



Game of skill: Annabel and Sophie with their bridge coach Sue Johnson. Photo Milly Sutton

## Take your partners, please

By David Gritten

You may not immediately associate the card game Bridge as an obvious pastime for 10-year-old girls. But Annabel Sutton and Sophie Ward, two pupils at Coldfall Primary, where it is an optional after-school activity, have been playing Bridge for just over a year. And remarkably, they have now been invited to join the England Under-16 Bridge team, where they will be among the youngest players in the group.

The two girls are devoted to Bridge, and play it outside regular school hours, either in person or online, for some six to eight hours each week. Their ambition now is to be part of the international team representing England.

None of this has happened by accident. Annabel and Sophie have been coached by the highly rated Sue Johnson, who is based nearby in Muswell Hill, and runs the Bridge club New

Tricks, not a commercial venture but a UK-registered charity. Sue works with a number of schools in north London, teaching Bridge to interested pupils. She has been described in the media as “the fairy godmother of Bridge”.

In a delightful sideline, Sue has noticed that several parents of New Tricks pupils have themselves taken up Bridge, and meet up in evenings and at weekends in order to play.

Annabel’s mother Milly Sutton makes the point that while Bridge is widely considered to be a game for older people, it is also an ideal means of keeping the brain active and refreshing the memory, as well as being an easy way to mingle with new people.

**Town Team date**  
The Town Team Christmas social meeting will take place on Thursday 14 December at the East Finchley Constitutional Club, 9, The Walks, N2.

Anyone who is interested or wants to contribute ideas is welcome. Light seasonal refreshments will be provided and drinks are available at the bar. Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start.

## Why we must never lose sight of human rights

*Debora Singer explains why the work of the human rights charity where she is a volunteer is more important than ever in today’s war-torn world.*

When I retired from running the Women’s Project at Asylum Aid four years ago, I made two key changes to my life. One was to move to East Finchley where I enjoy Cherry Tree Wood, the local shops and the sense of community. The second was to continue using my campaigning experience for human rights.

Sunday 10 December sees the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, published by the newly formed United Nations in 1948. This was written as a response to the Holocaust so that never again would a state perpetuate gross violations on its citizens with impunity. It was the first time that a community of nations had made a declaration of human rights and freedoms. It remains the most translated document in the world.

The charity I volunteer for, René Cassin, is named for the co-writer of the Declaration, French Jewish lawyer, Monsieur René Cassin. He had himself lost most of his family in the Holocaust.

Based in North London, René Cassin is the Jewish voice for human rights. We use our experience as a Jewish community to speak up for minorities in the UK who are now facing the types of abuses we experienced all those years ago. Hence our work against discrimination and modern slavery and for asylum seekers and refugees.

My theme is the human rights framework in the UK. Working with other organisations we saw off the Bill of Rights which weakened the Human Rights Act. Now my focus is on the proposal by some senior government ministers to withdraw from



Rights campaigner: Debora Singer

the European Convention on Human Rights, the offspring of the Declaration. My time is spent producing parliamentary briefings and social media campaigns emphasising the importance of remaining within the European Convention.

The Convention plays a huge role in numerous human rights advances including freedom to wear religious symbols, same-sex marriage, rights for disabled people and those fleeing domestic violence. It is a cornerstone of the Northern Ireland peace agreement and Scottish devolution.

Most recently I was involved in making a film of key Jewish people explaining why we need to stay signed into the Convention. The film includes local Olivier award winning actor, and René Cassin ambassador, Elliott Levey, which you can see on our website [renecassin.org](http://renecassin.org).

With the conflicts in the Middle East, Ukraine, Afghanistan, the Declaration and the Convention continue to be needed as a framework for human rights across the world.

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## Stanley undefeated at UK chess champs

Congratulations to 14-year-old Stanley Badacsonyi from East Finchley for winning the UK Chess Challenge under-14 final at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire.

Thousands of children from all over the UK competed in qualifying rounds and the final 12 in each category competed in an 11-round all-play-all tournament. Stanley, a year 9 student at Fortismere School, who started playing chess aged nine at Coldfall School, played over 30,000 games online during lockdown, and is currently ranked first in both blitz and rapid chess in his age group in England. Stanley said: “This was my third consecutive year playing at Blenheim Palace. I really enjoyed the last two years and gained loads of experience playing, but I enjoyed it even more when I won the whole thing without losing a game!”



Chess king: Stanley Badacsonyi