, after which a spade comes through, so you have to win, cross to ♥Q and play a club to the Jack, dropping the 10. You can now cash the hearts ending in dummy (they're 3-3), finesse ♣Q and claim. Three brave souls bid this and two went down, but the Duttons played it from West, avoiding the diamond lead, taking ♠A and playing as directed to make 660. Phew!

Board 10: Game all, dealer E

West ♠J8732 ♥A3 ♦AQ ♣KQ32 East ♠AQ9 ♥Q962 ♦K965 ♣A5

Against me the bidding went 1♥-2NT (Baron: 16+ balanced)-4NT-6NT. Where on earth did the final bid come from? Partner, bless him, found a heart lead (I held KJ1087 over dummy) and declarer eventually got out for 2 down by end-playing me with the fourth round of clubs to give the last trick to dummy's ♥Q! However, all declarer had needed to do for 12 tricks was to play a spade to the 9 at trick 2! I can't see much point in doing anything else. 6♠ is much better, of course, even on a heart lead – you can win, throw the heart loser on the third round of diamonds after finessing ♠Q and cashing ♠A and ruff your club loser in dummy. 7 out of 12 declarers got to a slam on this deal, 4 made it (two for Leics, the Bygotts and Nicholas/Roberts for Oxon) and three went down (two from Leics).

Board 11: Love all, dealer S

North ♠A65 ♥AK876 ♦2 ♣AKJ3 South ♠KQ1082 ♥J32 ♦AJ6 ♣108

We bid 1♠-2♥-3♥-4♣-4♦-6♥, probably the best spot, though 3 pairs played game in spades, 3 played in 6♠ and 2 in 7♠! (I'll spare the blushes of the one from Oxon). 6♥ looks to be a simple exercise, after a diamond lead, in how to play the trump suit (take the Ace, then low towards the Jack – triumph! West has the singleton 10). So you knock out ♥Q, ruff the diamond return, draw the last trump with yours and play a spade: horror! – they're 5-0 offside. Your last chance is a favourable position and misdefence in clubs, so you cash the top spades and lead ♣10 from dummy, but when West covers from his QXX, East has the setting trick with ♣9. John Slater, hoping East might be squeezed in the minors on the run of the top spades (he wasn't) was lucky enough to see him discard a club anyway, so 6♥ rolled in.

Board 12: NS Game, dealer W

North ♠Q10 ♥7432 ♦J875 ♣842 South ♠KJ85 ♥AKJ ♦K4 ♣AK107

At my table West opened 1♠ which was passed round to me. Holding a balanced 22-count in the protective seat isn't exactly an everyday occurrence. Certainly we have no point-showing bid available. As 2NT would have shown 18-20, I doubled first and rebid 2NT over partner's strangled cry of 2♦, presuming this showed a stronger hand. However, I wasn't a bit surprised when he gratefully passed. On the other hand, I could hardly justify bashing 3NT opposite a possible Yarborough. In fact, of course, clubs were 3-3, ♥Q would have dropped if I needed it, and so on. Both Flower/Stead and Constable/Jalie managed to bid and make 3NT, presumably but not necessarily without the opening bid (on a flattish 11-count) to contend with. Well done anyway.

Board 14: Love all, dealer E

	♠652	
	♥J9865	
	♦4	
	♣KQ84	
♠109874		♠3
♥10		♥AK43
♦10853		♦AKQJ2
♣A62		♣J109
	♠AKQJ	
	♥Q72	

♦976

♣753

At my table East opened 1♦ and having considered the merits of 1♠ (not stupid) and 1NT (yuk) I elected to pass. West raised pre-emptively to 3♦ and when this was passed round to me (?) I ventured a TO double, passing the 3♥ response. Chris won't mind me relating how, after accepting a diamond force at trick 2, he ran ♥6 to the singleton 10 and didn't trouble the scorers too much after that. It's not often one goes 5 down (fortunately in 50s) without having drunk a single glass of champagne. However, what about 5♦ by EW? One eminent Grand Master from Leics played this after South had made the yuk double of 1♦ and, assuming that club honours would now be no worse than split, took two finesses to go down. In fact, as Tim Dickinson points out, 5♦ is makeable on a cross-ruff after discarding one club on ♥K and conceding a club, even if they've switched to a trump at trick 2. He should know, because he made it – the only declarer to do so. An opening trump lead is a different matter, because South can lead another when in with ♠A, but nothing else will do, and who's going to find that defence?

Board 19: EW Game, dealer S

West ♠AKQJ103 ♥KQ102 ♦Q9 ♣J East ♠none ♥A984 ♦AKJ1086 ♣K65

At my table South opened 2NT to show a minor-suit pre-empt, Chris doubled to show values (well, he certainly had some of those) and North jumped to 4♣ (pass or correct – a whimsical effort holding XXXX XX XXXX XXX!) and I jumped in turn, with lissome grace, to 6♦. This caused partner some mild palpitations before he passed (he must have entertained some vague hope of playing this hand when he picked it up). Two Oxon pairs and one from Leics managed to play this in game, otherwise all but one were in 6♥, 6♠ or 6NT. The exception was Dickinson/Southcombe for Oxon C, who bid and made 7♥ without first telephoning Mr. Blackwood. I haven't asked for the auction, out of respect for everyone's feelings, but Tim was gracious enough to acknowledge that North had reasonable grounds for leading a club, and decided not to.

Board 23: Game all, dealer S

West ♠KQ86 ♥KQJ74 ♦Q106 ♣Q East ♠AJ ♥9 ♦943 ♣AJ96432

At my table South opened 1♦, Chris overcalled 1♥ and after a pass by North I responded 2♣ (forcing). Chris enquired with 2♦ (no doubt hoping for delayed heart support) and I replied with a disciplined – some would say craven - 3♣. Chris decided to chance 3NT anyway, given the vulnerability, and was doubled for 1 down. In a sense he was lucky that South held only four diamonds (AKJ7) to go with ♠A and ♣K, but South with his actual hand was **very** lucky to find his partner with three small diamonds rather than 2. Five pairs altogether tried 3NT and one (Dickinson/Southcombe to the fore again) made it – the means are undisclosed. Two NS pairs managed to defend 1♣ doubled, one for Oxon netting 500 and the other for Leics 800. South must have pondered later on the merits of opening 1♣ with KXXX rather than 1♦ with AKJX, but with a 3-2-4-4 15-count, it doesn't look to me like a terrible crime, and once you've done it, you're caught.

Board 24: Love all, dealer W

West ♠AK103 ♥1053 ♦K862 ♣AQ East ♠95 ♥Q4 ♦AJ97 ♣KJ932

David Flower asks how you play 5♦ when the defence leads 3 rounds of hearts, North having shown what is described as a 3-suiter with short clubs (he in fact holds ♠Q743 ♥A862 ♦Q53 ♣54!). David in practice ruffed, crossed to a top spade and played a diamond to the 9, which was instantly disastrous, of course. Even a diamond to the Jack would have left him in trouble unless North held singleton ♣10, in the scenario lodged in his head. In practice the hand is only makeable if diamonds are 3-2 or ♣10 is singleton. All of which proves that life can be very tough sometimes when the oppo are idiots. Most pairs sailed into 3NT and found that hearts were 4-4.

Board 25: EW Game, dealer N

North ♠A863 ♥Q4 ♦Q74 ♣A842 South ♠KQ ♥763 ♦A53 ♣K10653

You bid 1NT-3NT, East leads ♣Q and West shows out as you win with the Ace. Any thoughts? Well, half the field went down when the defence came in with a club and found the heart switch, and half the field made when they didn't. I like Tim Dickinson's play of taking ♣10 at trick 2 and leading a heart to the Queen and Ace! This kind of play is often available and rarely used, but can be devastating, as here, when the defence never led a heart after that but hung on to the suit at the expense of unguarding spades!

Board 26: Game all, dealer E

West ♠KQ94 ♥Q64 ♦Q ♣KQ543 East ♠J753 ♥AJ10 83 ♦none ♣10876

At my table West doubled my opening 1♦ as South and East bid 4♥ over partner's diamond raise. He ruffed the diamond lead, crossed to a top spade and then changed tack by playing Ace and another trump. Chris won and put me in with ♠A for a spade ruff and ♣A. OK, the contract needs a lot, but I always thought that combining one's chances was meant to be aimed at achieving victory, not defeat Surely it's better to finesse ♥J after reaching dummy. If the finesse loses you were favourite to go down anyway but if it wins, you can now lay down the Ace. If the King drops you're OK and if it doesn't you can switch back to spades, knowing you only need clubs to behave. The Bygotts managed to make 5♥(!) while the Duttons' oppo got home in 4. Several NS pairs decided to save in 5♦, perhaps wishing later that they'd taken their chance in defence. Constable/Jalie's oppo got to play 3NT by North and after a heart lead to the King, had six diamond tricks and two Aces to score, for an unlikely result.

Board 27: Love all, dealer S

	♠QJ1043	
	♥K84	
	♦KJ10	
	♣A10	
♠AK6		♠752
♥AJ953		♥1062
♦5		♦AQ9862
♣QJ93		♣6
	♠98	
	♥Q7	
	♦743	
	♣K87542	

At my table the bidding went P-1♥-1♠-2♥-end making 9 tricks. No one at the table seemed to have any idea of how to bid with style and adventure. Tim Dickinson's opponents reached the obvious 3NT by EW (only 4 down) but three pairs bid and made 4♥ - two for Oxon (Hayes/Landy and Brown/Keep) and one for Leics. Sandra Landy showed how to do it when she won the spade lead, crossed to ♦A and played a club to Jack and Ace. She won the spade continuation (trump, anyone?) and cross-ruffed until the ♦K came down (it wouldn't have helped to discard it on the third round of clubs). Back in dummy after ruffing her last club, she discarded the spade loser on ♦Q. Whichever defender ruffed, there were still only two trump tricks for the defence, to go with ♣A.

Board 31: NS Game, dealer S

West ♠AK1094 ♥AQ8 ♦43 ♣A54 East ♠62 ♥K1043 ♦K82 ♣K1096

One declarer on each side went down in 3NT after the auction 1♠ -2♣-2NT (GF)-3♥-3NT, when North led ♦10, ducked, and followed with ♦Q. It's nasty now. If you duck again – which is a perfectly legitimate play – North will cash his other three diamond winners (as happened here) and you'll feel small, even if everyone behaves impeccably. It's hands like this which persuade most partnerships these days to respond 1NT with 6-9 points (OK, sometimes partner will raise with 16 just in case when you actually have 6, and you're in a silly contract, but it's better to go off in a partscore than a game). 1NT just looks right here, with the three Kings.

Board 32: EW Game, dealer W

	♠K8	
	♥865	
	♦Q72	
	♣A8653	
♠J965		♠Q
♥K2		♥AQ1073
♦K		♦J109864
♣KQJ742		♣10
	♠A107432	
	♥J94	
	♦A53	
	♣9	

A horrid hand on which to finish. My West opened 1♣, partner passed and after East responded 1♦, I made a weak jump of 2♠. This was enough to buy the contract at some tables (David Flower tells me how he actually made it). But my intrepid East risked 3♥, which was converted by West to 3NT. Note that we have 5 top tricks against this contract, but no one told us. Chris led ♠K and another. I knew after winning ♠A that I couldn't lead a third round sensibly. I knew also that we probably needed quick tricks – two diamonds and a club or vice-versa. Either way it seemed best to lead a low diamond, giving declarer a guess with KX. The King won, of course (no matter, we still had five top tricks) and declarer continued with ♣Q (sneaky!) and, when this was ducked, with ♣K. Chris erred, I have to say, when he ducked again, because he can deduce that to beat the contract I must hold ♥K or ♦A, and if it's the latter he has to win and cash out (if the former, it's going down

anyway). Jeremy Bygott defended just as I did at tricks one to three and adds only “the defence had 5 tricks set up and found them with no further trouble” – easy game, isn’t it, sometimes? There was an interesting sub-plot at my table because, had Chris won the second club, I would have needed to tell him which card I held: our normal style is a simple high discard to encourage, which clearly was impossible here, so I would have had to play my lowest spade, relying on him to read this as a McKenny for diamonds. There, I’ve admitted it – I prefer McKenny discards in the first place. 3NT actually got home three times: fortunately the other two occasions saw Oxon declarers at the helm – Brown/Keep and Constable/Jalie, both of whom deserved a bright moment in otherwise disappointing afternoons.

I understand that Chris’s new book (*Winning with Wilson: vol 1 – Defence*, published by Ladybird Books price 50p) is being delayed for a couple of minor amendments to be accommodated. My own book (*Winning with Williams: Know Your System*) has been rejected by M Mouse Publications.

So there we are. I need to finish now. My library books are overdue again. Hope there’s not too long a queue at the surgery.

JOHN WILLIAMS
22/09/04