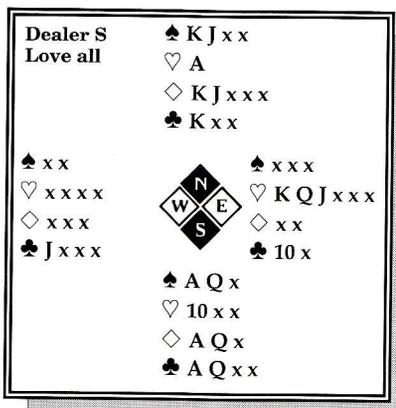


By Peter Stocken

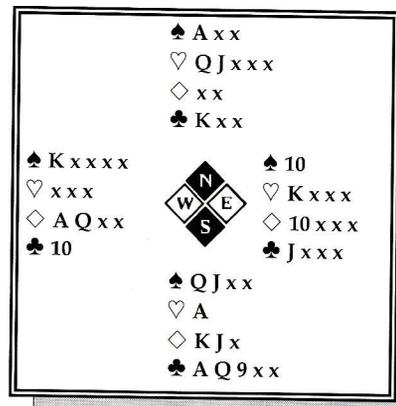
Corn Cairdis* in Dublin's fair city

* Cup of friendship

dangerously as EW:



After the bidding had gone 1♣ - NB - 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♥, West threw a spanner in the works with 4♥, putting North on the spot. In an unfamiliar partnership, he chose 6♣ as the least worst option. At the other table Ireland's Thomas Hanlon and Hugh McGann were allowed a free run to bid the Grand Slam in diamonds:



As we left on the Monday morning, I think the thought of all of us was why hadn't we done this before. We look forward to the return match in England next year and to our Irish friends 'Go raibh maith agaibh.'

ENGLAND, open: Mark Horton & Richard Winter, Willie Crook & Nick Stevens. Ladies: Jill Casey & Kay Preddy, Dee Evans & Jane Spence. Juniors: Dan Holloway & Simon Pollack, Bernard Magee & Brian Powell. Officials: Tom Bradley & John Williams, Gerard Faulkner & Peter Stocken. NPC Grattan Endicott.

IRELAND, open: Donal Garvey & Michael O'Briain, Thomas Roche & Pdraig O'Briain. Ladies: Grainne Barton & Ann Dillon, Elizabeth Dowling & Marjorie Tormey. Juniors: Tomas Hanlon & Hugh McGann, Tommy Garvey & Sza Udvari. Officials: Tom Burke & Clare Pippet, Peter Flynn & Paul Porteous. Captain: Joe Moran.

I LAST played bridge in Dublin 27 years ago. Then, in a city of three quarters of a million, I could find a game of duplicate about twenty evenings a week; there was brimming enthusiasm for the game, tournament directors were called once in a blue moon (usually only for some technical reason); and aggravation was rare. Indeed even one's partners seemed more cordial.

Nothing has changed, except that Dublin's population has increased to a million and the number of bridge clubs has doubled (in the whole of Eire there are 32,000 paid up members of the CBAI - compared to the EBU's 27,500 - and goodness knows how many affiliated clubs, all of whose members belong to CBAI)

Seventeen of us flew over on the last week of February for the first friendly international between England and Ireland and it was... well, 'Corn Cairdis' is the name of the trophy the Irish presented for the event: translated it means 'Cup of Friendship', and apt that was. From the moment we stepped onto Irish soil, we were overwhelmed by the hospitality of our hosts, who wined us, dined us, ferried us to and fro across the city and, most generously, put us up for the two nights in their own homes.

The final dinner concluded with a spontaneous outburst of songs, poetry and some of the wittiest speeches I had heard for a long time: in the general atmosphere of bonhomie even Mark Horton's jokes had us rolling in the aisles. Actually, "concluded" is not quite the right word, since most of us were still indulging in the odd drop of the hard stuff at four in the morning with a plane to catch at seven.

Tremendous zest

We played matches of 32 boards. In the first and third matches each of the four teams played their opposite number; in the second, the open teams played the Ladies' teams, whilst the Juniors played the Officials. The Irish teams were essentially their European Championship teams and despite the 186 - 169 defeat our teams did well to hold their own. The best performance was by the Irish Juniors, though it should be noted that they were held to a draw by our Officials, whose age, experience, wisdom, savoir-faire, understanding of the world and sheer charm made them a hard nut to crack.

The Irish Juniors had a tremendous zest and their bidding was never constrained by such irrelevancies as the points they might hold or the cards they saw in front of them; the 'Carrot Club' with a random 2♠ (0 - 10 points with any two suits though not both majors) was interesting to defend against. In the match against the English Officials, Tommy Garvey and Sza Udvari lived

South	North
1♣ ⁽¹⁾	1♠ ⁽²⁾
2♠ ⁽³⁾	2NT ⁽⁴⁾
3♦ ⁽⁵⁾	3♥
3♣	4♣
4♦	4♠
4NT ⁽⁶⁾	5♦
6♦ ⁽⁷⁾	7♦ ⁽⁸⁾

- (1) Weak or Strong
- (2) Which? and 12-16 points
- (3) 18 plus, balanced or four Spades
- (4) Four plus spades and five diamonds to the queen or six to the jack
- (5) Diamonds it is
- (6) Blackwood
- (7) Sign-off
- (8) South: "There is no such bid in the system."
North: "I never told you about the King of Trumps."

Occasionally a wheel came off. As South, vul, against Tommy and Sza, I picked up ♠QJ x x, ♥A, ♦KJ x, ♣A Q 9 x x

East	South	West	North
1♠	1NT	Dble	Redble
2♣ ⁽¹⁾	Dble	2♠	Dble
Redble			

- (1) Alerted as now showing four spades and five clubs!

THE SCORES (England first)

England First	Second	Third
Open 20-10	23-7	13-17
Ladies 19-11	0-25	21-9
Juniors 5-25	8-12	7-23
Officials 10-20	15-15	18-12
Totals 54-66	56-59	59-61
England 169, Ireland 186		

To three of the players it was painfully obvious that East had psyched and had the red suits. This finally dawned on me after we managed to get it only two down and when partner in his usual reassuring manner had commented icily that at least there would be no swing since I would probably have made 3NT. Probably? He should have been grateful for two down since it was only the third hand on Sunday morning and hospitality from the night before was still rendering vision difficult and thought impossible.

As it happened, it didn't matter, since this was the full hand and the Irish pair had gone down in 4♠ on the NS hands: