



Frances Hinden has had a tremendous year in bridge, winning a record number of Gold Points (see page 45). After a string of successes while playing Junior bridge, she has won a number of national titles, including the Gold Cup twice as well as bronze medals at the 2009 and 2011 European Open Mixed Teams. She also finds the time to sit on the Laws & Ethics Committee, of which she is the youngest member.

### How did you start playing bridge?

My parents were, and still are, very keen players and brought me up playing card games such as Hearts and Knock-out Whist. I started learning bridge as a teenager and took it up seriously at university. Cambridge University had a large bridge club which actively encouraged newer players – the captain ran a formal post mortem in the pub after every county match, which was massively helpful to me when I started. I stayed on to do research after graduating (in maths), so I was at university for seven years in total and progressed from playing in the B team to winning a Junior Camrose and a silver medal in the first European Universities Championship. Four of the other five players in my England Camrose team this year were partners or team-mates while I was at Cambridge.

Most importantly, I met Jeffrey Allerton through the CUBC. He persuaded me to play strong no-trump, then to play attitude leads, then finally we married in 1997. There's nothing like being in two male-dominated environments – maths and bridge – for finding a husband!

### How often do you play?

I play about as much as I can fit in with work. I play club duplicate very occasionally at Wimbledon, but usually get my midweek fix from local league and knock-out events. Playing a teams match over an evening at someone's house is more fun than a pairs session, particularly when it includes dinner in the middle and a bottle of wine afterwards. We enter most of the big English events (though some congresses often come off second best to the chance to go skiing). I have also been playing abroad once or twice a year for the last few years, but only in big events such as the European Open – I don't have enough leave from work to go to holiday-type events. Sometimes Jeffrey and I play in Sussex events with my parents.

### Who do you play with?

Because I play bridge purely for enjoyment rather than to earn a living, it's important to me that partner and team-mates are people with whom I spend a stressful day and then still want their company for dinner afterwards. I usually play with either Jeffrey or Graham Osborne; most teams events I now play with Graham, with Jeffrey as a team-mate.

I sometimes play with other people to make up a team or simply because I ask a friend for a game, and I think it's a good idea to do so to stop yourself getting too entrenched in believing there is only 'one true way'.

### Do you enjoy being on the L&E?

I was always interested in the Laws, and used to be TD for both the Cambridge Town and University Club, so I enjoy the 'Laws' part but find the 'Ethics' somewhat depressing: many disputes start from relatively minor disagreements but escalate into hugely contentious arguments that run on for months and drag in lots of other people. If only everyone could remain polite even under (perceived) provocation, and not take a TD's ruling as a personal accusation of cheating – remember it's only a game!

### What do you do for a living?

I work in corporate treasury for a large multinational company. I look after a team managing what's called 'intra-group funding', which means ensuring that all our operating companies have the right capital structure, that they pay regular dividends, and that the Group as a whole is set up to fund its business in the most efficient way.

### What are your hobbies?

Jeffrey introduced me to skiing, and we go to the Alps as often as snow conditions,

work and bridge allow. Recently we've started hillwalking on free days or weekends during the non-skiing months. The longer I live and work in London, the more I want to get away from it at weekends. We are lucky that there are still beautiful areas of the Surrey and Sussex Hills a short journey away. I am also an avid classical music fan, and go to the opera and concerts when I can, as well as having a big CD collection.

Apart from that I try and do *The Times* crossword during the commute each day, and also enjoy an occasional meal out at a good restaurant.

### Do you have a favourite bridge book?

One of the first books I read was *Step by Step Card Play in No Trumps* by Robert Bethe, which is one of the best beginners books I've seen. Plus I have to mention *Adventures in Cardplay* by Ottlik and Kelsey – not so much because I've used many of the techniques at the table (although they do come up sometimes) but rather it opens your eyes to ways of making extra tricks that otherwise just wouldn't occur to you.

### What's the bridge success closest to your heart (so far)?

The first time I played against Tony Forrester was as a student, when he generously turned out for the opposition in an annual friendly match against the University Team. He went off in a slam when I gave false count in a suit and he believed it. I was over the moon that I'd got a good board against the best player in the country.

And I once got 81% in a club duplicate playing with Tom Townsend: this included one board where he opened 1NT, I raised to 3NT and he bid 4NT(!) with the comment: 'I like to give myself a challenge in the play.' It made exactly.