



Journal of the International Playing-Card Society



# From the Chairman

## This Year's Annual Convention in Vienna

With this issue of *The Playing-Card* you will find the schedule & booking form for our joint annual convention with Talon and BubeDameKönig in Vienna. Additionally, the page [https://bit.ly/Vienna\\_2024](https://bit.ly/Vienna_2024) on the IPCS website has links to an online booking form and other useful items relating to the convention. You will see from the schedule & booking form that our hosts, Talon, have put together an interesting and exciting programme, which includes a visit to the playing card and games factory of the firm of Piatnik, which this year celebrates the 200th anniversary of its founding. I look forward to seeing you in Vienna.

## Oxford 2025

In the meantime, thanks to our man on the ground, Peter Burnett, good progress is being made with organising next year's annual con-

vention in Oxford. It is proposed that the event will take place from Thursday the 11th of September to Sunday the 14th of September 2025. If all goes to plan, the main venues for the programme events will be Trinity College and the Bodleian's Weston Library. Besides the usual talks, auction and trading and game sessions, an exhibition of items from the Bodleian's rich collection of 16th and 17th century playing cards is being planned. Negotiations are underway to secure single and double ensuite accommodation (with breakfast included) on the Trinity College campus at rates that are very favourable when compared to hotel rates in the city. Hopefully, more information will be available at this year's AGM.

John Williamson  
([chairman@i-p-c-s.org](mailto:chairman@i-p-c-s.org))

## Incontro Soci IPCS Italia – Napoli 25 maggio 2024

Abbiamo il grande piacere di annunciare che il giorno sabato 25 maggio si terrà a Napoli l'incontro annuale 2024 dei soci italiani della International Playing-Card Society, con la partecipazione dell'Associazione 7bello – Cartagiocofilia Italiana A.P.S.

L'occasione è la conferenza di presentazione presso l'Archivio di Stato di Napoli (<https://www.archiviodistatonapoli.it/>), zona Duomo, della mostra *Le carte in gioco – Carte da gioco a Napoli*, risultato del lavoro del prof. Vincenzo Capuano con alcuni competenti appassionati di carte da gioco. All'incontro / mostra sarà associata la ristampa di un mazzo di Rovescino.

Dalle 09:30 saremo nella sala conferenze per ascoltare le relazioni collegate all'evento e avremo la possibilità di visitare la mostra. A fine giornata avremo il nostro momento conviviale.

Seguirà – appena definito con l'Archivio – il programma dettagliato della giornata. Visto il periodo dell'evento, è necessario provvedere individualmente alle sistemazioni alberghiere.

# Jewish Cardmakers in Europe

Written by Thierry Depaulis

Before 1800, there were very few cardmakers in all Europe who were Jewish. Probably the making of playing cards was the kind of trade that they were implicitly banned from. Although I know of no country or city where such a rule was promulgated, and it does not seem that the rabbis had particularly condemned such an activity, Jewish cardmakers are almost unheard of. I know of no specific study about them.<sup>1</sup> However, there are here and there small pieces of evidence that mention Jews making playing cards.

The earliest presence of Jews as cardmakers that I know of is the recently discovered (and published) role they played in the introduction of card making in Perpignan. Now a French city, Perpignan was, before 1659, a Catalan town, and belonged to the Crown of Aragon. Its port and its artisans were very busy in the Middle Ages. As Jean-Pierre Garrigue has shown, Perpignan had cardmakers at a very early stage, for a city ruling of 1399 explicitly mentioned '*fahedors de naips*', makers of playing cards.<sup>2</sup> Of these early cardmakers, Garrigue discovered two families, the Cassanyes and the Lehonarts, who appeared to be converted Jews. They were probably forced to convert,

as there was a wave of forced conversions in Perpignan in the years 1414–16. Thanks to a rich archival documentation, Jean-Pierre Garrigue was able to track the lives of these 'neophytes', freshly converted Jews, who not only had to give up their fathers' faith, but also had to change names. For example, Bonastruc Jaco, a prominent member of the Jewish community, became known as Joan Cassanyes and turned to card making around 1416, appearing as *nahiper* in 1418.<sup>3</sup> So, according to Garrigue, the earliest cardmakers in Perpignan were converted Jews.

We have to look for other places to find a few Jews involved in the making of playing cards. Italy, an area that has always been more tolerant to Jewish communities than elsewhere in Europe, had indeed Jewish cardmakers in Perugia, Mantua and probably elsewhere. In Perugia, we hear of a ban on playing-card and dice making of 1486, that targetted the Jews as cardmakers. However, in August 1508, a contract was sealed to establish a company whose two partners were a Jewish cardmaker, Vitale di Mosè, and Bianchino Bernardi, a Christian printer from Verona.<sup>4</sup> Was it in Bologna or, perhaps, in Perugia that a master cardmaker who signs M. Agnolo Hebreo produced the

- 1 For example, the 'Jewish Craftspeople in the Middle Ages: Objects, Sources and Materials' research workshop, which was first scheduled for May 2020 at Tel Aviv University, and was finally held online in March 2021, mentioned in its call for papers: "Jews in medieval Europe working as [...] playing card makers", adding: "We also have evidence of Jewish women who worked as cheese makers, writers, copyists and playing card makers." Unfortunately, no paper was devoted to this subject.
- 2 See Jean-Pierre Garrigue, *La carte à jouer à Perpignan du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, Perpignan, Société agricole, scientifique et littéraire des Pyrénées-Orientales, 2012; Id., *La carte à jouer en Catalogne XIV<sup>e</sup> & XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Saint-Estève, Les Presses littéraires, 2015.
- 3 Garrigue 2015, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-108. For Rafael Lehonart, another converted Jew, who is mentioned as early as 1417 as *nahiper*, see pp. 112-114.
- 4 Ariel Toaff, *Gli Ebrei a Perugia*, Perugia, Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria, 1975, p. 286-7; Id., *The Jews in Umbria*, vol. 3 : 1484-1736, Leyden, Brill, 1994, doc. 1906, p. 1006 and doc. 2200, p. 1139.



# Playing the Game: Bavarian Schafkopf – pure genius!

Written by Paul Eaton

## Introduction

Picture blue skies and snowy-topped mountains, tranquil lakes and flower-filled meadows, castles perched atop giddy rock faces and log cabins serving beer and playing oompah music and you begin to get a feel for the land where Schafkopf is the national card game. Now Bavaria is so varied that no such characterisation can ever do it justice, but this game is very much at home in the pubs and clubs of towns and villages with a backdrop of hills or mountains. Indeed it is said that any true Bavarian can play Schafkopf and, so embedded is it in their culture, it has given rise to its own sayings and witticisms, known as Schafkopf language (*Schafkopfsprache*). So what is its attraction?

I must have played over 100 different card games of every hue and colour, but Bavarian Schafkopf is the one I come back to time and again. It's a nice balance of luck and skill, of teamwork and individualism, of risk and reward. But what is particularly clever is the counterpoint offered by its official tournament rules – “pure” Schafkopf (*reiner Schafkopf*) – alongside the variety and gaiety of the pub game with its extensive pick ‘n mix menu of add-on contracts and other game features – so-called “impure” Schafkopf (*unreiner Schafkopf*). Thus every village has its own version of the game, yet all have a core set of rules, understood by every Schafkopf player and fixed by the School



Fig. 1. Classic Bavaria: St. Sebastian's Church in Ramsau alongside an Alpine stream in the Berchtesgaden Alps.

of Schafkopf (*Schafkopfschule*) in Munich. So if you join a new circle, they just say “we play long Schafkopf with Geier and Bettel, tariff 5/20” and if you're a Schafkopfer, you know exactly what they mean and can join in seamlessly. It's a game for the social as well as serious player; infinitely tuneable to your taste and level of skill. Impure it may be, but it's pure genius!

## Background

Schafkopf's eponymous progenitor is first attested in the late 18th century and was well established by 1811 when Paul Hammer described no less than nine versions.<sup>1</sup> Three were 32-card, point-trick partnership games for four players who bid for the right to choose trumps; the main difference being that the

<sup>1</sup> Hammer, Paul. (1811). *Taschenbuch für Kartenspiele*. Leipzig: Weygand. I have only seen the 1817 “new” edition; however they cover the same games.

number of *Wenzels* (matadors, i.e. Obers and Unders acting as top trumps) varied from four to eight. Five others were point-trick games in which Bells were always trumps, the number of *Wenzels* and cards varying with the number of players who were divided into two teams.

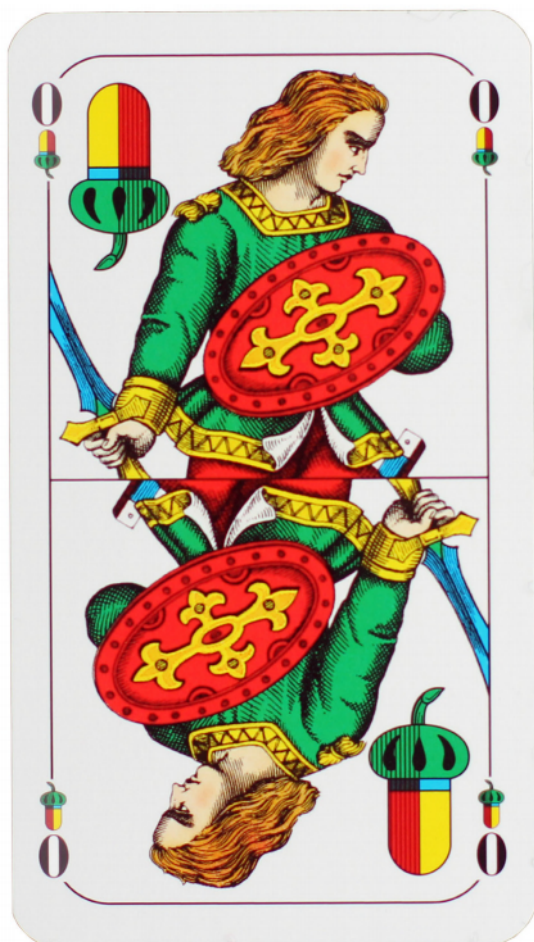


Fig. 2. The 'Old Man' (Ober of Acorns) is the commanding card in Schafkopf.  
Card © F.X. Schmid.

The odd-man out was a four-hand, plain-trick game with four *Wenzels* and Bells as trumps, in which players played for themselves and had to make two tricks to avoid a penalty. Whist rules of play applied.<sup>2</sup>

The older form of Schafkopf, first described in these nine variants by Hammer, is now usually called "German Schafkopf" to distinguish it from its Bavarian offshoot. Although several other descendants of German Schafkopf are still played in the north of Germany,<sup>3</sup> in the Palatinate<sup>4</sup> and in parts of Poland,<sup>5</sup> Bavarian Schafkopf is easily the best known and most popular and has been refined into a rather fine game.<sup>6</sup>

### Emergence of the Bavarian Game

Until recently, all the evidence suggested that Scha(a)f(s)kopf originated in Leipzig in Saxony. This was because all the early references to it were published in that city and, furthermore, it was being played at the university there in 1796 by students who liked to repair to disreputable bars to play Solo or Schafkopf "for a couple of Dreiers".<sup>7</sup> As early as 1780 it was well known enough to be mentioned without explanation in a comedy by Hartmann called *The Thankful Daughter* where Platz tells his brother that "I thought we'd play a Schaafkopf" and they go off to look for a pack of cards.<sup>8</sup> In a 1782 Saxon ordinance on drinking and gaming on Sundays and workdays, it was given the green light because it was not seen as a gambling game.<sup>9</sup> Certainly Schafkopf was embedded in Saxon culture by the late 18th century, but recently I

- 2 That is players must follow suit if able; otherwise may play any card.
- 3 See article on Scharwenzel, in *TPC* 35 (2): 127–130, and rules of "Seefelder Schafkopf" at weebly.com. Available from <https://leberduegerdi.weebly.com/die-seefelder-schafkopf-regeln.html> (accessed 11 August 2023), played in Hamburg.
- 4 These include three Palatine games: Bauernstoss and Alter Schoofkopp, reported in *TPC* 47 (3): 170–175, and Bauerchen played in the Kaiserslautern area – available from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bauerchen> (accessed 11 August 2023).
- 5 Kop and Baška.
- 6 Doppelkopf, the popular northwest German game, has traditionally been seen as evolving from Bavarian Schafkopf, but my research suggests it also goes back to German Schafkopf.
- 7 Rabiusus the Younger, Anselmus (1796). *Wanderungen und Kreuzzüge durch einen Theil Deutschlands*. 2nd, fully improved, revised and expanded ed., Part 2. Altona: Verlagsgesellschaft. p. 74. A Dreier was a Saxon coin worth 3 pfennigs.
- 8 Hartmann, Andreas Gottlieb (1780). *Die Dankbare Tochter*. Leipzig and Budissin: Deinzer. p. 24.
- 9 Hommel, Karl Ferdinand (1782). *Rhapsodia quaestionum in foro quotidie obunientum*, Vol. 3, Bayreuth, p. 115.

In a Rufer, each loser pays one of the winners the total game value including any bonuses and doubling. In a solo game, each defender pays the game value to the declarer if he wins; if he loses, he pays each defender the same.

*Example:* The tariff is 10/20. Anne wins a Solo with 91 card points having had the 3 highest Obers. From each opponent she earns 20 cents for the win, 10 cents for Schneider (over 90) and 30 cents for 3 runners making a total game value of 60 cents. Thus she earns 180 cents in total; each opponent paying her 60 cents.

### Tactics

The key to Schafkopf is to accurately assess your hand. To play a Rufer you need at least 4 trumps of which at least two are Obers. A void suit is good – offering a chance to trump it when it is played, and Aces are valuable when not guarded by more than one card. Since the declarer will be strong in trumps, his partner will lead a trump when able, whereas the defenders will lead the called suit in order to reveal the declarer's partner. A common ploy is that, if the defenders find a suit in which the declarer is void, they will continue to lead it to weaken his trumps.

To play a Wenz, you want at least two Unters alongside enough Aces and Ace/Ten combinations to take at least 6 tricks. With only 2 Unters, one should be the “Young Man”, the Unter of Acorns.

For a Solo, you want at least 6 trumps of which the majority should be lords, including at least 2 Obers. Again an Ace or Ace/Ten combination can make up for not having the highest Obers and void suits are valuable.

Of course some players are cautious while others are natural risk-takers and that will affect how they bid. If players know what they are doing, however, they will be playing a Rufer most of the time – a fascinating team game with the cut and thrust of the trumps, the quest to find your partner and the challenge of hauling home high-value cards while avoiding the menace of high adverse trumps.

### The Long Game – Langendorf Schafkopf

So much for the purity of the official rules, but how do ‘real’ Schafkopf players play? I put this question to sauspiel.de and received the usual ribald responses, but one serious reply. Ralf's description of Schafkopf as played in Langendorf, an idyllic village on the Franconian Saale in Lower Franconia, was interesting: a typical example of ‘long’ Schafkopf... just what one would expect from a place whose name means ‘long village’!



Fig. 6. The village of Langendorf lies on the River Saale in Lower Franconia.

For a start, Langendorf Schafkopf has no less than *five* additional contracts:

- Geier and Geier Tout
- Bettel and Open Bettel
- Ramsch

Geier is the same as Wenz except that the Obers are trumps. Bettel is a *misère* in which the declarer must take no tricks and Ramsch is a contract in which the aim is to avoid scoring the most points.

In addition – and very typical of local rules – a Cross round (*Kreuzrunde*) is played after every Solo. This is a round of four hands in which the players sitting opposite one another form fixed partnerships; otherwise play is as in a Rufer. In effect this is the game of Bierkopf, a simpli-



# Playing card designs by Christa Ehrlich (1903-1995)

Written by Paul Symons

About one and a half years ago, the museum where I am a volunteer had an exhibition of the life and work of silver designer Christa Ehrlich.

Christa Ehrlich was born in 1903 in Austria and was, already at the age of 24, an established designer in Vienna, where she had studied and gained experience and knowledge of design trends. She then came to work at the silver factory in Voorschoten, the Netherlands (Van Kempen, Begeer & Vos), where she experimented with silver, a material she had not used before. She created minimalist designs which were in contrast with the fussy designs of that period. Besides her silver designs, she also worked with ceramics, fashion design and wallpaper. She became a Dutch citizen in 1938 and died in the Hague in 1995.

Amongst the silverware and other items shown at the exhibition was a partly displayed set of playing cards she created in the early 1920s. They are unique designs in ink and coloured by hand. The designs are fascinating and clearly reflect her early life in Austria and elements of Austro-Hungarian card design, especially in the pip cards.

After the exhibition, the curator kindly took some photos of the 54 cards – of which one court card is unfortunately missing. These photos are not of the best quality, but I hope the enlargements I have included will give a better impression of the handmade quality.

The set was never published, and as far as I am aware, Christa did not design any other playing cards. They have now gone into private hands and will probably never be seen again. Therefore, I have decided to share these pictures with you here.

I hope they will interest you.



# New Issues

Some packs reviewed for you

**Name** Folklore Playing Card Deck

**Designed by** Sheena Wells

**Description** September's Hearth is a small business based in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, selling handmade kitchen linens designed by Sheena Wells. This is her first foray into playing card design. The one-way aces, court cards and jokers depict different characters from stories (mostly folktales) originating from many parts of the world. Shown here are characters from Kupe and the Giant Wheke (Polynesian/Maori folktale), Numazu being pinned down by Takemikazuchi (Japanese folktale), and Scheherazade (One Thousand and One Nights), and Laura (Goblin Market by Christina Rossetti). The artwork was first drawn, then hand carved in linoleum, and finally printed and scanned into a computer to fit a playing card template. The result is a pack with bold, striking, and memorable imagery.

**Printed by** Mr. Playing Card

**Published in** 2023

**Price** from £18.39

**Available from** September's Hearth shop on Etsy <https://www.etsy.com/ca/shop/september-shearth>

**Reviewed by** John Williamson



**Name** VARIUS Playing Cards (Classic)

**Designed by** Montenzi

**Description** Montenzi has a record of producing beautiful, eye-catching packs of cards with imaginative, non-traditional courts. The courts in this pack, while closely echoing the design of those in the classic standard pattern, have been reimagined with a more refined, less angular look that is somehow modern and classic at the same time. The pips have been given an elegant makeover, the central ones on the aces also having simple but graceful decoration within them. The artwork on the card fronts is presented in faded shades of blue and red against an aged parchment-looking background. The card backs feature a weathered, greenish-grey, borderless pattern inspired by ancient Roman floor tiles.

**Printed by** Cartamundi

**Published by** Montenzi Ltd

**Published in** 2023

**Limited Edition** 1,000

**Price** \$15

**Available from** <https://montenzi.nz/products/varius-playing-cards-classic> and various online playing card, magic and cardistry retail outlets, and on eBay

**Reviewed by** John Williamson



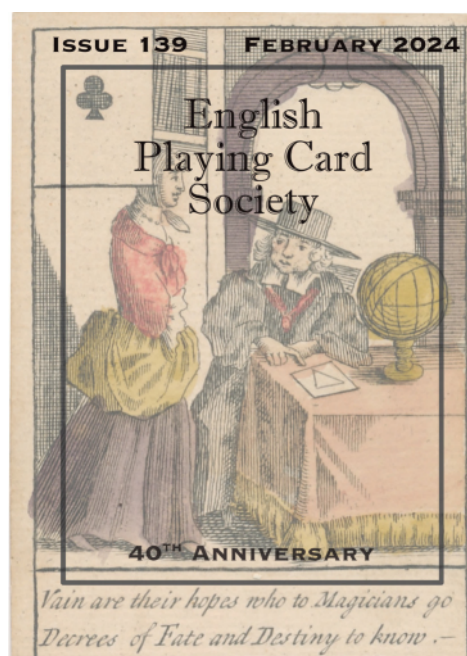
# Publications Roundup

## From other Societies' Publications

Some of the Contents  
Images taken from the Publications

Please note that this section comprises a curated selection, and the contents provided are not complete.

### English Playing Card Society Newsletter, No. 139



2024 marks the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Society. To commemorate this milestone, EPCS Magazine is now publishing in full colour.

- Ken Lodge, the doyen of the English Standard Playing Card, has uncovered another revenue-dodging scheme from over 200 years ago featuring a fraudulent Ace of Spades purportedly made by the maker Wheeler. Interestingly, this is an engraved ace as opposed to the usual woodblock fakes, with great analysis focusing on this maker.

- Paul Bostock offers a write-up on a pack of cards by designer Chloe Campbell, depicting

the London churches designed by Christopher Wren. You might wonder why this write-up is significant. Well, each card is designed using paper-cut impressions, which is simply amazing.

- The advent of full colour has liberated the editor, Julian Shilton, to write a fully illustrated article on Pepys's game – SPEED. This was one of the very few games that was reissued in line with advancements in 'speed' technology.

- On a sad note, the next article, "Melox Happy Families", was written by John Beasley, a regular contributor, who passed away after the publication. Our condolences to his wife and family.

- Michael Cooper, as always, manages to tease an engaging article from a single playing card in his latest piece, "Playing Cards of the Pegu Club: A Relic of Britain's Imperial History" – a truly compelling read.

- Secretary Barney Townsend treats us to a selection from De La Rue's series of Military-backed playing cards. I have a feeling this might be the start of a series of articles on this fascinating subject.

- The Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards' 2024 deck features the 20th anniversary of the Royal National Lifeboat Institute and receives good coverage by Paul Bostock and the new Master.

- Ken Lodge returns with a revelation about wartime production of playing cards during the Blitz.

- Extensive research by Peter Berthoud offers us a comprehensive write-up, with illustrations, of Henry Reason's Game of Parliament from 1886.

