

## WALES IN THE CAMROSE: OXFORD - January 2012

Wales went into the new Camrose season with something it had never had before – the Camrose trophy, which it had won for the first time in 2011. The Welsh team had changed a little – from the winning team Adrian Thomas had decided to rest himself and Mike Pownall was now playing with Peter Goodman, while John Salisbury & Mike Tedd who played last year in the WBU team joined Paul Denning & Patrick Shields (playing their 13<sup>th</sup> Camrose weekend from the last 14 chances) to make up the squad. One welcome return was the successful captain Alan Stephenson.

This year's Camrose has two Scottish teams, since Scotland are hosting the second weekend. This allows 3 concurrent matches in each of 5 rounds – and the format is repeated on the second weekend. As always, each board is played 6 times and almost all the bidding and play has been recorded, courtesy of the wonderful BBO system (many thanks to Fred Gitelman and all the helpers involved).

**WALES & REPUBLIC OF IRELAND.** Every round had key encounters and on the first round it was Scotland and the SBU, from which the former emerged with clear bragging rights (and a margin of 29 imps – which was all but 1VP of the difference between the two teams at the end). Wales played against familiar Irish opponents, although not their usual Camrose team. There were swings from the start when Wales bid a lucky 6D, making and then what might have been a bidding mis-understanding led to 4H-doubled making an overtrick; Wales were 25 imps up after 3 boards. We went as far as board 11 before coming to one where all 6 tables had the same contract and the same number of tricks, but it was followed by the swingiest hand of the set, board 12 –

J75 T9654 5 9643	AT6 AQJ7 KJT6 K7	82	Three tables bid effectively and reached 6D. Northern Ireland had problems after a cheeky first-in-hand opening by West for England, and SBU had a little difficulty after East found a 3C overcall of the opening 1D, and West then supported. But in 6D, the lead was the CQ and the key issue is how to play the diamonds.  The lack of a trump lead and the possible need to ruff a fourth spade argues for (successfully) playing East for the diamond length, while the lack of a singleton spade lead suggests East might have more spades and therefore West more space for the DQ. A close call and only England got it right, a decision which cost Wales 17 imps as Ireland had bounced into 6S without considering diamonds (and there declarer soon sees that East has 4 cards in the majors and so will always get the diamonds right).
	KQ943 83 A984 AT	K2 Q732 QJ852	

There was a bidding problem – it seems - on board 15.

KQJT KQ98 AKQ5 7	A93 642 J9842 42	Our heroes (Mike & John) were the only pair to start with 1H-P-P but when South protected they quickly recovered and reached the easy 5D. The Scottish Ladies who bid 1D-3D-5D were the only others to reach that contract. Robson & Allfrey chose 1C(1+, non forcing)-1S(no major)-2N-end, and the Scots bid 3N despite the fact that their opponents had bid clubs! Northern Ireland also played 3N. The mavericks were the Irish Republic who played in 4S which makes easily.

At the end of the first set it was Wales by 21, Scotland by 17, while England were 30 ahead of Northern Ireland. John & Mike now sat out and Paul Denning & Patrick Shields came in to join Peter Goodman & Mike Pownall. I liked this auction (which was replicated at three tables, including both in our match)

KQ876 6 AKQ94 AJ	J AT987432 765 4	We heard 1S-1N (not strong enough for 2H response)-3D-3H-3N-4H and that was just the right place to be. Much better than the 1S-4H sequence, when the man forgot that was a splinter and only got to bail out in 6S.

The biggest swing to Wales was +13 imps when Mike Pownall found the right lead from T4 – Q73 – 942 – KT642 against the opponents' 1S-1N-3D-4S. He led a club so we cashed two tricks there and a mis-guess in hearts later led to one down. The diamond lead allowed Patrick Shields to make an over-trick in the other room. Our biggest loss was this hand, played by Gay Keaveney for Ireland

A93 5 AQJ5 AKQ83	KJ742 AT K963 76	T65 KQJ764 7 942	At most tables the bidding started from West with 1C-1S. Both Scots had to double here; their Easts then bid hearts later, but both partners took them out into 5C and 3N. In Wales-Ireland, both Easts were able to show their hearts immediately (Mike Pownall transferring via 2D – a useful innovation) and Wales ended in 5C while Ireland were in 4H. The third match tried a bit of each and we ended with two tables in each of 3N, 4H and 5C. And one instance of each contract made, one went down !
	Q8 9832 T842 JT5		For Wales Paul Denning led the SQ which was won with the ace, and Gay now led out DA and DQ, ruffing the king away and going back to dummy in clubs to ditch a spade. Now came H5 to the HJ and he played back a low heart to the now bare ace (a high heart works just as well). Two spades set up a trump for South but that wasn't enough. The other instances of contract making were with some help from the defence.

There was another totally flat board in this set, every table in 4S+1. Wales repeated their first half gain of 21 imps to go into the lead with a 22-8 win, while Scotland did a little less to get 20-10, and Northern Ireland had pulled back against England to get a draw.

**WALES & SCOTLAND.** Scotland had performed very well in the last Camrose weekend (outscored Wales by 3 VPs even though Wales won the trophy) and were expected to be tough. The key match in this round would be Wales – Scotland and it opened with this interesting hand

	KT7 Q97642 K6 95		Five tables played in 4H, mostly after a weak two bid by North and with silent opposition. Least fortunate was Ian Sime for Scotland who declared as North and got a spade lead, and when he went for a ruffing club finesse (can't think why?) he was doomed . Other declarers were South and the most common lead was a club from West, picking up the suit.
AQJ6 3 Q842 8763		542 AJ85 973 Q42	All defenders took the HA on the first round except Douglas Piper, who cleverly ducked. Now when he beat the HT with the HJ and returned a club, declarer needed two entries to dummy to draw the trumps. Paul Denning used a diamond first, but had to win the DA after the HQ lost to the ace and a diamond came back. The club had to be cashed now for a spade discard, before playing a spade towards the king. West rose with the ace, and East waited for the trump-promoting club – but to no avail. West had needed to discard on the second heart and what card looked more useless at that time than a low club ! Sad – nice try.
	983 KT AJT5 AKJT		

Wales received a couple of gifts after that – the Scots found an overcall of 1S over 1H with almost nothing (as did another table), and this was followed by a takeout double and then a redouble from partner explained as showing high cards. The bidding tray was passed back to the takeout who looked at QJ93 – T4 – AQJ7 – A73 and the vulnerability (favourable) and decided that was high enough, and duly collected +1000 for two off. A few minutes later a lead-directing double of 2N by the Scots failed to get the right lead, and even with that the contract was always makeable. 13 imps this time to Wales.

Then this bidding problem arose

KT43 6 QJ2 A9863	AQ8 AK94 KT965 K	With no opposition at three tables, bidding 6D proved very easy (although one pair sailing along did stop out unexpectedly). For Wales Shields (as North) opened 3H in third seat and East found the pass and a re-opening double netted him +1100. Where the opener in third seat (with QJ87532 and a bust) was just 2H, it proved impossible to bid the slam. When the Scots chose that, Wales lost 9 imps.
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The next hand after that was also a slam disaster for Wales - the lead of a singleton scuppered 6D, when there was good reason to bid to the successful 6N found at two other tables. The third slam of the set also proved too difficult for most ...

AK85	JT	This time there was only one instance of unopposed bidding and that led to the English being the only instance of reaching the preferred (6H) contract (with an artificial auction after a 1D opening from West). Wales had to cope with a 2N opener from South showing the minors, and a 5C response by North. This got a (takeout) double from East, and 5D "pick a suit" from West; it rested in 5H when East declined to bid more, concerned that partner might be weaker with 5-5 majors. Scotland had an accident to play these hands in 5D (down three) and two tables reached 7H, going off when the diamond finesse was wrong. One of the pairs involved was bounced (by the opposition reaching 6C) while the other was just guilty of over-excitement. [We don't talk about the auction which ended in 4H]
KJT3	AQ9742	
T96	AQJ2	
94	A	

After an exchange of 107 imps on that set, Wales were ahead by 13; England and the SBU exchanged 106 imps on the same boards, but were dead level, while the Republic had a 43 imp lead over N Ireland. John & Mike now sat out for Wales and Mike & Peter came in. This set produced more interesting hands (but only one slam). This hand produced 15 imp swings in all 3 matches ...

	J	West dealt at both vul and at five tables opened 1S (once 2S). Three times North entered with 2S showing hearts and a minor, and East showed some spade support. South clearly has a suit worth mentioning but in these circumstances a bid of clubs is usually pass-or-correct as an attempt to find partner's minor- so the strength of the clubs was never disclosed. For the three tables using the Michaels cue bid, clubs was only mentioned by one South, Forrester for England, who got a conversion to 5D for his troubles and then had to play in 5H.
	AQ873	
	K7632	
	63	
AQ9743		The EW contract of 4S made twice when South didn't get a diamond ruff – a serious loss for defenders from Ireland and Wales. The 5H-X for England could have been a triumph. After SA lead and a diamond ruffed, declarer ducked a heart, won the club return and when the HT came up on the second round, he now had to decide whether East had J2 or KJ of hearts. With J2 the defender could have guaranteed beating the contract by playing the DA forcing his last trump, but hadn't done that. That play would have pushed declarer into the winning line if East has KJ doubleton. What was South to do? He went for trusting the opposition (and who can tell?) – the HA led to -1100 instead of +850. Winners on the board were Scotland, SBU, and N Ireland.
KT6	KT6	
JT5	J2	
2	AQ984	
	987	
	852	
	954	
	--	
	AKQJT54	

The other play hand of interest in this set was this

	J76	Every East opened 1H at love all, and four Wests raised to 2H. In response to that, two openers gave up, one made a game try, and the other went straight to game. Where West forced to the 3 level initially, East just bid game. All three plain suits were led, most commonly the D9.
	Q	
	Q865	
	AQJ62	
KQ4		The question is how to play the trumps. After the diamond lead, you can afford two trump losers, for which the best play in isolation is to run the JH. The Scottish lady ran the HJ but David Gold won the queen and played a second diamond, and was now able to give partner a ruff to beat the contract. Three trump losers! Mike Pownall played the hearts by leading the H3 to the HK, losing out if South had AQ95 or Q95 but gaining here. That was worth +6 imps other rather than -6 when the Scots stopped in 2H in the room.
K642	AT3	
T42	JT873	
T94	AKJ7	
	K	
	9852	
	A95	
	93	
	8753	

At the end of the set, Wales had gained a little more to beat Scotland 20-10, while England won 22-8 and Ireland won 23-7. Wales retained the overall lead.

**WALES – NORTHERN IRELAND.** This was expected to be an easier match for Wales, and the key interest alongside was the encounter between Scotland and England. The encounter was indeed tight – the lowest scoring set of the weekend- and left England, who conceded only 6 imps over 16 boards, ahead by 16 imps [The peak exchange was 117 imps over 16 boards, when England met SBU – the only other sets with over 100 imps exchanged were the two sets when Scotland played Wales] There was only one board in the first half of this match when Wales lost imps – 10 imps when a tight 5D was played in 4D+1.

The last three hands of the set were all interesting. Board 14 was

543	KQT6				
765	942				
QT	852				
KJ654	A32				
		AJ972			
		3			
		A763			
		T98			
	8				
	AKQJT8				
	KJ94				
	Q7				

All tables got to 4H by South; four of them got a spade lead (East had bid spades) to the king and ace, and a minor suit switch. The heart lead at one table and the club lead at another all saw spades played early – so every East was in a similar position. At this point choices varied. Irving Gordon chose DA and that was a disaster as South rose with the king on the next diamond for an easy overtrick. Three others chose a small diamond but it was only Anne Symons for SBU as South who rose with the king. This made the board flat in that match. The others all suffered a diamond ruff and were quickly off. Mike Pownall had the benefit of a club lead to the CQ at trick one but he tried a diamond to the DJ before drawing trumps and that hit the fatal ruff also.

and then came

AQ972	JT8543	
9842	AKJ	
K4	A6	
A8	J6	

When the 5 card spade suit opened 1S, the other hand usually started with Jacoby but, for many, their methods failed. Two pairs managed to stop in 4S, two tried for slam and went off in 5S, while two simply bashed 6S and that was a poor contract. Do your methods let you stop in 4S, with confidence you are not missing a good slam?

and

KT8765	AQ9	
AKT52	9643	
--	Q64	
65	AQT	

Everyone opened 1S and at three tables there was a 2D overcall. This (6H or 6S) is around a 90% slam but only the Scottish SBU Ladies – Sheila Adamson & Anne Symons managed to bid it. Their sequence was 1S-2N-3H-4S-5D-6S. It's curious that if you move the H3 to be the C3, it makes the responding hand a little more attractive but the slam is enormously worse. A very difficult slam to bid. Answers please on a postcard to ....

At the end of the set Wales had a 40 imp lead over N Ireland – so quick team change (all three pairs have played in every match but one for the last 10 Camrose weekends) and on with .... rather a surprise (to me) on the first board of the new stanza

	98				
	K65				
	J8742				
	973				
A6532		QT			
874		2			
6		QT953			
AJ64		QT852			
	KJ74				
	AQJT93				
	AK				
	K				

Five tables played in 4H by South [Piper-Wilkinson for Scotland opened East 2N showing the minors and got a 5C reply – second success for this toy over the weekend when it was allowed to make on a spectacular England defence]. West had overcalled 1S at three of the tables where that was possible, but what mattered most was the opening lead.

Three tables chose the SA (Mike Tedd with a small excuse but for the others I am still puzzling why) after which the wonderful spade layout let declarer draw trumps and claim 11 tricks. When Gay Keaveney led the D6 for Ireland, it was too much for declarer not to touch spades and when he led them from hand the diamond ruff beat the contract. Bill Whyte also led the D6 at trick one and got his ruff but then – wow – tried for two down by under-leading the CA for a second ruff – and it never came.



The bidding test of the set was this hand

AKJT963 874  
A K42  
KQ7 A92  
72 AJ4

There was one multi 2D in front of the big hand, but the others had a free run and chose 1S twice, 4S once and 3N once (this showing 8+ tricks in a major suit). The last table was a strong 1C and only this last one moved beyond 4S. The natural auction seems to be 1S-2C-3S(forcing)-4D(cue)-4H-4S(allowing a stop)-5D-5H-5S(lest two club losers)-6C-7S. At one table North did steal the 2C bid, but there was only one sniff at the slam at two of the five tables which stopped in game – on a hand surely worth at least two sniffs! That was a 17 imp gain for Northern Ireland and the biggest swing Wales lost over the weekend.

And then there was this play hand, only negotiated successfully by Tony Forrester for England ...

T953  
KJ2  
JT876  
7  
AK2 J876  
AT93 8  
A3 Q954  
AK43 J952  
Q4  
Q7654  
K2  
QT86

It was 3N at all tables except the Scots whose muddle led to 4S which went off despite the opening C8 lead running to the CJ and a successful ducking of the second diamond. All tables led a diamond against 3N and declarer won the DA; most cashed two clubs and played another diamond – the exception being SBU who cashed SAK first and that killed the timing.

The two declarers who covered the DJ left North on lead at trick five, with no nice choices. For Wales Shields found the ST which was covered all round and he was soon back on lead with the S9. This time he knew partner had the HQ and he could exit in high hearts. Declarer had no way to dummy and was easily put down two.

When South won the second diamond with the DK, he played through a heart and North won HJ and continued the HK. Forrester ducked that and won the third heart. Now when the SQ fell he had 9 tricks. For Wales Tedd won the second heart and cashed the top spades but now had no entry to the H-T9. For Ireland Keaveney won the second heart and played a third, setting up a trick there – but he threw two spades on the hearts and now the dropping SQ was no help to him. Also one off.

When it was all scored up, Wales had lost its first stanza (having averaged +22 imps for each of the previous 5 sets) and fell back to beat N Ireland 19-11, while England clocked up a 16-14 win over Scotland and SBU beat Ireland. Wales were still leading the table.

**WALES – SCOTTISH BRIDGE UNION.** This was the first match of the Sunday and Wales were looking for an easy ride. John & Mike sat out first. The first half was a match of small hands, with 11 hands where the most one could make was a part-score. The honours were even in the end and the 22-19 score to Wales was the lowest but one turn over of imps for the weekend. The defence on board 1 was good ..

T  
AQJT964  
J9  
875  
K A987642  
K873 --  
T42 A53  
KJ963 Q42  
QJ53  
52  
KQ876  
AT

The hand was opened 4H twice (3H three times and 1H once) and when East overcalled 4S it was easy for South to double. Paul Denning led the DK against 4S which declarer won. Next came a spade to the king, a heart ruff, SA and two rounds of clubs. Paul had noticed the HQ on the ruff, and the HJ discarded next – both as McKenney signals for diamonds and so was able to underlead to the DJ, ruff the club return and cash the DK for two off.

In a similar position for N Ireland and England, the declarers threw the D4 on the SA, and South never had to think- he could just cash diamonds from the top. For England, North dropped the DJ under the DK at trick one, making it all too easy! Although avoidable here, this seems to be one of the dangers of popular “K for count”.

Board 7 was quite interesting

AT  
J7  
T8732  
KJT8

J9542  
AKQ  
K95  
97

KQ  
8543  
Q4  
Q6543

8763  
T962  
AJ6  
A2

First curious feature was the auction : 1S-1N was replicated at all 6 tables – the only time that happened all weekend. Furthermore, the lead was always a small diamond from West. South had the first key choice to make – two diamond tricks were there if the lead was from the ace or JT, but if not then some help was needed to make two tricks. Two declarers trusted the opponents to simply force the queen and they chose the D9 from dummy, covered by the jack and queen. At their tables, when West won the SA he could lead a high diamond, so that the defence ran diamonds and clubs, and the contract was two down.

Four declarers played the D5 and East had a problem. Many cases were neutral, but playing the D6 was right if South had Q4, but the DJ was right if South had any of 87, 84, 74 – so they put in the DJ giving declarer a vital second stopper and letting three tables make overtricks. It's an awkward dilemma at this level – do you play to take the tricks which are rightfully yours, or do you hope RHO will make the wrong choice? It was curious that none of the 6 defenders was leading second best from that diamond suit – a choice which clears up the position beautifully for East.

Scotland and England both emerged from that set with modest plus scores. John & Mike came in next to replace Patrick & Paul – and the hands turned much more lively. Wales had some poor luck on this set, bidding a 50% or so slam not bid by anyone else, and losing on a 4-1 trump break. Was this one luck or judgement?

QJ73  
K  
A7  
A87632

K92  
QJ8762  
8  
QJ5

For SBU this wend 1C-<2D>-2H-<4D>-P-P, and the long hearts, who had already bid at the two level, had to decide what to do. The 4H choice was passed out and, with an unavoidable club loser but the hearts 3-3, that was a vulnerable game. In the other room, Wales bid up to 4C but the scorecard recorded 11 imps away.

The most interesting hand was this

763  
AQJ63  
9  
AK75

JT984  
KT2  
A54  
Q3

AKQ52  
97  
KQT2  
T8

--  
854  
J8763  
J9642

South passed and West opened 1H at all tables. Spotlight on North and three declarers bid 1S while three passed. As you might expect in a world of negative doubles, this was passed out and scored either -300 or -400. Against Wales North passed and it proceeded 1S-2C-3N and John Salisbury had a very easy time making that. Peter Goodman – facing a passed partner – sensibly passed the North hand also and got to defend 4S (doubled) and that was one off.

For England the auction started P-1H-P-1N showing 5 spades and now Tony Forrester as West ended as declarer in 4S. The SJ was led and this proved fatal as the pips meant that the defender was held to one trump trick and now 4S makes. Cheaper to overcall 1S and go four off!

By the end of the set Wales were cleanly beaten by SBU and came away with a 13-17 loss in the match. Meanwhile England had won 21-9 over Republic of Ireland, and the scores were even – both with 74 VPs, and Scotland were third on 62 VPs.

**WALES – ENGLAND.** The crunch match of the weekend – last year's Camrose winner against the winners of the year before. [This English team has just been announced as the English team for the European Championships in the summer] The starting line up for the match was Goodman & Pownall against Forrester & Gold, while Denning & Shields faced Crouch & Patterson. The first two boards were straightforward part-scores but then came this

AKJ93 Q74  
AK7 8  
T54 AK987  
A8 J954

Crouch opened a strong 1C to which Patterson replied 2C, promising both minors. After various enquiries they settled in 6S and on a trump lead this depended just on the diamonds behaving, and they did. In the other room, Mike Pownall started 1S and over the 3C response which showed a raise to at least 3 with any singleton, he tried 3H showing strength there but this discouraged Peter who signed off in 4S. Gay Keaveney for Ireland had to cope with a club lead against 6S but showed that was no problem – being able to set up a club trick to discard his losing diamond (RHO held KT73 clubs). Bidding the slam was a gain for N Ireland and for England, but flat in the Scotland-Ireland match.

The same pairs had another bidding exercise a few boards later ...

QT96 AKJ3  
AJT974 Q  
-- AQ8763  
Q42 K9

At favourable vulnerability, four of the six tables opened 1H in second seat and of those 2 bid the slam while Crouch-Patterson paid the price for their complicated system and had a mis-understanding which left them stranded in 5H, fortunately making. After the 4603 hand passed for Wales, his LHO opened the bidding and they found 4S but had no ambitions beyond that. It's a close slam, but bidding the slam produced gains there for SBU and Scotland.

Scotland tried a lone repeat on the next board (a 33% shot which failed) and Wales tried 6S on the board after that; even after England didn't cash its H-AK, success needed a 3-2 trump break, a 4-3 diamond break, and a 5-3 club break – none of which happened on this deal. Board 10 had Ireland try 6H but since nobody (except for the mis-defence by Wales against England) could even make game – this was clearly wrong; failing to double it cost Scotland 9 imps. There were a few more swings both ways after that, and when the smoke had cleared England were a very comfortable 42 imps ahead of Wales, while Ireland had a 3 imp lead over Scotland.

Wales brought in Salisbury & Tedd next in place of Goodman & Pownall, while England retained the same line-up. On the first board Wales sought a swig by opening 3D with 8 -8432-QJ9754-T8 and got one, but unfortunately there was AKT84 trumps sitting over and a takeout double sitting under. So that meant 54 down with 15 boards to go! There were plenty of interesting boards in the set, of which the first was

K9754  
A2  
KJT642  
--  
T6 AJ82  
T8 KJ76  
983 Q75  
QT9874 J2  
  
Q3  
Q9543  
A  
AK653

Two Norths opened 1S, while the other four opened 1D and three of them heard a double next from East. All tables ended in 3N and the lead was a club five times out of six. [At the sixth diamonds was the un-bid suit and East led and continued diamonds, giving declarer no problems at all] After the other 1S opener and 1D-P, the two declarers chose to play for the SA with West and to set up the diamonds; that didn't work for Forrester but Hastings Campbell for N Ireland found East discarding a heart on the third club and now he set up the hearts to make his contract.

Otherwise it started club, DA, heart to the HA and now two declarers chose DK. When nothing nice happened declarer continued hearts and East rose to play a second club. After that there were no winning options and 3N went one off. When David Walker played 3N for Scotland, after HA he continued hearts without cashing DK; East won HK and played a second club. West continued clubs forcing a spade discard from East, and David continued with HQ and another. In the end position Gay Keaveney could exit with a small spade (and did) but when SQ won and H9 was cashed he had to bare his DQ. That was no problem except his partner had come down to two diamonds and the bare C9. He was thrown in with the C9 and had to give dummy two diamond tricks at the end. So Scotland made 3N for a gain of 12 imps over Ireland.

and the next board was

KQ94 62 K3 JT743	8	JT632 KJT43 T4 8	At all but one table East cue bid over 1D to show the majors and at four tables North ended in 5D. Each table led the C8 and declarer deduced it was a singleton and played trumps by leading to the ace and another one back. Every West recognised the futility / danger of playing a top spade (it lets 5D make) and switched a heart and now the defence always had 3 tricks.
	Q85		
	QJ9765		
	AK6		
	A75		
	A97		
	A82		Mike McGinley in his first Camrose, for the SBU team, showed how it should have been played by taking SA and a spade ruff at tricks two and three, and then DA and another spade ruff, before exiting with the DQ. Again West led a heart to the H5-HT and if Mike had just ducked this (as he intended) East would have been end-played and 5D would have made in considerable style (but he caved in at the last minute and won HA).
	Q952		

A few minutes later Patterson was put to the test with this ...

T Q95 AQT632 A63	432	KQ97 KJ432 8 QJ5	Three tables played 3N which had no chance but England (with Ireland and Scotland) played in 4H and got the CT lead round to the CQ. East played out SK next, setting up a trick and a ruffing position. Paul Denning switched accurately to the D9, won by the ace and now came HQ to the HA and a second club. Declarer was again stuck in dummy and with the danger of a diamond over-ruff played a heart to the HJ and ruffed a spade. He came back now with a diamond ruff and cashed his hearts, coming down to Q9 in spades and CJ. Meanwhile Paul was squeezed and to keep S-J8 he had to bare his CK and he was thrown in to give declarer the last two tricks in spades. That was 11 imps to England when Wales had played the hand in 3N.
	A87		
	KJ75		
	742		
	AJ865		
	T6		
	94		
	KT98		

An unlucky hand for some next – it was 14 points opposite 10 and the no trump ranges meant that 3N was bid by 3 teams and not the other three. 3N was a poor contract needing the heart suit to be 5-3 and the hand with the long hearts not to have either of the missing aces, and that's how it was so a double figure swing against each Irish team and against Wales. And there was this hand

9863 85 KT6 A842	AQT	K52 K74 J74 QT65	First curious feature was the auction : 1S-1N was replicated at all 6 tables – the only time that happened all weekend. Furthermore, the lead was always a small diamond from West. South had the first key choice to make – two diamond tricks were there if the lead was from the ace or JT, but if not then some help was needed to make two tricks. Two declarers trusted the opponents to simply force the queen and they chose the D9 from dummy, covered by the jack and queen. At their tables, when West won the SA he could lead a high diamond, so that the defence ran diamonds and clubs, and the contract was two down.
	T2		
	A9832		
	J93		
	J74		
	AQJ963		
	Q5		Four declarers played the D5 and East had a problem. Many cases were neutral, but playing the D6 was right if South had Q4, but the DJ was right if South had any of 87, 84, 74 – so they put in the DJ giving declarer a vital second stopper and letting three tables make overtricks. It's an awkward dilemma at this level – do you play to take the tricks which are rightfully yours, or do you hope RHO will make the wrong choice? It was curious that none of the 6 defenders was leading second best from that diamond suit – a choice which clears up the position beautifully for East.
	K7		



When the totals were added up, England had gained another 31 imps, winning the match 25-4. This was their biggest win, and Wales' biggest defeat. England had played well, but not unbeatably, through this match – but such a defeat meant that Scotland, by beating Ireland 20-10 were able to move into second place.

The table looks like this

		ENG	SCO	WAL	SBU	IRE	NI	Tot
1	England		16	25	22	21	15	99
2	Scotland	14		10	20	20	18	82
3	Wales	4	20		13	22	19	78
4	SBU	8	10	17		17	19	71
5	Ireland	9	10	8	13		23	63
6	N Ireland	15	12	11	11	7		56

England have the highest score they have achieved in any one weekend, since this format came into being. Well done, England – but do watch out, there are a lot more matches to come !

The Welsh team for the next weekend – the first weekend in March in East Kilbride in Scotland – has been announced as unchanged.