

ROBIN HOOD'S HOLD-UP

DAVID BIRD



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David Bird

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Master Point Press
214 Merton St. Suite 205
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M4S 1A6
(647)956-4933

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CONTENTS

1. A Break in the Rain	5
2. The Sheriff's Late Appointment	10
3. Friar Tuck's Visit	14
4. Sir Guy's Downfall	24
5. Little John's Master Play	29
6. The Sheriff's Perfect Partner	34
7. Wise Wynfryth's Powerful Spell	39
8. Gisborne's Foolish Opening Lead	44
9. Robin Hood's Change of Plan	53
10. Gisborne's Intervention	58
11. An Afternoon's Entertainment	63
12. Gisborne's Disappointing Session	68
13. Father Gulwynne's Reward	73
14. Friar Tuck's Raiding Party	78
15. The Sheriff's Concern	83
16. Friar Tuck's Donation	88
17. Robin Hood's Overbidding	93
18. Gisborne's Unlucky Guess	102
19. Gisborne's Excellent Dummy	107
20. Will Scarlet's Golden Card	112
21. Witchcraft in the Castle	117
22. Wise Wynfryth's Final Warning	122
23. Robin Hood's Bad Breaks	127
24. The Unexpected Encounter	132
25. The Sheriff's Young Admirer	137
26. Gisborne's Untimely Analysis	142
27. The Golden Windfall	147
28. Esther Roake's Brilliant Defence	152
29. Lady Flowynn's Restraint	157
30. An Early Departure	162
31. Maid Marian's Special Play	167
32. Robin Hood's Hold-up	172

Once again I must thank my great friend and fellow writer, Tim Bourke of Australia. The world's finest constructor of bridge deals, he gave me many of the most unusual and imaginative deals in this book.

My thanks are due also to Martin Cantor, who kindly offered to check the final MS. He found several errors that had evaded me.

DB

1

a BREAK in THE Rain



Robin Hood clapped Little John on the back. ‘Will you join me to hunt down a couple of deer this morning?’ he asked.

Little John scratched his cheek. ‘In this rain?’ he said. ‘When I get soaked through, it takes days to get dried out again.’

‘How about you, Tuck?’ persisted Robin Hood. ‘You enjoy eating venison. The deer won’t just walk up to the cooking pot, you know.’

‘A monk’s garb takes even longer to dry out,’ Friar Tuck replied. ‘Perhaps we could play cards for a while and see if the rain stops.’

Nazir was summoned to make up a four and this was an early deal:

**Neither Vul.
Dealer South**

♠ J 4 3
♥ —
♦ K Q 9 8 6 4
♣ A J 6 4

♠ 2	♠ 9 8 7 5
♥ A 10 9 7 3	♥ K J 8 4
♦ A 10 3	♦ 2
♣ 10 9 8 2	♣ K Q 7 5

♠ A K Q 10 6
♥ Q 6 5 2
♦ J 7 5
♣ 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Friar Tuck</i>	<i>Nazir</i>	<i>Little John</i>	<i>Robin Hood</i>
—	—	—	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Robin Hood won the club lead with dummy's ace and saw that it would not be right to draw any trumps straight away. Instead he played a diamond to his jack.

Friar Tuck was reluctant to release the ♦A at this early stage. Even if he then gave his partner a diamond ruff, declarer would be able to draw trumps and score enough diamond tricks for the contract. Friar Tuck followed with the ♦3. When Hood led another diamond from his hand, Tuck played low again and Little John ruffed, switching to a low heart.

Robin Hood ruffed with dummy's ♠3 and ruffed a club in his hand. He continued to cross-ruff clubs and hearts and soon had ten tricks before him.

'Yes, well done,' said Nazir. 'Nothing they can do when you play it that way.'

'Nothing we could do against Six Diamonds neither,' declared Little John. 'Five trump tricks, five spades, the ace of clubs and a club ruff. It's a pity me and Tuck didn't have your cards. We'd have bid and made a slam before you could blink.'

Nazir paused to consider the matter. 'Six Diamonds is not so easy, is it?' he said. 'When I play a trump, Tuck will duck the first round. Now if I take a club ruff, the clubs will be bare when Tuck takes the trump ace. If instead I play a second trump, he will win and play a third trump. I would lose the club ruff.'

Little John flapped his hand dismissively. 'Well, if you wouldn't have made it, you're right not to bid it. I'd have made twelve tricks, anyway.'

If anything, the rain had become even heavier. The rubber stood at Game All when this deal arose:

Both Vul.	♠ 5 4	
Dealer East	♥ A Q 8 4 2	
	♦ K 10 8 5	
	♣ J 3	
	♠ K 10 9 7	♠ Q J 8 3
	♥ K J 6 5	♥ 10 9 7
	♦ —	♦ 6 3 2
	♣ A Q 10 7 5	♣ K 9 2
	♠ A 6 2	
	♥ 3	
	♦ A Q J 9 7 4	
	♣ 8 6 4	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Friar</i>	<i>Nazir</i>	<i>Little</i>	<i>Robin</i>
<i>Tuck</i>		<i>John</i>	<i>Hood</i>
–	–	Pass	1♦
Dble	1♥	1♠	2♦
4♠	5♦	All Pass	

Friar Tuck led the ♠10 and down went the dummy. ‘You bid Five Diamonds on that?’ he exclaimed.

‘Perhaps you could make Four Spades,’ Nazir replied. ‘I wouldn’t go to Five Diamonds normally.’

Robin Hood won the first trick with the spade ace and drew one round of trumps with the ace. When West showed out, he finessed the queen of hearts successfully. After discarding a spade on the ace of hearts, he ruffed a heart in his hand. When both defenders followed suit, Robin Hood nodded happily. ‘You had good cards for me, Nazir,’ he said.

Hood crossed to the ♦10 and ruffed a fourth round of hearts in his hand. A trump to the king drew East’s last trump and he discarded his last spade on the thirteenth heart. He then faced his remaining cards. ‘You take two clubs and I can ruff my third club with dummy’s last trump,’ he said.

Little John was none too pleased to see the diamond game succeed. ‘Why d’you bid Four Spades on your hand, Tuck?’ he demanded. ‘You pushed them into it.’

‘We might have made Four Spades,’ Friar Tuck replied. ‘I’m not bidding any less on my hand.’ He paused to sniff the air. ‘Do I detect some bread being baked? I haven’t eaten anything since breakfast.’

Robin Hood laughed. ‘Remarkable restraint on your part,’ he declared. ‘Mind you, it’s not mid-day yet.’

‘I’ll be back in a moment,’ said Friar Tuck, rising to his feet.

The overweight priest soon returned.

‘No luck?’ queried Nazir.

‘Yes, yes,’ replied Friar Tuck, who was looking somewhat bedraggled from his trip into the rain. ‘I didn’t want the bread to get wet.’

The Friar leaned forward and reached up into his cassock, eventually tugging out a large brown loaf. ‘Would any of you like a small piece?’

The other three declined, with almost indecent haste, and the game continued with Tuck munching happily.

Not long afterwards, Robin Hood reached a slam on this deal:

Neither Vul.
Dealer North

♠ Q J 4
♥ A Q J 7 4
♦ K Q J
♣ A K

♠ 2
♥ K 10 6 2
♦ A 9 4 2
♣ J 10 8 6

♠ 10 8 7 6
♥ 9
♦ 10 6 3
♣ 9 7 5 4 3

♠ A K 9 5 3
♥ 8 5 3
♦ 8 7 5
♣ Q 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Friar Tuck</i>	<i>Nazir</i>	<i>Little John</i>	<i>Robin Hood</i>
–	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♠
All Pass			

‘I nearly bid a Richmond 4NT over your Two Spades bid,’ exclaimed Nazir. ‘If you showed one ace, though, there would be no way to discover if you held the king of trumps.’

Hood smiled at his partner. ‘I had a similar problem,’ he replied. ‘You showed me two aces but I had no way to find out if you held the queen of trumps.’

‘No convention is perfect,’ observed Friar Tuck. ‘Maybe in the distant future someone will invent an even cleverer method than the Richmond 4NT – one that can divine the presence of the trump king and queen.’

‘Yeah, and take all the fun out of biddin’ slams,’ retorted Little John. ‘Where’s the excitement in dummy goin’ down if you already know what’s in it?’

Friar Tuck led the jack of clubs and was none too pleased to discover that his ♥K had the ♥AQJ sitting over it. He consoled himself by tearing off another piece of fresh bread. Delicious! Much, the Miller’s son, certainly knew how to bake a tasty loaf. Mind you, that’s just about all he did know. He was completely clueless as a bridge player.

Robin Hood won the club lead in dummy and saw that he would need to find the king of hearts onside. Since he would probably have to take the heart finesse twice, he would like two trump entries to his hand. How should

he arrange the play?

All followed to the trump queen, declarer contributing the ♠3 from his hand. On the second round, Robin Hood led dummy's jack of trumps and surprised the other players by overtaking with the ace. West showed out on this trick but this caused no problem. A finesse of the heart queen proved successful and Hood then led the ♠4, finessing the 9. After drawing Little John's last trump, he repeated the heart finesse and claimed the contract. 'You make a diamond trick,' he said.

'It's a good thing we don't play for money,' observed Little John. 'You and Nazir have the luck of the devil. Almost unnatural, it is.'

You were fortunate that the four trumps were in John's hand, too.' said Friar Tuck. 'Put them in my hand and you can't afford to overtake in trumps to get the two entries you need.'

'If John shows out on the second trump, I don't overtake,' replied Robin Hood. 'I'd have to draw trumps with the four top honours and take just one heart finesse, hoping to find you with ♥Kx.'

Suddenly a bright ray of sunshine pierced the forest shelter where they were playing. Robin Hood leapt to his feet. 'That's enough bridge for me!' he declared. He reached for his longbow and a quiver of arrows. 'Four huntsmen are better than one, lads. It's time to switch our attention to a different sort of game!'

2

THE SHERIFF'S LATE APPOINTMENT



he third round of the castle duplicate saw the arrival at the Sheriff's table of a couple who had worked for many years in the castle laundry. Few better jobs were available to those of their standing. The laundry room was warm even in the depths of winter.

'Your silk shirt shows well today, my Lord,' observed Berwick Jubert. 'I believe my wife was assigned to its cleansing this week.'

'I added some marjoram to the soapwort, my Lord,' said Odine, his wife. 'I hope you like the fresh scent it produces.'

The Sheriff, who had little interest in such matters, managed a small nod. He pointed at the board before them and the players drew these cards:

Neither Vul.

Dealer South

♠ 9 8 4
♥ A K J 6
♦ A 8 7 4
♣ A Q

♠ 7 3
♥ 10 3
♦ K Q J 9
♣ J 9 8 5 3

♠ 2
♥ Q 9 8 4
♦ 10 5 3 2
♣ K 10 7 6

♠ A K Q J 10 6 5
♥ 7 5 2
♦ 6
♣ 4 2

WEST

*Odine
Jubert*

—
Pass

NORTH

*Guy of
Gisborne*

—
6♠

EAST

*Berwick
Jubert*

—
All Pass

SOUTH

*The
Sheriff*

4♠

The ♦K was led and Gisborne put down the dummy. Berwick Jubert was distressed to see that dummy contained the ♣AQ and he held the ♣K sitting over the tenace. What if the slam eventually depended on a successful club finesse? Should he risk annoying the Sheriff by winning the queen with his king? Perhaps he should follow with the ♣6, claiming that he had pulled the wrong card.

‘Play the diamond ace,’ said the Sheriff. ‘And lead another diamond.’ He ruffed this trick with the ♠10, retaining his two lowest trumps to allow him to enter the dummy safely. He crossed to the ♠8 and ruffed another diamond with the ♠J. Returning to dummy with the ♠9, he ruffed dummy’s last diamond. With the diamond suit removed from the fray, these cards remained:

	♠ 4	
	♥ A K J 6	
	♦ —	
	♣ A Q	
♠ —		♠ —
♥ 10 3		♥ Q 9 8 4
♦ —		♦ —
♣ J 9 8 5 3		♣ K 10 7
	♠ A K	
	♥ 7 5 2	
	♦ —	
	♣ 4 2	

The Sheriff led the ♥2 from his hand and the ♥3 appeared from West. ‘Play the six,’ said the Sheriff, looking almost bored as he made this expert play. He would no doubt be the only declarer in the room to find it. Then, very tediously, the ♥Q would probably be onside.

Berwick Jubert won with the ♥8 and had to surrender the contract by leading into one of dummy’s tenaces. ‘Well played indeed, my Lord!’ he exclaimed.

‘Well played, but not well defended,’ observed Gisborne, turning towards Odine Jubert. ‘Play your ♥10 on the first round, woman! Your partner wins dummy’s jack with the queen and can then exit safely with the ♥9.’

‘That would be a brilliant defence...’ declared the Sheriff.

Sir Guy was delighted to receive such a rare compliment.

‘... had she been playing against the village idiot!’ continued the Sheriff. ‘Any other declarer would win the ♥10 with dummy’s ace, return to his hand with a trump and finesse the ♥6 for the endplay. Even if West began with

something like the ♥109, it would make no difference. I cover the ♥9 with the ♥J on the second round. East wins with the queen and has to lead back into dummy's ♥K6.'

'Exquisite analysis, my Lord,' said Berwick Jubert. 'It's a privilege to listen to it.'

A couple of rounds later, two serving wenches arrived at the Sheriff's table. Gisborne was somewhat ill at ease to discover that one of them was Patsi Kingslake, a lithe 19-year-old who had recently paid several late-night visits to his officer's quarters in the West tower. Such encounters broke no regulations, as far as he knew, but the Sheriff would jibe him mercilessly if he discovered the situation.

'Ah, who have we here?' enquired the Sheriff, looking Miss Kingslake up and down. 'Have you played in the castle duplicate before, my dear?'

'No, my Lord,' Patsi replied. 'It's my first time.'

The Sheriff smirked. 'Did you hear that, Gisborne? It's her first time.'

'I believe it's you to bid, my Lord,' replied Gisborne.

This was the deal before them:

E/W Vul.			
Dealer South			
		♠ 10 6	
		♥ K 6 2	
		♦ A 8 5	
		♣ Q 10 9 8 3	
	♠ K Q 8 5 4	♠ 9 2	
	♥ J 8 4	♥ Q 7 5 3	
	♦ 9 3	♦ 10 6 4 2	
	♣ K 7 2	♣ A 6 4	
		♠ A J 7 3	
		♥ A 10 9	
		♦ K Q J 7	
		♣ J 5	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Patsi</i>	<i>Guy of</i>	<i>Letha</i>	<i>The</i>
<i>Kingslake</i>	<i>Gisborne</i>	<i>Fogge</i>	<i>Sheriff</i>
—	—	—	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Patsi Kingslake led the ♠5, her somewhat stout partner producing the ♠9. The Sheriff saw that he had eight easy tricks, including a couple of spades. He would therefore need at least one trick from the club suit to make the game. Suppose he won the first trick with the ♠J and played a club. If the outstanding club honours were split and spades broke 5-2, East would win

the first club and clear the spade suit. He would then be in danger of losing three spades and two clubs. What could be done to guard against that situation?

The Sheriff soon spotted the solution. He followed with the ♠3, allowing East to win the first trick. The ♠2 was returned, South playing the ♠7, and Patsi Kingslake won with the ♠Q. She paused to read the lie of the spade suit. Letha would have returned the ♠J from an original ♠J92. The Sheriff must still hold the ♠AJ and it would give him an extra trick if she continued the suit.

Pleased to have an opportunity to impress Sir Guy, Patsi switched to the ♦9. The Sheriff won and was soon able to set up the club suit, making the contract exactly.

‘That’s surprising, my Lord,’ said Gisborne, inspecting the score-sheet. ‘Most declarers have gone down in 3NT.’

‘His Lordship played it well, Guy,’ observed Patsi Kingslake. ‘If he wins the first trick, the contract cannot be made.’

The Sheriff’s ears pricked up. ‘She calls you Guy?’ he queried. ‘What have we here, Gisborne? Are you acquainted with this wench?’

‘Er... well, not really, my Lord,’ Gisborne replied. ‘She sometimes serves the wine in the Great Hall.’

The Sheriff eyed Patsi closely. ‘Now I come to think of it,’ he continued. ‘I believe I saw you, or someone very much like you, entering the West tower at around eleven on the clock last night. What was your business there? Speak up!’

Patsi Kingslake looked helplessly at Gisborne, expecting him to come to her aid.

‘It was entirely innocent, my Lord,’ said Gisborne. ‘I’ve been giving Patsi some help with her bridge. She works long hours and it was the only time we could er... get together.’

The Sheriff surveyed the young serving girl, whose charms were growing on him by the moment. ‘If you want to improve your game, my dear, there’s no need to waste your time with Gisborne,’ he informed her. ‘I will see you at eleven tonight. My chambers are in the East tower, on the top floor.’

Resigned to her fate, Patsi Kingslake nodded her acceptance.

‘I’ll have my man bring up a good bottle from the cellars and we can go over this 3NT deal again,’ declared the Sheriff. ‘Yes indeed, it will be an enjoyable night. For both of us, I can assure you!’

12TH-CENTURY BRIDGE ADVENTURES

Journey back to Sherwood Forest and Nottingham Castle in David Bird's fourth book of Robin Hood bridge stories. The 32 stories contain well over 100 splendid deals and provide the laugh-aloud humor and painless instruction for which the author is renowned.

The cast list features Robin Hood, Maid Marian and the Outlaws — also their arch-enemies, the Sheriff of Nottingham and his hapless side-kick, Sir Guy of Gisborne. Joining in the fun are a host of nuns, novices, priests, bishops, Wise Wynfryth (a witch), Maid Marian's girlfriends, soldiers, serfs, horse traders, landlords, barmaids, undertakers, lords and ladies of the court and their vulnerable young daughters. The deals played are ingenious and the adventures hilarious. *Robin Hood's Hold-up* is a sequel to the popular *Arrow Through the Heart*, also available from Master Point Press.



DAVID BIRD (England) has written over 130 bridge books, a record number, including over 50 for Master Point Press. He is well known for his humorous bridge fiction, including the Abbot series, which has run for nearly 40 years.