

It is my pleasure to present the Annual Report for 2019: our 73rd as a Club and my 1st as President. The year has been mostly great with some challenges along the way. Early in the year, the Committee agreed that our focus was to be attracting and retaining members and increasing opportunities to play at the Club in a warm and inviting environment.

Improvements to our Club Rooms

We have continued with the improvements to the Club Rooms that were initiated last summer with the repainting of the walls. We have installed a new water cooler and replaced the old playing supplies cupboard with a purpose built one. New tablecloths have been purchased and the hemming should be finished before the end of March. Thanks to Anne Gordon for leading this initiative, to Laura Griffin for her successful application to Pub Charity for sponsorship, to Martin Carryer for crafting the beautiful cupboard, to Tony Fayerman for arranging installation of the water cooler and to Lee Fayerman, Morgan Booker and Jack James for cutting and sewing new tablecloths.

Beginners' Lessons

The Committee agreed to augment the usual poster and flyer distribution with a City-wide leaflet drop to promote the lessons which started in late April 2019. The new intake was just about 30 which was a fantastic outcome. However, there was no concrete evidence that people attended classes as a direct result of the leaflet drop. Lessons were taken by Jack James with support from Anne Gordon and Jan Whyte. Anne continued to organise support for the learners coming into the Novice Plus evening and it was fantastic to see many of these new members continuing to enjoy their bridge throughout the year. Many thanks to all Club members who stepped up as "buddies" for the new players during the transition. Lessons this year started in early March – this is to enable better integration into the Novice Plus evening before the Summer Bridge break. We did not repeat the City-wide leaflet drop but distributed posters and flyers to relevant drop off points and organisations. The class is smaller – just 7 this year – so still very important that we retain the new members and support them to play in the coming year.

Playing Programme

As part of our focus on encouraging more people to play more often, the Committee did a thorough review of the playing programme in planning for 2020. Our concern was low table numbers on the Monday Novice Plus and Tuesday Open sessions. The new intake of members from the beginner's lessons last year certainly boosted table numbers for the Novice Plus session but Tuesday night was becoming increasingly unviable. It was the only session without a paid Director simply because table numbers could not justify it. In September, play was cancelled due to lack of interest!

After consultation with the membership, the Committee established an Open evening on Monday to run alongside the Novice Plus session and a Social event twice a month on Tuesdays. As the new year programme started, and after much discussion during Summer Bridge, it became clear that this was not going to increase viability of the Open session – many of our senior players now play on Monday afternoons and/or play in Feilding on Monday evenings. The Committee accepts that we got

this wrong. The Session Host, Morgan Booker, has reinstated a senior night programme on Tuesday evenings and it will run alongside the published social programme.

Summer bridge sessions were well supported on Monday daytime and Thursday evenings and the new Tuesday Social evening held successful “Speed Dating” events in February and mentoring sessions with our one of Gold Grandmasters, Bob Hurley, in March. Thanks to Anne Gordon for this initiative and to Bob for his inspirational tutoring.

Overall, we have achieved our aim to give more options for our Club members to play bridge more often in an environment that is fun and social. But the route was perhaps not as direct as we might have hoped. Anyway, the Committee feels that it is important to have a competitive open session where intermediate players can challenge themselves to step outside their comfort zones. I would encourage all of you to support the Open Sessions when you can.

The money side

Certainly, this focus was directed in large part by our financial position. The Club has been eating into its substantial reserves for a number of years as our costs inevitably increase. Overall, we have ended the year with a cash deficit of about \$5,000. However, we do need to move to a situation where we breakeven.

Our wonderful Club Rooms are not only our greatest asset but also our greatest liability. During the year, the Committee has spent a great deal of time looking into all areas of expenditure to see where we can trim our costs. We have identified energy consumption as one of our key fixed costs and are currently investigating capital improvements to reduce monthly outgoings. Funding applications will be made during 2020 to cover the capital costs.

Another area where we are proposing to secure savings is in the payment of Honoraria to Committee members. Instead, we are working on various role descriptions so that tasks can be divided amongst members of the Committee to share the workload equitably – to be honest, this is how the Committee has worked this year and so it seems only fair that certain roles are not singled out for special treatment.

The Committee has carefully monitored income and expenditure for our tournaments to ensure that we at least breakeven and contribute a small surplus towards our fixed costs. We will look at continuing this in the coming year. We have made a small increase in both our subscription rates and table money for 2020. Boosting table numbers across all sessions will help enormously for us to cover the overheads associated with the building.

We have a small funding sub-committee which is looking at ways to secure more sponsorship and fundraising. This year we secured \$550 in sponsorship to publish the playing programme and also \$400 worth of prizes for the Christmas Cheer tournament. Many thanks to Robyn Anderson for her work here and to Mitre 10, MetLife Care, Julia Wallace and Naylor Palmer for their valued sponsorship.

Venue for Hire

The Club Rooms are hired out during the year and during 2019 raised about \$10,000 in income. The Committee will look at more extensive promotion of the rooms as a "venue for hire" to see if we can generate more bookings. The whole area of venue hire is managed by Club member, Susan Baty. Susan has done this for many years now and it is clearly an avenue of income that is essential to our financial viability. It is great to have this opportunity to thank her for everything that she does behind the scenes to make this income stream work.

Tournaments

During the year, the Club held four very successful events - the Junior/Intermediate tournament in May, the Open tournament and our Club "Spring Fling" tournament in October and the Christmas Cheer tournament in December. This year we are planning the same four events (dates to be confirmed) and also will be hosting the 15A National Pairs tournament in August.

In addition, we participated in the annual friendly match with Hawera and Whanganui Clubs on 6 June and came home with all the silverware. Well done to our teams at every level!

Thanks are due to everyone who worked behind the scenes to make these events such a success, but particularly to the indefatigable Liz Burrows for her work at each of our Club events, to Julie Bunnell for organising the teams for Hawera/Whanganui (and to Ken Bateman and Jan Whyte for their coaching sessions for those new to team matches), Lorraine Stachurski for expert direction and Robyn Anderson for catering, raffle prizes and sponsorship.

The Committee

The Committee has been a very active Committee and I have been so grateful for all their support and hard work. Tony Clear and Liz Burrows will be stepping off having both "done their time" with many years of excellent service. Thank you both – although I hope we will still be able to call on you for your expertise in the areas where you have excelled!

William Laing will be stepping down as Treasurer after two years in the job. We are not an easy organisation to manage financially – with a building to manage, a number of employees on different contracts and a complicated schedule of subscriptions and table monies. I would like to thank him for his sterling efforts to keep track of all the money.

Finally

There are always too many people to thank for their outstanding contribution but let's give it a go!

Of course, many thanks to the Room Reps and Hosts - you have made a real difference to how our sessions run for the enjoyment of everyone.

Special mentions, too, for Ray Kemp who has prepared our bi-monthly newsletters, to Bev Colville who does our shopping to keep biscuit and milk supplies in stock, to Dianne Hunter who sends best wishes cards to our members who are indisposed, to Lynn Wilson, Glyn Robinson and Carolyn Brodie for dealing boards, to Carolyn Brodie for maintaining the gardens, to Don and Barbara MacDonald for providing advice and practical support around building maintenance issues and to Julie Bunnell, Val Pain, Liz Burrows, Graeme Donaldson and Bryan Northcott for directing our playing sessions.

Many thanks to Lorraine Stachurski who yet again has supplied outstanding administration, direction, and expert advice – and cups of tea when needed.

As always, we are so grateful to all members who have supported the Club in so many ways throughout the year.

Denise Servante
President
March 2020