

Palmerston North Bridge Club Newsletter August 2021



President's Welcome

I am writing this welcome from a magnificent holiday home in the Scottish Highlands on the last week of my trip to the UK. Provided I can maintain my COVID free status, I will be returning to New Zealand in late August and back to Palmerston North two weeks later. Of course, one of my regular tasks is to go online and see how the sessions have been going and how you have all been doing at the bridge tables. Rather soberingly, I notice that it seems some of my regular partners are doing much better without me! I sincerely hope that by the time I get out of managed isolation, the whole country is also back to level 1 and I can meet you all again playing at the Club.

It's been a very busy time for the Committee so massive thanks to Julie Bunnell who has been undertaking nearly all presidential duties in my absence. The Working Group looking at the Grading Review (with knock-on impacts for the playing programme) has now reported back to the Committee and the final decisions are reported by Julie elsewhere in this newsletter.

The North Island Pairs tournament went very well with 21 tables over the weekend of 31 July/1 August. Again there is a report on this further in this newsletter but I would like to extend my thanks to the team of volunteers who helped make it such a success – particularly Liz Burrows as Tournament Secretary and Robyn Anderson, Gillian Humm and the magnificent caterers.

The Committee established a Jubilee Courtyard Fundraising Working Party to progress the fundraising for the Jubilee Courtyard Project. The Working Party comprises Robyn Anderson (as Convenor), Martin Carryer, Suzanne Carpenter and me. Thanks to generous donations by our members we have already had almost half of the total amount pledged. If you would like to be part of this great project, please contact any member of the Working Party or see Lorraine. We are hopeful to complete the project in this

Jubilee year and it would be great to include as many of our members as possible in the list of supporting members.

Finally, the Committee completed the review of staffing/position descriptions. There are two items to report back to you, our members. Firstly, Lorraine's job description has been changed from Administrator to Chief Director. This change acknowledges and recognises the particular skill set that she brings to the Club and sets limits on what we can expect of her (rather than her previous catch-all job as Administrator). There are some portfolios that Lorraine will continue to do (such as Membership Secretary) but overall, it spreads the load more evenly amongst the membership.

While this review was ongoing, and following the retirement of our long-time Cleaner, Kate McNamara, Anne Gordon stepped in to undertake cleaning duties in the short-term. The Committee agreed to recruit a permanent cleaner to replace Kate, and I am pleased to report that our new cleaner, Daniel Soveini, started work in early August. Daniel is a Massey University student, studying by distance, and has previously worked for commercial cleaners in Wellington. He will start regular duties on Monday, cleaning 2 hours between the afternoon and evening sessions, another 2 hours on Wednesday, and 2 hours on Friday afternoon. I am looking forward to meeting him when I get back home.

My thanks to Julie Bunnell and Grant Elliott who undertook the recruitment process and, once again, many thanks to Anne for stepping in to the gap between cleaners and keeping our club rooms in order.

Stay safe, everyone.

Denise Servante
President

Julia Wallace Village Open Day

We have been delighted to have received extended support from Julia Wallace Village during the past two years. There are many of our members living as part of JWV community and we know what a supportive, caring environment it is. As part of the sponsorship arrangement, Julia Wallace Village will host an Open Afternoon on 29 September for Club members. The day will start with a tour at 2.00 pm followed by a presentation and afternoon tea. More details will follow in due course but put the date in your diary if you are interested, for yourself or for friends/relatives, to find out first hand what superb facilities and services are offered.

The newsletter provides lots of information about the many activities and successes of our Club and its members. Thank you to everyone who has been active in so many ways to support us to provide a safe, warm and friendly Club for our “mind-sport”.

Denise Servante

Grading Review Outcomes

As you will be aware, during the early part of this year a Grading Review Working Party reviewed the Club’s grading system and made recommendations about modifications that should be made. The Working Party reported to the May PNBC Committee meeting, who asked the WP to undertake consultation about three particular recommendations: (1) whether the Ungraded category applied to daytime players should be discontinued, with all currently Ungraded players being assigned a grade, (2) whether Silver grade competitions should be moved from Thursday to Monday evenings, with the consequence that all Thursday evening competitions would become Handicapped Multigrade events, and (3) whether some small changes should be made to the criteria for movement to a higher grade.

About 1/3 of all Club members responded to a questionnaire designed to elicit feedback on these topics, and a few members provided feedback by email. Thanks to everyone who took the time to complete a questionnaire – the Working Party was heartened by the response rate, and felt we had a good snapshot of the membership’s views.

A substantial majority of respondents were either supportive or neutral about the proposed changes. A summary of responses was discussed at the August PNBC Committee meeting, which decided to proceed with all three recommendations. So what does this mean for you?

Ungraded Players

If you are currently an Ungraded player (because you mostly or exclusively play daytime sessions) you will be assigned a club grade of Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum from 2022. These grades will not be used in daytime sessions, but if you choose to play in evening sessions, will indicate which competitions you are eligible to win.

Your grade for 2022 will be a “best guess” based on your past performance in daytime sessions and your current NZB grade. Your 2022 grade can, of course, be adjusted for 2023 if the best guess turns out to be not quite right.

2022 Playing Program

The 2022 playing program will be adjusted in two ways. First, the two Silver-graded competitions currently held on a Thursday night will instead be held on a Monday night. The two competitions that are affected are the John Whibley Memorial Pairs and the Silver Championships. The John Whibley Memorial Pairs will be held in parallel with the bronze-grade Keith Rowland Memorial Pairs, and the Silver Champs will be held in parallel with the Bronze Champs. Second, all events on a Thursday night will become Multigrade competitions, with places determined on a Handicapped basis (C points will continue to be awarded on the basis of raw scores.) There are currently six Handicapped Multigrade competitions on Thursdays, so this will expand to ten.

As a side note, the Committee is aware that our current handicapping system is pretty basic. A small group of members (with Morgan Booker as Convenor) has agreed to investigate identifying and implementing a more refined handicapping system for use on Thursday nights.

Regrading Criteria

The criteria for regrading to a higher grade will be slightly modified. The criterion of a top placing in an A point tournament will be removed. The criterion of winning the relevant grade Champs in two years out of three will be amended to winning in three years out of five.

Once again, thanks to the Grading Review Working Party (Morgan Booker, Maxine Keay, Ray Kemp and the author) for their work. The Working Party has now been disestablished. Good bridging to all

Julie Bunnell

Lessons Update

At the beginning of July we welcomed our latest graduates to the Monday night Junior sessions, after 13 weeks of lessons and practice.

I’m sure the usual nerves accompanied them as they took their places with their mentors as partners, but all did very well. We all know (though some may not remember) how daunting the first few times in the main playing room can be and our regular Monday evening players were ready and willing to assist – thank you all.

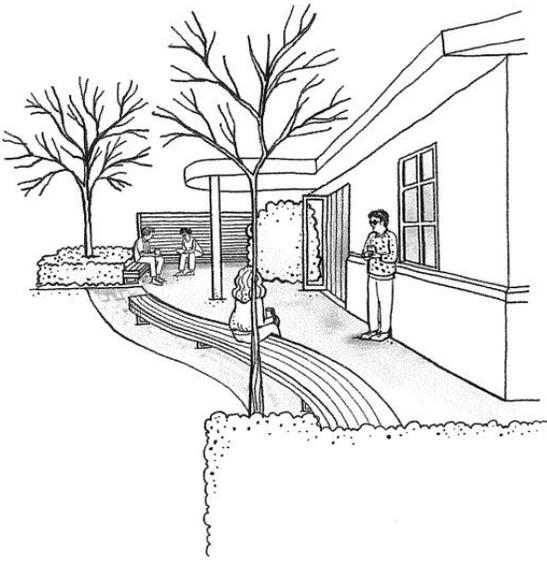
Thanks to Jack James who ran the lessons so capably, we couldn’t have a finer teacher. Many thanks too, to all the members who came along to assist and mentor.

We extend a very big welcome to David Bunckenberg, Jill Dixon, Gerald Haddon, Karen Loye and Simone Pieralli. We hope you will enjoy our Club, and many years of satisfying Bridge.

Maxine Keay

Palmerston North Bridge Club "Jubilee Courtyard"

To celebrate and commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Palmerston North Bridge Club (est. 31 October 1946), the Committee is planning to develop the area immediately outside the door to the "Smoko Room" as a tranquil and beautiful "Jubilee Courtyard". Our member, Lyndsey Chadwick, a retired landscape designer, has created a fabulous design to make the most of the space and create a welcoming entrance to our Club Rooms.



A Working Party has been established to drive the fundraising programme and our early fundraising has been very successful: we have already secured over 40% of the funding needed for this project. The Courtyard Working Party wants to ensure that anyone who wants to contribute can do so – all contributions will be acknowledged in the Courtyard. So, if you would like to be part of this project, please pick up a leaflet from the Club Rooms, or email the President, Denise Servante, at denise.servante@gmail.com.

Denise Servante

Club and Tournaments Results

Congratulations to all Club members below who have achieved success in recent tournaments.

Jack James Jeremy Fraser-Hoskin	1 st	North Island Pairs
Jack James John Davidson	5 th	Wellington Open

Debbie Marcroft Garry Hodge	3 rd	Wellington Restricted Open
Jan Whyte Ken Bateman	1 st	Feilding Charity
Laura Griffin Tony Clear	2 nd	
Morgan Booker Zheng Zhang	3 rd	
Marnie Norris Mandy Jones	5 th	Taradale Junior
Terry Young Grant Elliott	2 nd	
Maxine Keay Malcolm Loudon	4 th	
Debbie Marcroft Garry Hodge	6 th	Hutt Intermediate
Laura Griffin Tony Clear	2 nd	Dannevirke Intermediate/Junior
Peter Avery Tony Fayerman	4 th	
Cindy Lowndes Alistair James	5 th	
Angela Harper Paul Harper	1 st	Paraparaumu Junior
Maxine Keay Malcolm Loudon	5 th	
Craig Killington Clare Veltman	6 th	

Congratulations to pairs who achieved a score of 70% or better in our club sessions since the last newsletter:

Sonia Smith & Elwi Beshlawi	78.13%
Marion & David Bunckenburg	70.63%

Gayle Leader

Improvers Corner

One of the lessons in the NZ bridge Improvers material considers slam bidding using Blackwood. It is often skipped during our presentations since there are many other more pressing matters to consider. Deciding on low level bids, the playing of contracts, defence and leads crop up all the time during a session but you might get only the occasional slam to worry about. Often you can take a chance and 'wing it' anyway. Still, if you want to be scientific then you should have Blackwood in your armoury of weapons. As with many conventions, however, it is important to know when it can be used without ambiguity and what alternatives are available.

First, let's revise how 4NT works. If you are interested in playing a slam, then it may be crucial to know how many aces your partner has. Consider the following hand from Monday afternoon bridge.

Board 13	♠ A K Q										
North Deals	♥ J 8 7										
Both Vul	♦ 6 2										
	♣ A 8 7 6 4										
♠ J 10 9 6 4	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="background-color: green; color: white;"> </td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8 7 5 3
	N										
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♥ 9 5 3		♥ 2									
♦ —		♦ J 10 9 7 5 4 3									
♣ K J 9 5 3		♣ 10									
	♠ 2										
	♥ A K Q 10 6 4										
	♦ A K Q 8										
	♣ Q 2										

If North has opened 1NT then what are your thoughts as South? You have twenty points so surely must be thinking that you and your partner are in slam territory. Partner must have at least two hearts for their no trump opener so the most likely spot is a slam in hearts although if partner has black suit stops, then no trumps might be the better option.

Although things look rosy it is not yet certain from South's perspective that any slam is makeable. Let's do the Maths. If opener has 12 points then that makes 32 points total. There is an outside chance that there are two aces missing! So you can either take a chance and bid a slam anyway or be more scientific and ask partner how many aces they have before committing yourself. If you and your partner have agreed beforehand to play Blackwood then the bidding can go:

West	North	East	South
	1 NT	Pass	4 NT
Pass	5 ♥	Pass	5 NT
Pass	6 ♦	Pass	6 ♥
All pass			

South doesn't worry about any waiting bids but plunges straight into Blackwood asking for aces. North is on the right wavelength and responds with a five heart bid, showing two aces. South now knows that a small slam is highly likely but may be considering a grand slam if partner has enough kings. So 5NT asks partner how many kings they have. The response is disappointing. North only has one king so South decides to be cautious and stick with the small slam in hearts.

The above method will work in most circumstances, but as you get further into bridge you may wish to develop a more sophisticated approach with your favourite partner. Ace asking is all very well but each ace only gives you one trick. Your combined high card point count will often give you a better overall view of whether you should be in a slam. To cover this possibility, some players use a direct bid of 4NT in response to a 1NT opener as a quantitative asking bid.

So, say your partner opens 1NT and you have a balanced 20 point hand. Here you may wish to be in 6NT if partner is at the top of their range (ie 14 points) but not if they are less. In this case the sequence 1NT-4NT would be *invitational* asking partner to pass if they have 12 points and bid 6NT with 14 points (with thirteen points they might have to 'take a view' on how good their hand is). Alternatively, they might leave responsibility back with partner by bidding 5NT.

So far so good, but what if you really want to ask for aces as in the above hand? An alternative bid for aces is to use Gerber four clubs. Gerber has a bad reputation because of confusion in suit contracts but a direct response of 4 clubs to partner's 1NT opener should be 100% unambiguous. Ace responses, as with Blackwood, can be just incremental: 4 diamonds might show zero or four aces, 4 hearts could indicate one ace, four spades two and four no trump three.

In the above deal, assuming you are using Gerber, the bidding might go:

West	North	East	South
	1 NT	Pass	4 ♣
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	5 ♣
Pass	5 ♥	Pass	6 ♥
All pass			

So South now knows North has two aces and one king. Seven hearts might be the right destination but six hearts looks safer. As with the previous sequence, North gets to play the contract which is unfortunate if East leads a diamond. If South plays the contract then NS can make all thirteen tricks.

As with all conventions, you should check with an unfamiliar partner before you start to make sure you are on the same wavelength.

Ray Kemp

Ken & Jan – Double them at your peril!

At last month's North Island Pairs the stakes were high with twenty 'A' points for the winners. This brought out some of the country's top pairings, so it needed a certain bravado for local pairs to even sign up for this two day endurance test. Ken Bateman and Jan Whyte are no strangers to high level competitions but even they must have thought that the odds were against them. However, in this company it is important not to be too cautious. OK, maybe your high level opponents are going to beat you anyway but don't make it easy for them by being too timid. Jan and Ken could rarely be accused of timidity as shown by Ken's account below of one of the hands at the tournament.

Sitting North (vul against non-vul opponents) you hold

♠72
♥94
♦AQT73
♣A852

East is the dealer and opens 1♠, 11+ hcp and 5+ spades. Partner passes and RHO comes in with 2♠.

Time to take stock. LHO has 11+ hcp, RHO has 6-9hcp. Hopefully this leaves a bit of room for partner to have some values. A three diamond bid tells partner your long suit and that you have some points. However it doesn't tell partner you have another, albeit poor, suit. 2NT would describe your hand a bit better, both minors but only 4/5.

What will partner do over a double? Not for penalties but wanting to compete. Generally a double of one major shows a 4 card suit in the other major but not always.

Hold your breath and back in with a 'double'. East likes this, 2♠X is a game scoring contract. However, East wants more blood: XX.

Partner bids 3♥.

Now it is West's turn to get the smell of the blood. With a maximum for his original 2♠ bid he gets the axe out and doubles 3♥.

Back to me. Partner might just have a 4 card heart suit.

This does not look good; doubled, vul and possibly only a 4-2 fit. Here we go again; hold your breath and bid your suit, 4♦.

Having used the axe on all our bids so far, East is having a feeding frenzy and backs in with yet another double.

Partner passes, West passes and I am left in 4♦X. A summary of the bidding:

East	South	West	North
1♠	pass	2♠	X
XX(blood)	3♥	X(blood)	4♦
X(more blood)	pass	pass	pass

Here is the full deal:

♠ 72
♥ 94
♦ AQT73
♣ A852

♠ JT43
♥ A75
♦ K6
♣ J963

♠ AKQ985
♥ KQT
♦ 9
♣ QT7

♠ 6
♥ J8632
♦ J8542
♣ K4

Go buy a Lotto ticket. Fifteen high card points between the two hands. One spade loser, 2 heart losers, finesse the K♦ and cross ruff the rest of the hand. Four diamonds doubled bid and made.

Ken Bateman

You must be joking

Bad breaks happen ...



Aghast, I turned to my right ...
"Hi Tony, my name is Val"

Tony Fayerman