

## WALES IN THE CAMROSE: EAST KILBRIDE – March 2012

The first weekend of the 2012 Camrose season was a disappointment for the Welsh team, even though they had been leading right up to the last match (when they got hammered by England). But the team was quite capable and the same six (Paul Denning & Patrick Shields, Peter Goodman & Mike Pownall, John Salisbury & Mike Tedd) went into the second weekend in a very positive mood, captained again by Alan Stephenson (with Krista in support).

This year's Camrose has two Scottish teams, since Scotland are hosting this second weekend. The numbers allow 3 concurrent matches in each of 5 rounds each weekend, but with an almost random draw each time and so a different sequence of matches. 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 Scottish helpers involved).

**WALES & NORTHERN IRELAND.** Wales had won the previous encounter 19-11 but occasionally had scored mountains against this team. Northern Ireland, for the first time in ages, were missing stalwarts Rex Anderson & David Greenwood, following the latter's illness. The match started with a very interesting board—

T86 QT7 AKQ7 J75	J9 KJ9865 52 Q64	AQ752 32 T3 AK82	All six Norths showed a weak two immediately and five Easts bid 2S. The exception was a pass over a multi-2D and 2S on the next round, which resulted in England playing a combined 25-count in 2S. Over the 2S overcall, three made tries (accepted once) and two just bid game.  Against all 4S contracts the lead was the HA and another, and North continued the suit. Declarer ruffed (but not with the S2!) and South over-ruffed with the king. All three now made the mistake of returning the CT, which highlighted to declarer where the CQ was. When the CJ forced out the CQ and then the spades were cashed, South was squeezed in the minors. Much better to win the SK and return a spade! Gain of 6 imps to Wales when N Ireland was the one team to go off in 4S.
	K43		
	A4		
	J9854		
	T93		

A suit play problem came up a few boards later and only Mike Tedd for Wales got it right : you need to play QJ84 opposite A92 for three tricks, with no entry (outside that ace) to the short hand. The answer is to lead the queen (one of the other four found that) and to continue with the jack (only Mike). Fortunately for the others, all routes led to three tricks as the suit broke 3-3 !

Then a bidding problem to the same players – at green they open 1S in front of you and you hold Q-void-JT985-Q976532. There is a choice here, with half the field choosing to bid clubs (3C twice and 4C once) and half opting to show a two suiter (2N twice and 4N once). Graham Osborne for England made the best (IMHO, the right) choice with 4C but it was too difficult for partner to find the cheap sacrifice over X-P-4H-P-P when holding AT842-Q95-A64-J8. The 4N bid got its just (but avoidable) deserts when partner preferred diamonds and got out lightly for -800.

The segment finished with two big spade suits for North. On the first, in third seat after P-P, you hold AQT973-2-KQ832-K and on this half the field opened 4S and the others 1S. After the low start only Brian Short for Scotland managed to bid 4S next round while the other auctions died in 2S, which cost SBU and the Irish Republic 9 imps each when game was easy. The other hand was more clear cut, with five out of six bidding 4S in second seat, over a 1H opener, at green, holding AKT9876-void-64-A874. The exception who overcalled 1S was the winner this time, being doubled later in the cold 4S for a gain of 5 imps.

At the end of the first stanza Wales were 23 imps ahead (while Scotland were 37 ahead of SBU, and England were 27 behind the Irish). Wales now sat out Denning & Shields and brought in Goodman & Pownall for the second half. In that fist stanza, every team had one double figure swing (3 in, 3 out) but in the first three boards of the next stanza there were substantial swings in all three matches.

The second of these hands was this –

K92 95432 J63 53	6 KQT A42 AT9872		East was dealer (at green) and two opened – one with 1S and the other with a 2D gadget showing both majors. Two tables reached only game, but the Welsh North South bid (over a 1S opener) 2C-P-6C-end and that was the right place to be.
		AJ8754	At the other table for Wales Mike Pownall passed initially and after 1C-P-2N(support) he doubled. The auction continued XX-3H-3N and it might have stopped there but he now sacrificed in 4H. This induced South to leap to 6C and West now sacrificed. For reasons yet to be fathomed, North continued with 7C and Mike's double ended the auction. The spotlight turned on Peter's lead; the double asks for a non-standard lead so clubs and hearts were ruled out. But was it to be a spade (works) or a diamond (fatal)? Peter thought for a while before producing the S2 and gaining 17 imps for Wales.
		J876	
		Q85	
		--	
	QT3 A KT97 KQJ64		

On the board before and the board after Wales also gained to go well ahead; England managed to be on the right side of all three boards to level its match. A few boards later a bidding problem was faced by the East-West pairs ...

J4 KQ984 J96 AJ8	AKQ83 72 T K9763	All tables opened 1H and rebid to show a balanced hand over their partner's spades. Despite a certain visible weakness in the diamond department, three pairs bid to 3N (and one even got to make it). But Wales (Goodman & Pownall) and Scotland showed how it should be done by giving preference to spades when partner bid clubs next and getting therefore to 4S.
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There was one more bidding exercise of note ..

J2 AQ964 KJ5 KQ2	AKT9853 -- T2 AJ63	Each match had one table open 1H and one open 1N. In each case over 1N they reached the tight 6S, while each case over 1H ended in 4H. So each match has one slam and one game, for 11 imp swings all round (this time against Wales). After 1N and a transfer to 2S, two players were sufficiently devious to bid diamonds (one naturally, the other as a splinter) before punting 6S. There was the DA to cash but the curious effect of bidding clubs naturally on the second round was that the DA was led (the third 1N table) and now declarer decided to play the leader for the SQ and finessed and went off!
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Wales collected 29 imps overall on that set to get a score of 23-7, while Scotland gained enough for a 25-4 win and England pulled back to win their match by 9 imps (18-12 in VPs). A good start for Wales.

**WALES & ENGLAND.** The crunch match came as the second match this time. Wales started off with the same four as lost 42 imps on the first stanza last time – but there was no repeat ☺ It was a very tight set with only 41 imps exchanged. The hands were all very quiet and the only swing in the first 13 boards was a memory lapse which left Wales going off in a part-score instead of making an easy (vulnerable) game. But at the end of the set this hand came up

863 K874 J2 T953	K972 96 Q93 QJ84	4	All six tables got to the sensible 4S contract by South. The N Ireland choice of lead was the DJ which meant declarer had 3 tricks in that suit to go with six trumps, and the CA. For others it was a more neutral lead, either a heart or a spade; with two top heart losers success depends on the play of diamond suit.
		AJT5 KT64 K762	In four of the remaining five cases, East had entered the bidding and so declarer suspected that the DK was sitting badly. In the fifth case Billy Hamilton had no such suspicions and when he led a small diamond to the DQ and DK, he had four sure losers. In all the other cases declarer set about a partial elimination, ruffing one heart, drawing two trumps and cashing CA before playing a diamond to the D9. When East won he had no answer. So all but one declarer made his game.
	AQJT5 Q32 A875 A		

And on its heels came this

KT764 A875 2 A93	AQJ852 K9642 75 --	93 QT KJT KJT765	At red Mike Pownall with the 0274 shape opened 3D and heard it go X-P-3N-P-P; then partner came to life with 4D, promptly doubled. The lead was (well done, Chris Jagger) a diamond but Mike countered by leading a heart. To avoid losing his heart trick, West had to rise and now declarer could win HK and play two top spades (ditching clubs). In again, but with no trump to play, West had to exit in clubs but one ruff and the winning SJ took care of his clubs to allow declarer 10 tricks, and a score of +710.
	--		Mike McGinley for SBU was similarly rewarded for his brave 4D opener (doubled, all pass). When England opened 3D and Paul Denning doubled, North's 3S bid killed prospects of 3N and it went 4C-P-P-P. Wales gained 12 imps.
	J3		
	AQ98643		
	Q842		

At the end Wales had a tiny lead (5 imps) over England while SBU had gained 30 over N Ireland and the Republic had gained 34 over Scotland. Wales continue with the same line-up and the hands became more lively. On the first board a passive Welsh lead to 3N avoided giving an easy ninth trick and declarer went down one for +10 imps, and a few boards later Paul Denning found a 5D sacrifice against a vulnerable game, and the defence let a trick slip, for +8 imps. This hand surprised a little ..

42 T82 AJT95 AQ9	JT75 A543 K8 JT7	A9863 KQJ97 3 53	East opened 1S, vulnerable against not, and three of the Souths – despite as many points outside the minors as inside – bid 2N. West could show values with a double and when North rescued East came back in with 3H. This was not (but should have been?) recognised as a minimal hand with a 5cd suit and all three Wests bid 3N. A club lead was won by declarer who set about hearts but could only come to 8 tricks.
	KQ 6		Where South didn't bid, East-West bid 1S-(1N or 2D)-2H-2N-3H-4H. That contract can be beaten if South switches to trumps after winning a top spade, but nobody found that.
	Q7642		We can but raise our hats to the 2N bidders!
	K8642		

That board was flat for Wales, but a few boards later a slam try which petered out in 5H left Wales one level too high and that was 11 imps away. The margin was 4 imps to Wales when board 29 came along and Graham Osborne heard the auction start from his right and go P-P-1N-P-3N ; he found himself looking at AKJ52 of spades. He thought for a while and then doubled – and that was the right thing to do as every other table passed it out and the heart lead let declarer cash 11 tricks. This double scared Wales into running (there were 5 spades tricks about to be cashed) and they ran to 4C (but might have bid 5) for a loss of 11 imps. Then came two hands Wales might prefer to forget ... the first was this –

J 86532 63 T9875	AKQ632 Q 54 KJ32	T9875 K9 KQ72 64	Paul Denning opened a strong 1C (any 16+) with the South hand and Frances Hinden as West produced 1N (two suiter, C+H or D+S). The bidding continued naturally but one level higher than it might have and Wales missed a chance to stop in 4N and ended in 6N. East, looking at the other two suits, doubled this. The same contract was reached in the other room, and at two other tables.
	4		When North was declarer (twice), East led the DK and that was now 12 tricks, taken quickly by one and more slowly by the man who forgot to unblock the C-AQ before playing a second diamond. For England, Frances Hinden found the only lead to beat the contract by force, namely the SJ. In the other room a more gentle CT gave declarer hope but when Tom Townsend (with no warning of bad breaks) won and tried a small heart to the HQ and HK, he could not recover from the 5-2 heart break.
	AJT74		
	AJT98		
	AQ		

And on the final board of the match our Welsh “hero” forgot to cash his two aces against 4H-X and lost one of them to allow a vulnerable game to make, while Goodman & Pownall had done well to get to, and to make, 3N in the other room. Wales only lost 8 imps on the last two boards but had the potential to gain 26 – so England had run out winners of the match by 17-13 VPs - not ideal for Wales but the difference between the teams was 17 VPs better than at the last encounter!

**WALES – REPUBLIC OF IRELAND.** Match three started off with a bidding problem from which most emerged unscathed. The bidding started 1S-X at every table and then over a mix of a raise to 2S (4 times) or 3S (twice), the fourth hand had to decide what to do with 743-A3-KQ654-QJ8. Only one player bid 5D, while 3 settled for 4D and the others found (over 2S) X and 3S. The last of these got England to a hopeless 3N (down 2) while all the others got to 5D – the doubler finding a raise in all cases with this minimal hand A-KQ54-8732-K963. This was the successful choice when the (I reckon about 20%) game rolled home. Unlucky for England to have to lose!

The boards were then quiet again until board 10 offered this spectacle ..

JT84	AK	This was an exceptionally strong hand, sitting in fourth, and clearly a 2C opener. Difficult however for the two tables where first hand opened 2D (and once got raised to 3D). Neither player with this problem found the solution – an unusual 4N (then raising partner’s preference to slam); they both doubled and one ended in 4C, the other in 5S (don’t ask how!). After a strong opener and negative, Mike Tedd showed his hearts and over a second negative, showed his clubs. John Salisbury gave preference to hearts but (sensibly) passed 6C on the next round. Only Wales and England got to the right contract, Ireland gaining 2 imps when the inferior 6H also made.
T7	AKQ92	
T852	3	
J94	AKQ83	

The next hand was also of interest

	J9		South opened 1H at all tables and every West overcalled – usually 2D but twice West chose 3D. Three tables bid to the hopeless-looking 3N but Wales jockeyed Ireland back to 4H by sacrificing in 4D (the perils of bidding 3D with such a good hand). Wales and Scotland were left in 3N with a diamond lead. Both won the first diamond, and then one chose a first round heart finesse while the other tried three hearts from the top. The first effort clearly succeeded but the second did also – when West’s signalling failed to get a spade switch. Testing for a singleton club queen or clubs being QT doubleton were not investigated at either table. The other tables played in a boring 4H.
	J92		
	AQ6		
	K9862		
KQ8		A6543	
7		Q83	
KJ8542		973	
Q53		T4	
	T72		
	AKT654		
	T		
	AJ7		

A very flat set of boards ended 21-6 in Wales’ favour when the Irish let Wales play 4H making when everyone else bid on in their 6-4 spade fit and went one off. England won their set 31-8 and Scotland led N Ireland by 27-21 imps. The match continued with fairly small hands but the Irish dribbled away imps through repeatedly poor choices. A number of tables faced this awkward choice on board 23; partner opened 2D – multi which could be balanced 22-23 and RHO overcalls 2S. This is passed round to partner who doubles (strong hand) and you hold 753-742-T943-975. Wales chose to pass, hoping the strong hand could beat this, but the strong hand had only Q4 of spades and 2S-X was cold; fortunately the declarer lost his way and Wales collected +200! Wales had gained 38 imps on the set when this bidding exercise came along

KQJ932	T86	After a 1S opener and a 2S rebid, the responder will have slam ambitions. For Wales Mike Tedd continued with 3C and then raised 3S to 5S (which asks sometimes for a heart control, sometimes for good trumps) and this was raised to 6S. It makes when either the diamonds split 4-3 or the CK is onside, and some other times – but not today. It was bid three times but not by the Irish, who gained 11 imps from playing in 4S+1.
K95	AQ2	
J	AK983	
QJ2	A3	



The last hand of the set was the only real play exercise, and sad to report that the three declarers given the chance all failed

Q3	9854	Playing in 3C after LHO has bid hearts, you get the HK lead. Everyone counted two spade losers and possibly two club losers and won HA and cashed two top trumps. When diamonds proved to be 5-1 and clubs 4-1 this proved inadequate. The answer is to test the diamonds – playing two rounds – before cashing the second top trump, it can get ruffed but they can't stop you ruffing the fifth diamond in dummy this way.
J	AT63	
AQJ86	K5	
AKT97	862	

When the totals had been added up, Wales had won enough on the set to win 23-7, while England had only conceded 4 imps on that set and beat SBU by 25-5; Northern Ireland held Scotland to only 5 imps on that set to win the match 18-12.

**WALES – SCOTLAND.** By this point England were very likely winners of the Camrose Trophy but this match was between the clear contenders for second place. The first stanza of this match had more play problems than we have seen to date – the first being also a bidding issue.

Q5	AKT4	The outcomes varied a lot here – two pairs played in clubs (both 6C), two pairs played in no trumps (both 3N) and two pairs played in diamonds (5D and 7D). Although slam is tight, 6D is the best offering and it was missed by all. Against 6C the hand on lead had HA but the man who had shown this in the bidding (with a double of a cue) failed to lead it. After winning his spade lead, Frances Hinden was able to play two top trumps (necessary since queen third was offside) and then cash spades throwing the losing heart. That was worth 13 imps to England. The other defender against 6C cashed his ace and that was one off. But why choose 6C? The bidding started 1C-1H(spades)-2C-2D-3D which described opener well but responder worried that the DQ might be the CQ in which case 6D has no play and 6C has excellent chances. So the auction ended with 6C intending to offer a choice but there was a danger that 2D was bid on a 3cd suit and because of this opener could not chance 6D. Awkward.
7	K92	
KQ54	A932	
A86532	KJ	

A few boards later we had this

	4	At five of the six tables, South opened to show a weak two and most got a double from West. When England passed over 2D(multi), it proceeded 2H(pass/correct)-X(takeout)-2S(spades)-X(takeout)-all pass. That netted +1100, a good result even if there was a vulnerable game to be had. Most of the other tables reached 3N and got the SQ lead. Each declarer won SK and three tried the C9 but North avoided the cover, and East won that but ducked the next club to South (in case the suit broke 4-1)
	KT975	
	QT64	
	T54	
K7		A982
AJ84		2
A97		K832
9632		AK87
	QJT653	For Wales, Paul Denning found the heart switch and John Matheson for Scotland ducked two rounds of that and won the third. He knew now that South was a 6322 shape, so he cashed his minor suit winners and exited with a spade to the S8, end-playing Paul to get his ninth trick. Against Wales, after CQ, South continued with the SJ and declarer had an easy ninth trick in spades. Irving Gordon playing in 3N made his ninth trick by leading D2 to the D7 and DT, cashing the DA dropping South's DJ, and then finessing North for the missing DQ. The fourth 3N contract against England was played by West and declarer made an unfortunate discard at one point on which England were able to capitalise and went one off. This meant the England gain (or do I mean the N Ireland loss?) went up to 15 imps.
	Q63	
	J5	
	QJ	

A few boards later was this awkward hand

Q543 653 QJ762 4	AJT7 A4 A93 KT63	6 Q98 854 AQJ952	East overcalled the opening 1N with 3C and for Wales Patrick Shields as North ended in 4S. The opening lead was a diamond won by the DK, and then came SK and a successful finesse against the queen. Since losing a heart to West will lead to defeat, declarer continued with two top hearts and then ran the JH to East's queen. [Running the HJ after running the S9 – and yes he had unblocked the ST – would have been better] East returned a second diamond and now after DA and a ruff, and two more spades, East was in real trouble – what three cards should he keep in the ending? He prayed his partner had the CT and threw the CJ but declarer was able to exit in clubs (the CK in fact) and he got a club as his tenth trick at the end. There was a gain of 10 imps as silence by the Welsh East left declarer innocently playing a club to the king for his tenth trick and that didn't work.
	K982 KJT72 KT 87		

The most swingy board of the set – double figure swings in all three matches – was the penultimate board of the set -

QJ2 A3 AKJ KQ952	K98753 QT8 Q7 T3	AT64 K8 T852 AJ7	Two tables stopped in game when East took a very pessimistic view over a 2N opener, and three tables bid the easy small slam, but the interest arose when Scotland had a bidding misunderstanding and, via 2N-5N-7N, they ended in a grand slam. North knew a wheel had come off and started with a neutral club lead. Ian Sime for Scotland won and issued a sigh of relief when the finesse of the SQ worked.  He now cashed his clubs and then his spades. North started by ditching spades, and then South threw hearts, and in doing so indicated a 6 card suit. This meant that on the last club North could throw a heart. Now came the spades. Having seen his partner throw a heart, Paul Denning sitting South could see his hearts were no defence if declarer had three, so he ditched more of them and in the ending declarer had three diamonds in each hand, South had three diamonds left and North two diamonds and a winning spade.
	-- J97542 9643 864		

At the end of the stanza, Wales were 28 imps ahead of Scotland, while England had shut out N Ireland by 65-2 imps, and SBU were 10 imps ahead of Ireland. And so onto stanza 8 .... there were two double figure swings either way in this set but this hand was flat ...

K652 Q94 K973 A4	A AK532 AQ642 Q8	For Wales Paul Denning opened 1D (which might even have been 0 diamonds) and over the 1H response bid 1S. Now Patrick Shields was able to bid 3D (game forcing, at least 5-5) and heard preference to 3H. With clear slam potential but the possibility of missing C-AK, he raised to 5H and Paul acknowledged a first round club control with 6C. Now (with hearts seemingly agreed) 6D was bid as a grand slam try and Paul knew that he could hardly have more fitting cards and he bid 7D. There it rested, for +2140.  In the other room the auction started 1D-2D(inverted, support)-2H(confirming 4 diamonds)-4H(ace asking in diamonds)-5C(two of five)-5H(king ask)-5S(king)-7D. It's not clear whether the Q94 could have been the 964 but the final bid was a calculated choice, and successful. None of the other six tables reached the grand slam – a number started 1m-1H-1N but then missed the descriptive 3D rebid which had allowed Wales to bid the grand with confidence.
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The question of tempo drove the result on this next hand, unfortunately for Wales ..

QT82 QJ73 9652 5	K964 T82 Q43 AT2	AJ753 -- K87 K9843	Every table saw East open 1S in third seat except where Wales were able to open 2S showing spades and a minor. South made a simple overcall in hearts, and West supported spades (to 3S except at one table). Spotlight on North! One player who had heard a 2H overcall and the man whose partner was forced into a 3H overcall – they both passed rather than bid 4H, while the others all showed heart support (3H once and 4H three times). What this induced in East was a 4S sacrifice and this pushed South into bidding 5H, doubled and one off. Getting the hand off his chest with the first bid of 2S didn't work out well there for Wales, who lost 13 imps on this hand.
	-- AK9654 AJT QJ76		

The last hand of the set was the other big loss for Wales, and an awkward hand it was ...

87432 Q873 J7 K2	-- A954 943 AJ7543	AK5 KJ2 AKQT85 6	For Scotland, Douglas Piper had opened the East hand with a strong club and over his partner's negative 1D response, North had bid 3C. It proceeded 3D-4C-X(takeout)-P-5D and so it came to pass that Patrick Shields sitting North was on lead against 5D. Looking for just the CK in his partner's hand he tried the C7 (to get a spade ruff on the return) but most of declarer's points were in clubs and he was able to win trick one and had 11 tricks very quickly. Only a trump lead would have beaten 5D.
	QJT96 T6 62 QT98		At the other table John Salisbury chose to open the big hand with 2N (we were hoping for 2C and a 2D negative!) and we thought 3N might get home until North doubled the 3C enquiry from West. They ended in the "normal" 4S contract but this was doomed by the bad break – and Wales had lost 13 imps.
			The contracts at the other tables varied wildly. The English South psyched a 2N bid at one point and played the hand in 3N-7, but lost points for that as in the other room his team-mates had bid to 4S. But he didn't lose many as the opposition had sacrificed in 5C for -300 over that. In the third match it was EW in 3N when South had bid spades and nobody bid clubs. That could have been a quick three down but Derek O'Gorman led the SQ and now it was home. The final table – where North had bid clubs and South had bid spades – reached a tight but workable 4H contract by West (two off if played by East) which Enda Glynn was able to bring home.

When the smoke cleared Scotland had pulled back 13 imps and the match went 17-13 VPs in favour of Wales. The 25-1 win which England produced over N Ireland had left them uncatchable in this year's Camrose, but second place was not yet clear.

**WALES – SBU.** The final match was also against the hosts. The first 16 boards here were not the most exciting. Wales lost two double figure swings, one on a near blind lead against 3N and the other is the 3N hand described below. The most distributional hand of the tournament turned up on this set : you are second in hand at amber holding KQ96 – KQJT7652 – 7 – void. It starts with a pass from RHO; five of the six tables opened 1H. The next hand bid clubs and partner made a negative double. Everyone resisted showing their spades but the Irishman holding this hand had to bid 5H on the next round and his partner raised to 6H. The good news is that he had done this with two aces but the bad news is that one of them was clubs.

85  
J96  
AT852  
T62

K9  
KQ3  
KJ643  
KQ3

QT742  
T2  
7  
AJ975

AJ63  
A8754  
Q9  
84

Two tables played this hand in spades but the others were all in 3N after the bidding had started (from South) with 1H-1N-2H and from the four tables we had two leads of H6 and two leads of D5. Mike Tedd led a diamond for Wales and William Whyte won that and played CK and CQ. When North followed he knew he could overtake this safely, and that let him play a spade to the 9. SO he had two fairly quick spade tricks and he couldn't be denied a heart trick, and he was home.

Wales (Peter Goodman) and England (Frances Hinden) both got a heart to the HA and another round of that suit. They tried the SK which held. Peter returned to clubs and found himself with the diamond guess at the end. Unfortunately for him, his LHO was the only one of five not to have bid 2H when he had the chance – so Peter played South for the DA, fatally since that meant five losers. Frances, after the SK had led a second spade to the SJ and the hearts were cleared. Now when she ran the clubs she was forced into a winning “guess” in diamonds since, in the end position, if South held the ace he would have ditched D9 and kept his winning heart. That was 13 imps in for England and 12 imps out for Wales.

The penultimate board of the set was another big swing hand ...

AT2  
A87  
KT8654  
3

K965  
KT654  
QJ  
AQ

J8  
QJ92  
2  
KT9752

Q743  
3  
A973  
J864

One table played a part-score but three were in game to East-West and two in game to North-South. It was surprising to see two tables open 1N with the West hand, but they did – as a result of which they were allowed to play in 4H. Over a 1H opener on the other hand, there was a diamond overcall and in due course two Souths ventured 5D.

Against 4H everyone led the singleton club and had no trouble obtaining a ruff to beat it. Against 5D it was more tricky. The HQ was led and it came down to playing the spade suit. Scotland solved the problem for England when West led the S5 in the middle of the hand. I hope they said thanks. But Ian Syme had to do all the work himself and he started with the SQ; when he later played to the ST and the SJ he was down. The best play is not at all clear but his choice clearly works for any small doubleton with East, so investigating and diagnosing the shape of the defending hands would not have helped..

At the end of that penultimate set, Wales led SBU 37-23 imps. The next stanza was more bidding exercises than play exercises and it was North-South who had the hard work to do – the first hand being this

K652  
973  
K  
QT653

J73  
AJT85  
94  
J92

AQT98  
KQ42  
Q82  
7

4  
6  
AJT7653  
AK84

North dealt and passed and East opened 1S. Over this we had four overcalls of 2D, one of 4D and one of 5D. The 4D bid, while usually somewhat weaker than this, hit the second best spot since nobody was able to bid over it and 4D made on the nose. After 2D, West supported spades and three times that was passed back to South (the fourth had a 3H game try from East).

For SBU, South passed and 2S made 4 overtricks when West set up (!) his diamonds for one loser. For Scotland John Matheson bid 3D and then 3N (showing 4 clubs) when they bid 3S over that, and he ended in 4C (but North might have bid game). For England Tom Townsend re-opened with 3C and when supported went to game. For Wales over the 3H try, Mike Pownall bid 3S and Peter Goodman bid 5C. The opposition sacrificed in 5H so Wales started with +7 imps on this board.



The next hand of interest revolved around responses to a weak two bid –

4	A975	In first seat at green, two players did pass with this (reasonably) and three opened a weak two. One auction missing for those who are counting! The three got an enquiry from partner and a sign off opposite a negative response. Tom Townsend was able to open a “good” weak two on this, and that was enough to make his partner bid the excellent game. That was 7 imps to England.
A86532	KT7	
T842	AQJ5	
QT	92	

But England didn't succeed in this bidding exercise –

K	AQ7	Four tables opened 1D and two tables 1N. Over the latter partner transferred to hearts and continued but in each case opener showed the heart support and hid the diamond fit, so they ended in 6H. This was one of the times it mattered (hearts were 4-1) and England was one off but for reasons as yet unknown N Ireland managed a first round finesse in hearts to make that slam. Of the three who reached 6D, we have as yet detected little science and can only attribute their successful arrival there to good judgement.
KT8	AQ963	
QT532	A976	
AK53	T	

This curious hand depended on the opening lead

A764 A943 J7 976	JT95 J 5432 QJ84	2	Dealer was North (who passed) and three tables opened as East – twice with 1H and once with 4H. Those who passed heard 1C-P-1S and they chose three different entries to the auction – X, 1N and 2N. The last of these got partner to bid 5H over 4S but the others left East on lead against 4S with a silent partner. Both led a heart and declarer just needs to play small to make 4S. Graham Osborne must have looked sort-of-sneaky, for Ian Syme rose with HK and now he could be forced and was off.
		QT8765	
		AQ986	
		2	
	KQ83 K2 KT AKT53		The two pairs in 5H had a chance for a jackpot but both cashed the HA, catering for singleton king in either hand, while running the HQ, which works for singleton HJ with North would have scooped them many imps.

And then Mike Pownall perpetrated this swindle ..

AQ	954	He overbid to the 4H game (actually 3N is rather better) and got a diamond lead. He won the second round of that suit and finessed in hearts, losing to the HQ, but the spade return picked up the king for him and now he ran his hearts. He threw four clubs from dummy, and while that was happening the opposition threw away five clubs. If you count that means the only one out is the CK, so Mike led the CT to the CA, came back to the SQ, and cashed the C2 for his tenth trick! Another 7 imps to Wales.
AKJ965	8	
T43	A752	
T2	AJ864	

The final bidding exercise was this one

K84	T73	Opposition were silent except at one table and the most successful auctions were 2N-3N and 1C-1S-3N, each of which happened once. After a start of 1C-1D-3C one responder passed and another successfully chanced 3N. For England it started 1C-1D-2S and now they struggled. They didn't know that winning the weekend depended on them making game on this hand – otherwise it was a first weekend win for Wales since this format came in six years ago! They shied away from 3N with hearts the fourth suit and likely to be led, and found themselves reluctantly in 5C. A spade lead would have beaten this but it was a heart that was led and the diamonds were 3-3 and the SA onside and now 5C could make by ducking a diamond and setting up the fourth one for a spade discard.
Q	A53	
A95	K643	
AKQJ43	T65	

Wales had almost whitewashed SBU in the second half of this match, winning 67-5 – the only loss being when 5H was doubled and made. This gave Wales a 25-3 win but Wales was fined 2 VPs because a player's mobile phone had been switched on and rang in the playing room – strictly forbidden. The totals for the weekend thus showed England on 101 and Wales on 99, which means England take the Camrose trophy – well done. They have done that before; this result, however, this was the highest score ever produced by Wales in one weekend and this year's total of 177 VPs was higher than the 170 VPs with which they won the trophy last year. So they don't feel too bad! And the final table (where average is 150 and the max is 250) looks like this --

	First Weekend	ENG	WAL	SCO	IRE	SBU	NI	TOTAL
England	99		17	16	18	25	25	200
Wales	78	13		17	23	25-2	23	177
Scotland	82	14	13		14	25	12	160
Ireland	63	12	7	16		13	11	122
SBU	71	4	3	4	17		22	121
N Ireland	56	1	7	18	19	8		109