

Welsh Bridge Union



Newsletter 20/01
August 2020

Bridge in the time of coronavirus

Some weeks ago I was asked if I would consider producing a newsletter for the WBU, as I used to back in the mists of time (and of Cornelly, which lies below sea-level). Foolishly I agreed, on the basis that the newsletter would be sent out by email and not languish, unread except by two people and a sheep, on the website.

These will not be the 28- or 32-page tomes of the past, but are intended to inform members of forthcoming events, results, law changes and so on. At the moment there's not much to report on any of these subjects, but we must start somewhere.

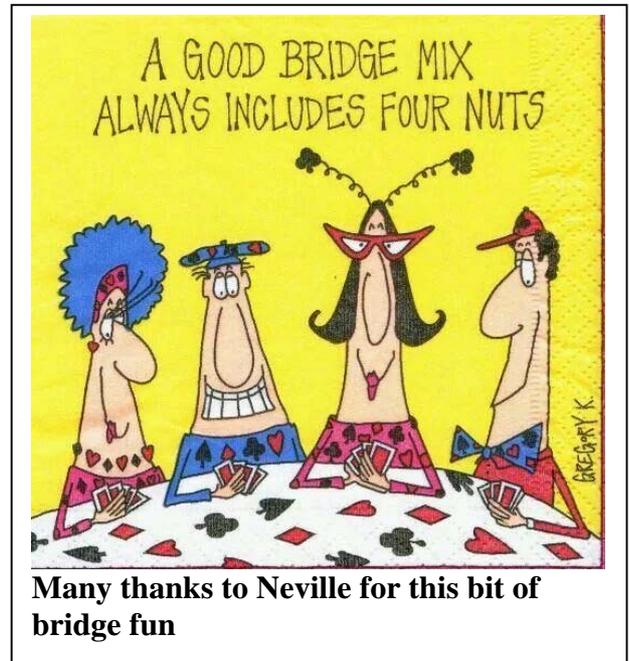


I am grateful to those who have provided material for this initial issue, and hope that more will be forthcoming for future editions.

The conditions are not ideal: I am 1500 miles away on an island in the middle of the Atlantic; I have been sharing my usually silent living-space for 4½ months with a coronavirus refugee who is definitely not silent (he has now departed for Spain); and my top-notch Windows 10 laptop has died, leaving me to struggle on an ancient Windows 7 desktop until the repairs are complete. On the plus side, I am in what seems to be the safest place in the world, where face-to-face bridge has resumed, in a limited way, out of doors and on an unofficial basis. And the weather is fab.

I haven't in the past been a fan of BBO, but like everyone else I'm glad it's there now.

Note: I can't remember what the last newsletter number was. If anyone can tell me, I will continue the previous sequence. In the meantime, I've started with 20/01 (for the first newsletter of 2020).



Many thanks to Neville for this bit of bridge fun

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CONTACTS

If you have information to contribute to the newsletter, please email me at newsletter@welshbridgeunion.org

The next newsletter is planned for early September, so the deadline is the end of August.

Details of forthcoming events, results, important information on clubs' re-opening plans (if it ever becomes possible) and so on are particularly welcomed, but of course if you have an interesting hand we will put that in too.

I cannot guarantee to fit everything in, and reserve the right to edit articles to fit in the space available; but I will do my best to publish everything I am sent.

Other useful contacts:

Sarah Amos (Bridge Director)

sarahamostd@gmail.com

Jean Hand (National Tournament Organiser)

nto@wbu.org.uk

Mikey's Musings 21: CONVENTIONS – ARE THEY REALLY NECESSARY?

Here are two bidding sequences (different boards). Let's say you are the partner of the player making the last bid shown, what do you make of it, what does it mean?

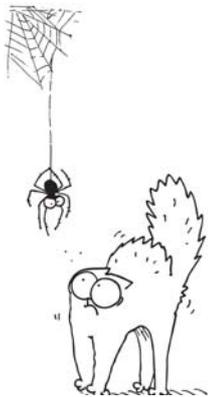
Sequence A

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♥ | 1♠ | 2♥ | 1♦ |
| | | | 2NT |

Sequence B

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| Pass | 1♠ | 2♣ | 1♦ |

I suspect that club players will look at Sequence A and say – “OK, what's the problem?”, whereas tournament players will be saying “2NT is never natural” and/or expounding the merits of the Good/Bad 2NT convention (and how they play it).



The second bidding sequence will be causing fear and trembling amongst both sets of players. The club players will wonder about East's bidding a suit ostensibly claimed by North-South and the tournament players will be pondering whether partner has come up with another convention (six clubs and four hearts maybe?)

A little scene-setting here. I was playing online - not something I enjoy much, I'm afraid, but I will play the odd friendly game. My partner was a Grandmaster from Cardiff, who is always trying to get me to play the latest fad, such as weak jump shifts (good idea in 5M and Strong, pointless in Acol and Weak). I got to make both of these bids (we had switched directions and opponents at half-time).

Yes, both bids were natural. In Sequence A, I held

♠42 ♥AK2 ♦K8762 ♣KQ5

Not a great hand, and a couple of points short of a proper 2NT rebid, but it told him where I

lived. Fortunately we do have a basic convention card agreed, and 2NT Good/Bad is not on it.



The bid helped partner, who held ♠AQ9876 ♥none ♦QJ94 ♣1073, to evaluate correctly that I had too many points in their suit for slam to be a good prospect, and he settled for game in spades when I admitted to a doubleton.

When I bid 2♣ in Sequence B, the next hand passed, and time stopped. I could hear the whirring of partner's mind over 12 miles of broadband internet. Perhaps he did not consider that North could have bid 1♠ when he did not have them (a psych in bridge parlance, frowned on if you are playing with or against club players). We were playing tournament players, but North does not psych.

My hand was ♠AKJ93 ♥A1076 ♦A3 ♥92*

Anyway, partner picked the wrong bid, which was a bit sad, as I can make 2♣ and our teammates had made +130 in 2♦ as North-South.

Some tips:

- 1) If you have not agreed a convention, then you are not playing it. Don't make them up at the table either.
- 2) If the bid isn't a convention you are playing, it is natural. Proceed accordingly.

Mike Close

**This isn't my actual hand. I was a couple of points short of this, but the devil was in me, and I couldn't resist torturing an old man...*

FROM STEVE BURGOYNE, WWBA AREA TOURNAMENT ORGANISER:

“We are hoping to run the Western Area Open Swiss Pairs in September, and probably another Area event in October, both online, but details not yet finalised.”

Fond farewells

Since the start of this awful year we have lost two of our best-known players, one to Covid-19, the other to cancer. I'm certain there have been others, but these are the two I know of.

John Moore

(14th June 1923 – 28th March 2020)

John Moore, the widower of Mary Moore (whom many of you will remember), died in March. His family could not be with him because of the risk of infection. The following article is from a national newspaper.



A Second World War hero pilot who saved his family's life and vowed 'never to waste a moment' after he survived being shot down by the Nazis has died from coronavirus aged 96.

RAF hero John Moore spent the Second World War saving lives, including his sister's during the Liverpool Blitz, before he had turned 18 he had already signed up to serve as a pilot.

His crew of six men flew 27 missions over Europe before their Lancaster was shot by enemy fire and came down over Lincolnshire. Two crew members died in the crash and three were left seriously injured.

But John managed to survive the crash and spent a month in hospital recovering.

Neighbours and friends of hero John have now paid tribute to the 'lovely man' who had a 'wonderful wit'.

He died at the Princess of Wales Hospital, Bridgend, South Wales, on March 28 after being diagnosed with coronavirus.

Villagers in his home of Aberthin near Cowbridge, Vale of Glamorgan, lit candles in their windows to mark his passing.

Friend Lindsey Alford said: "Ever humble, John joked that he only joined the RAF to escape the Blitz.

"In more reflective moments he spoke of how the experiences of war profoundly changed him - he vowed to never waste a moment and live life to the full.

"John kept his promise and became an inspiration to all who knew him."

John moved to the village 30 years ago with his late wife Mary. He had two children, two step-children, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

He was born in Liverpool on June 14, 1923, to a Welsh mother and Irish father.

Throughout the Liverpool Blitz from 1940 to 1941 he worked in the civil defence unit - extinguishing mercury incendiary bombs and pulling residents from toppled buildings.

He was just 17 when he rescued his sister Nell and her two-year-old son Alan who had sheltered in a reinforced cupboard under the stairs.

John signed up for the RAF before he was legally old enough to train - to make sure that when he turned 18 he would be drafted in.

Keen rambler John often walked up to an impressive 800 miles a year despite being 96.

One tribute said: "I have just learnt the very sad news that John Moore has passed away at the age of 96 after contracting the Coronavirus.

"I know that some people in the village knew John from playing bridge with him, from The Hare and Hounds, where he was a regular, and from the Ramblers."

The tribute added: "A lovely man, great to walk with and a wonderful wit."

The village now hopes to hold a memorial event if lockdown is lifted.

[From the Daily Mail, 9th April 2020]

Geoff Evans

(29 March 1951 - 21 June 2020)

Geoff was born to Tegwen and Leonard Evans in March 1951 and raised on the family farm at Nant-y-Calch in Caerphilly with his two younger siblings, Gillian and Ceri. His sisters remember a thoughtful and studious brother, with a competitive streak in evidence from the outset, particularly when it came to board games, and an emerging interest in cards encouraged by his mother who was keen on Whist. Being a family business all three children helped on the farm and the milk-round, and they grew to know the community in Caerphilly from an early age.

Geoff attended Caerphilly Boys' Grammar School, where he made a number of lifelong friends. Having shown particular aptitude in the sciences, he went on to study Agriculture to Master's level at Reading University and enjoyed his time there greatly. The academic work was stimulating, and his group of friends made at Wantage Hall lived together throughout university and remained in close and regular contact for fifty years.

Some of Geoff's family – and indeed friends made later in life – may be surprised to learn that, amongst this university friendship group, the terms 'theoreticals' and 'practicals' did not refer to serious laboratory science. No, they were the codenames of different venues for drinking excursions. By all accounts, such adventures did not cease entirely after graduation: when Geoff was best man for a friend in 1973, he spent the wedding night sleeping in the front hedge of the Groom's parents' house, having lost his keys. Forty years later, Geoff was astounded to be presented with those same long-lost keys by the Groom's father, who had re-discovered them during a hard pruning! Geoff was amazed that the keys had been remembered after all those years, but to the Groom it was another indication of how fondly his parents felt about their son's friend and best man.

After leaving Reading University, Geoff worked for three years in Saudi Arabia, establishing a new dairy enterprise on an enormous scale compared to that of the family farm, followed by a spell at a commercial dairy in Newcastle Emlyn in mid-Wales. Geoff returned to Caerphilly, and after his father's death in 1985

took on the family farm and the milk-round, which he ran in partnership for thirty years with his late mother, and where he remained for the rest of his working life. Geoff would be out in all weathers with the cattle or delivering milk to his customers come rain or shine, sleet or snow. At this time the milk-round covered the whole Caerphilly basin and involved both his mother and sister. Geoff's milk customers could depend on him, and often became good friends; over the years he became regarded as something of a fixture in the local community.

Geoff had discovered bridge whilst at university,



and soon began to play more regularly in and around Cardiff. He made his international debut in 1976 and played successfully in many competitions, ultimately attaining the status of Grand Master. Long-standing playing partners and friends from the Cardiff Bridge Club describe Geoff as a talented, thoughtful and analytical player who strove for the best from every hand. Competitive until the end, in 2020 he won the East Wales Bridge Association's coveted Victor Ludorum award. His wider contribution to the governance of Bridge came through membership and chairmanship of various committees of the Welsh Bridge Union and the regional association. In a lasting legacy, Geoff initiated a stand for bridge at the Cardiff University Freshers' Fair - a first - which recruited many young players and ensured a promising future for the game in Wales.

It was also through Cardiff Bridge Club in the 1970s that Geoff met Isabel, reportedly when her Cardiff 'B' team beat his Cardiff 'A' team in two successive competition finals. That certainly got Geoff's attention. They were married in 1985 and a year later Hannah was born. Geoff and Isabel continued their shared love of Bridge

during thirty years of marriage, winning the Welsh National Mixed Teams competition together in 2011.

For Geoff, Bridge wasn't just about the competition, and he will be warmly remembered both for his pantomimes and his speeches. Geoff really was a gifted and very funny public speaker, with a natural delivery and seemingly off-hand timing that belied hours spent drafting and perfecting his notes. Perhaps Geoff's best oratory was reserved for Hannah and Phil's wedding in October 2016, where his pride and joy at a match that so thoroughly delighted him nevertheless came amidst grief, having lost Isabel so suddenly earlier that year. In that bittersweet moment, Geoff drew on all his experience and held things together just long enough to bring the house down. It was by common consent an outstanding and hilarious father-of-the-bride speech.

Throughout his life, Geoff was also an avid sports fan, and he was particularly dedicated to Cardiff City Football Club and Glamorgan County Cricket Club. It was said that Geoff had the ability simultaneously to listen to BBC Test Match Special, to watch a football game and to read the sports pages of the newspaper. He followed most sports and so, coupled with his extraordinary ability to absorb and recall information, Geoff was not only a formidable Bridge player but also well worth having on your quiz team. Geoff and Isabel quizzed at the Green Lady pub together for over 15 years; the tougher the quiz, the greater the emphasis on geography, history or literature, the more affinity he had for it. Undoubtedly Geoff's finest quizzing hour came as a member of the Green Lady team that qualified to appear on the BBC's Eggheads. Geoff had been detailed to cover geography, duly the subject for Round 2. With little hesitation, Geoff answered his first three questions correctly before his opponent, Daphne Fowler, a winner of Brain of Britain and 15-to-1, got one wrong! Returning victorious to his seat, there was a pronounced spring in Geoff's step and a grin as wide as the River Taff: after all, he had just handed the legendary Daphne her first ever Eggheads defeat on geography! The team ultimately left empty-handed, but this was an achievement of which Geoff remained suitably, but modestly, proud. He was happy to return to the satisfaction of local competition, with his wife, daughter and son-in-law, and was

active in playing and writing quizzes until the start of lockdown this year. While Geoff always kept score to ensure he hadn't been wrongly docked half a point here or there, he often stressed that, while winning was nice, the real joy was in learning.

Another of Geoff's many interests and quiz specialities was Art. He filled shelf upon shelf with a vast collection of books on the History of Art. This passion led to a part-time return to academic study, through Cardiff University's Extra-Mural Studies department, where Geoff was delighted to receive the first ever Distinction awarded in the Art History Diploma. In 2008, a Leonard Cohen concert in Amsterdam afforded Geoff and Isabel an unmissable opportunity to visit the Rijksmuseum, the Dutch masters being a particular soft spot. Having collected guidebooks to many of the world's leading galleries through the travels of family and friends, principally Isabel and Hannah, Geoff had hoped to see for himself more of those great works about which he knew so much, after his retirement from farming.

In closing, the family has asked me to pay special tribute to the district nurses and carers who supported them in looking after Geoff with such compassion during his illness. They wish to thank the extended family, friends, customers and neighbours for their support: for the many messages of sympathy; for help on the farm at this difficult time; for joining this service remotely amidst all the current restrictions; and for paying their respects along the route of the funeral cortège this morning. Geoff will be remembered as someone of great humour, intellect and kindness; a true gentleman. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him, having enriched the lives of so many.

Thanks to Geoff's family for allowing us to publish his funeral oration.



It's all in the timing

Over the past few months many of us have derived enjoyment from playing on the various online platforms. We have been subjected to more than our usual share of 'freak' hands, but this hand taken from the Wednesday night WBU StepBridge tournament provides an example of an opportunity to show good technique from both defence and declarer.

| | | |
|------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Board 8 | ♠ 10 9 7 6 5 | |
| Love All | ♥ K Q J | |
| Dlr West | ♦ 2 | |
| | ♣ 10 9 8 3 | |
| ♠ none | | ♠ A K 8 4 3 |
| ♥ A 2 | | ♥ 8 4 |
| ♦ Q J 10 8 5 4 3 | | ♦ K 9 6 |
| ♣ A K 6 2 | | ♣ J 7 4 |
| | ♠ Q J 2 | |
| | ♥ 10 9 7 6 5 3 | |
| | ♦ A 7 | |
| | ♣ Q 5 | |

The bidding is certainly a 'pairs' auction – West/East: 1♦ – 1♠ – 2♣ – 3♦ – 3NT, spurning the safer 5♦ 'teams' contract. I would have preferred a 4th-suit 3♥ from West, but West was from the school of "Don't tell 'em what I've got" (or perhaps had never heard of 4th Suit Forcing).

An obvious lead from North – a heart, but which one? At the table I 'watched' (I was directing), North chose the king. This is the usual choice if you want partner to unblock: holding something like KQ109 you want partner to play his ace or jack so that you know what to do next (if partner cannot contribute say the jack, declarer is probably holding up with AJ - the 'Bath coup'). With this holding you certainly don't want partner to play his ace, so the correct lead is the queen. Partner (South) knows that you should normally only lead the queen with a holding of QJ9x or QJ10x, so he can deduce that this is the exceptional case where you have the king. He should now play his 10 (assuming high is encouraging).

Declarer ducks, and North now clarifies the situation by next playing his king, which West performs wins. He now attacks diamonds, South ducking the first round. On the second round, what does North discard? Having seen partner's

encouraging first round heart, it's essential that he unblock the heart suit by discarding his jack. Then when partner wins his ♦A, he can run the hearts. At the table in question North failed to do this, giving declarer a clear run to 10 tricks and a top board (losing two hearts and a diamond).

End of story? No. On a basic level, declarer should consider North's lead to be from a potentially blocked suit. Also from an 'experience' level, what is the point of ducking the first round? The defence are bound to get in with the ♦A and then continue hearts. Make it more difficult for them (and hope for a blockage) by not ducking at Trick 1. Now North can discard only one heart on the diamonds, so the suit is still blocked – a more assured way of making the contract.

Tony Haworth

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StepBridge started in 2001 as the internet bridge club of the Dutch Bridge League. In 20 years, StepBridge has become the No. 1 online bridge club in the Netherlands. The community at StepBridge is Dutch only, so StepBridge never expanded outside the Netherlands (except for an Australian franchise which started 15 years ago).

During the coronavirus lockdown, StepBridge has offered all Dutch bridge clubs their own online room to continue regular club sessions. This created an enormous influx of clubs, with over 400 Dutch bridge clubs now playing their weekly sessions on StepBridge.

During the same period, the Welsh Bridge Union got in touch in search of a solution for his clubs. This led to the creation of StepBridge UK. Our primary focus is to provide bridge clubs in the United Kingdom with an alternative as we did for the Dutch bridge clubs.

The advantages of social distancing ...

by Simon Gottschalk

The Welsh Bridge Union is running regular weekly “Lockdown Pairs” sessions. The Friday evening slot at 7pm with IMP scoring is gaining popularity. There are no sit-out tables and you could even play against a bridge ROBOT.

There was also a free bar with unlimited coffee and biscuits. I found the ability to shout at partners after a bad bid or play was therapeutic (for of course they were out of earshot playing elsewhere).

| | | |
|------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Board 2 | ♠ K 10 7 5 3 | |
| Love All | ♥ 10 8 7 6 | |
| Dlr North | ♦ J | |
| | ♣ 6 3 2 | |
| ♠ A | | ♠ Q J 9 8 |
| ♥ A Q 5 2 | | ♥ K J 9 4 |
| ♦ A K Q 9 4 2 | | ♦ 7 6 5 |
| ♣ Q 10 | | ♣ 8 7 |
| | ♠ 6 4 2 | |
| | ♥ 3 | |
| | ♦ 10 8 3 | |
| | ♣ A K J 9 5 4 | |

The hand shown above poses an interesting bidding problem. South has the first decision third in hand. Many would pre-empt with 3♣, but then there would be no story.

Our South, like all the others in the event, chose to pass. West then had the dilemma of what to open. There are three options worth considering:

2NT (20-22 balanced) makes life easy for partner, who will know how to respond. Despite the 21 points, however, the hand feels too strong for a 2NT opening.

1♦ seems like an underbid and risks the hand’s being passed out. But after the 1♥ response West can make a 3♠ splinter as a slam try; and when East is unable cue bid clubs a bad slam will be avoided. This would probably be the choice of many experts since there is no guarantee of game with the West hand.

2♣ (23/24 balanced OR any game force) is a slight overbid and may cause difficulty later due to lack of bidding space.

The Wests who treated the hand as balanced by either opening 2NT or opening 2♣ and WBU Newsletter Issue 20/01

rebidding 2NT should have had an easy ride to 4♥ after East used Stayman to find the 4-4 heart fit.

But the West who opened 2♣, and after the 2♦ negative response rebid 3♦, posed East a problem. Firstly the 3♦ bid is game-forcing, so 5♦ by East would show nothing (principle of fast arrival). If East bids 3♥, West should assume that East has 5 hearts, so that leaves two possible bids – 4♦ or 3NT. 4♦ here would show a maximum for the 2♦ negative and be a possible slam invitation implying an ace. With only the ♥K maybe this would be an overbid. So 3NT saying “I have a balanced hand and am non-minimum” is a good bid. East does not expect to actually play in 3NT – it would wrong-side the contract and anyway West is assumed to hold an unbalanced hand. But 3NT allows space for West to show another suit. West will now bid 4♥ and East may make a slam try with 5♥. But the failure to cue bid a club control should persuade West not to go on.

On the night, ALL the East-West pairs played in 3NT. When West was declarer this made 11 tricks on a non-club lead (well what would you lead as North?). But when West incorrectly passed East’s 3NT bid, punishment was swift at the table and continued well into the night.

* * * * *

NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

(not aimed specifically at Simon, I hasten to add)

If you are sending a bridge hand, it would be a kindness (to me) to observe the following conventions:

- Unless they’re at the start of a sentence, ace, king, queen etc. do not have a capital letter.
- Nor do hearts, spades etc.: “holding five hearts ...”; “If the king of spades holds ...”
- When using abbreviations, the suit comes before the card: HK, DQ (or ♥K, ♦Q) etc.

Screenshots of hands are generally not of high enough resolution. If you include one in an article, please send me the .jpg file separately, as well as the picture pasted into the text.

Bridge Responses During the Time of COVID-19



The 'Bridging the Gap' research project aims to explore the experiences of new and returning players into the game of bridge and build a picture of what this journey looks like. Funded by University of Stirling, EBED, SBU, NIBU, IBU and WBU, the project is interested in the transitions experienced during this journey and, as this picture will include a wide range of ages and experiences, it is hoped that each voice will be able to share their stories. Transitions represent an important feature due to the challenges involved in learning bridge. The project itself has experienced a series of challenges over the past few months and I felt that it would be heartening to share how the research has transitioned.

As a researcher, I was very eager to observe the settings in which the bridge boards are played, and to get a sense of where the mistakes are made. Unfortunately, the impact of COVID-19 has meant that this unique study would need to be conducted remotely. It would have been rewarding to see the regulars return week after week - those who have been bitten by the bug that is bridge - and watch as the community routinely gathered, played, learned, and dispersed.

Admittedly, I was very naïve at the beginning of my studies about the complexity and depth involved in learning and playing bridge. I had never played the game before and the fast-track lessons felt like a whirlwind of information. However, I soon realised that, like all satisfying, and equally frustrating games, engagement with bridge is founded on a set of basic rules that prompt intricate, and often, elaborate solutions.

Play depends on deep levels of problem-solving, rationalisation and thought. All the time a player will be reading positions, evaluating cards and formulating a plan from mental experiments, and despite all this activity the display of bridge can appear easy and sedentary.

Bridge presents a problem that requires commitment, experience and refinement. It could be argued that the answer may occasionally be arrived at through sheer luck,

but these attributes need consistency for players to progress and, most importantly, to develop a communication with a partner so that the game can be played successfully.

Over the course of my first year of study, I have managed to share these bridge experiences and stories in academic forums. Speaking at, both national and international, events has proven to be fantastic opportunities to broaden the image of bridge and widen perspectives that seem dominated by leisure and sport. It has also meant that academia and research has fed into the game with the publication of a journal article on the experiences of learning bridge and the development of a blogsite that captures the researcher's journey and (many) mistakes.

Despite working within the confines of lockdown, I have managed to adapt the project so it will deliver on the main aims. This could not have been done without the overwhelming support from the bridge unions and their clubs. In addition to the contributions to the survey and interviews, I have received many positive messages of encouragement and insight. These have made a huge impact on me, personally. The resilience of the bridge community, during a time that has affected everyone, has helped to galvanise my spirit and reconnect with this project. Dare I say it, you have helped to bridge a gap, thank you.

Thinking of others during these times of restrictions and uncertainty, many thanks go to Prof. Samantha Punch, Dr. Louise McCabe, and Dr. Dom Wilson, and, of course, Mo and Niamh.

The journal article is available from:

<https://spark.stir.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Article-3-Lessons-from-Bridge.pdf>

Please feel free to visit, and comment, the blogsite at:

<https://sociologyofbridge.wordpress.com/>

Kevin Judge