

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2019

PALMERSTON NORTH BRIDGE CLUB

What a fortunate Club we are. We have an excellent venue in which to play bridge and some fancy technology to make the playing experience fairly effortless. Our membership, though falling slightly, is still respectable given the trend of many other sports clubs that are closing their doors. We are also lucky to have a core group of committed members, virtually all of whom are volunteers, who keep the Club running smoothly. And we are still financially viable, though we need to take stock now to ensure the Club's longevity in the future

The Committee has chosen to respond positively to the key challenges facing the Club i.e. falling membership, lack of helpers and a degree of financial operational losses. We have enlisted the help of consultant Jane Stearns who has helped other bridge clubs out of the doldrums. The Committee has already implemented some of the strategies recommended by Jane, the most significant of which is the revamped décor of the club rooms. Some new fittings to outfit the club rooms are also planned with the intention of improving the playing environment. You can also expect a significant recruitment drive in addition to more active communication between the club and members through the resurrection of the Club newsletter and the use of Pianola to keep members more informed about Club activities.

Committee

The Club has had a group of hard-working committee members who have met monthly, emailed (copiously) between meeting, and performed a variety of tasks to keep the Club running well. My thanks on behalf of the Club to each Committee member for their dedication and hard work.

- Denise Servante (Vice President, Tournament Committee)
- Liz Burrows (Secretary, Tournament Committee, Tuesday Open Room Rep)
- William Laing (Treasurer)
- Morgan Booker (Lessons)
- Julie Bunnell (Administration Committee)
- Tony Clear (Tournament Committee, Daytime Room Rep 2018)
- Julia Flavell (Administration Committee, Novice Plus Room Rep 2018)
- Anne Gordon (Mini Bridge, Liaison with Jane Stearns)
- Diane Hunter (Multi-Grade Room Rep)
- Jan Whyte (Tournament Committee, Lessons)
- Tony Fayerman (Daytime Room Rep 2019)

Administrator

Thanks to Lorraine for all her efforts over the last year in managing membership, masterpoints, and the dealing and scoring software to name three of the most critical jobs she does for the club.

Club Helpers

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of those members who contribute often behind the scenes but who don't always get the acknowledgement and recognition they deserve. The Club runs on the efforts of its volunteers and there are so many people (too numerous to mention) who contribute in lots of other ways like setting up the room for play, cleaning up afterwards, helping with garden blitzes and a host of other jobs that keep the Club ticking over. Thank you to all who lend a hand and help make the Club an enjoyable place to be a member of.

A special thanks to the following people for their contribution:

Bev Colville (Household Management)

Susan Baty (Room Hire)

Duane Griffin (IT)

Graeme Donaldson (Certificates)

Bob Hurley (Coaching IP team)

Robyn Anderson (Interior design)

Graeme Thomson (Tuesday night draw)

Martin Carryer (Maintenance)

Carolyn Brodie (Air Conditioner)

Denise Servante (Bar Manager)

Ray Kemp (Improvers' sessions)

Cate (Cleaner)

Host Persons

One of the most important roles in the Club is that of the host person, and it involves much more than just finding the odd partner for a player. With playing numbers down it is even more vital that host persons actively keep in contact with players on their night and follow up with any players who have not been attending. Thank you to all host persons who have worked hard to make their playing session a success: Julia Flavell (Novice Plus Night), Barbara Passman (Multi-Grade Night), Val Pain (Tuesday Open Night), Barbara Eglington (Friday Daytime), Lyn Wilson (Monday Daytime).

Membership

We are saddened to have lost some of our long-standing members: Andrew Brodie, Bev Beattie and Joyce Macmillan who passed away in 2018.

Gone are the days of the 300 + membership role that we had back in early 2000 when I was last president. Our membership currently stands at around 177 financial members and falling. The Club is simply not replacing those members who have moved on or have passed away. The incoming committee is tasked with a big job to recruit new members to the Club, so if you know of anyone who might be interested in joining or rejoining please talk to a room rep or committee member about this. If you are available to help with promoting membership and/or lessons please come forward. Thanks to Julie Bunnell for all the work she did on reviewing membership categories to streamline these.

Lessons

I would like to say a big thank you to Ken Bateman who took the lessons in 2018 and helped transition learners into the Novice Plus playing night. Also thanks to all the helpers, and in particular Jan Whyte and Morgan Booker, who assisted Ken and helped mentor new players. This year we held a formal welcome on Monday night attended by myself as President to introduce learners to the Monday night room and to award certificates for completing lessons.

Please note we will be running lessons this year starting on 6 May 2019. Thank you to Jack James who has offered to deliver these with the support of Jan Whyte. Now is the time to encourage your bridge playing acquaintances to pick up the game again, or anyone else you know who you think may be interested in learning. The committee has had to introduce a charge for lessons this year due to our financial situation, but on the plus side the fee will include a book and membership for the rest of the financial year.

Playing Sessions

The same configuration of playing sessions continued in 2018 as in previous playing years, with a total of five different playing sessions on offer. All evening sessions were open to all players regardless of grade, except for Monday night where players of a higher grade were required to play with a Junior or Novice ranked player. Daytime bridge has continued to be popular, with Monday and Friday sessions in general being well patronized. Anne Gordon also ran a mini-bridge session to encourage returning players.

It is concerning that the trend with respect to table numbers is downward for all sessions. These statistics raise the question of whether the Club can sustain the same playing configuration in future years. Director payments and the cost of power, especially in the

winter, make small table numbers no longer a viable option. The options are to actively get more people along, to combine playing sessions, to increase table money or any or all of these. No changes will be made in 2019, however the incoming committee will make the review of playing sessions a priority in order to find the most viable solution for 2020.

Programme

By now you should all have received a copy of the programme for 2019. I would like to thank Jan Whyte, Lorraine Stachurski and Julie Bunnell for helping me put this together.

What's new is that the members list is now alphabetised under the first name instead of the last name to improve ease of use. Also we made a big push to include cell phone numbers so members have the option of phoning or texting for improved communication. Other innovations were the President's message at the front of the book, and playing nights were moved further forward in the book and tournaments shuffled to the back.

If you have suggestions for any changes to the programme for 2020 please let your room rep know. It should be noted that some events on Tuesday night may change depending on numbers attending so please check if you plan to play this night.

Newsletter and Communication

Improved communication and dissemination of information has been identified as critical to member retention and overall satisfaction with the Club. It is the recommendation of the outgoing committee that the new committee make a priority of getting timely and newsworthy information out to members quickly. As a member, please ensure you have supplied your email address if you haven't already and that you sign up to Pianola to stay abreast of club activities and changes.

Last year the newsletter was a casualty of having too few volunteers ready to help with this and lack of someone to drive it. A big vote of thanks to Ray Kemp for once again offering to coordinate the newsletter. If you haven't read it yet you will find the February 2019 edition on the website.

As part of improving communication it is the intention of the committee to showcase photos of monthly and tournament winners and to spotlight member contributions in the newsletter along with the usual fare of hands from playing sessions and bridge trivia etc, so don't be surprised if you are asked to pose for a photo if you win the month.

Tournaments

The Club successfully ran five tournaments this year. In March 2018 we hosted the North Island Teams which attracted 34 teams. We ran a 5B Intermediate tournament and a Junior 3B alongside it on 19 May 2018. Our annual 5A tournament, which we now run as a Swiss Pairs event, took place on 13 October 2018 and proved popular. A special thanks to Liz Burrows who single-handedly wrapped all the prizes for the Christmas Cheer 3A held in early December. No mean feat! The Tournament Committee (Liz Burrows, Jan Whyte, Denise Servante and Tony Clear) are to be congratulated for their outstanding efforts.

Sadly some historically regular events have been dropped off the playing schedule because of the lack of helpers. I, for one, would like to see at least some of these reinstated but it does take energy to make events happen. We currently have the offer of a three way Interclub event in June with Wanganui and Hawera on the table which we are hoping to get teams for. Also we could host a NZ Wide Pairs event later in 2019, and there have been some preliminary discussions with Feilding about running this event alternately already. And what about our traditional fish 'n chip night with Pahiatua? Is that something members would like to reinstate? We have had a long standing relationship with the Soroptomists to raise money for worthwhile charities and it is a shame that our Charity Tournament was dropped several years ago due to lack of helpers. My message to members here is very clear, if you would like these events reinstated please let us know, and if you can offer to help in some way please do so.

Dealing Machine

Thanks to Carolyn Brodie, Lyn Wilson and Glyn Robinson who have so unfailingly given up their valuable time to deal the boards for each playing session. We are very grateful to all three of you.

Directors

I would like to extend a special note of thanks to all those members who have directed playing sessions at the Club throughout the year and include: Lorraine Stachurski, Graeme Donaldson, Bryan Northcott, Val Pain and Liz Burrows. If anyone who has directed in the past would like to direct in 2019 please let someone on the committee know.

Employment

Thank you to Julie Bunnell, Julia Flavell and Denise Servante who have been working on and reviewing employment contracts and other compliance issues for all staff and contractors including Directors, our Administrator Lorraine and our cleaner Cate. New job descriptions

are being formulated and old ones reviewed to help anyone with a role within the Club have a better understanding of expectations and duties.

Building and Grounds

In general our current maintenance issues are with the interior, although we have had the lines on the carparks repainted. You will be aware that the upgrade of the interior began with the addition of new carpet about 18 months ago. We also had the main room painted over Christmas / New Year thanks to Anne Gordon and the many people who assisted with painting, washing curtains, providing drop sheets, taking down and putting up noticeboards, preparing the room and then putting it back into playing condition again.

We are grateful to Tony Clear who has been on hand to oversee and troubleshoot maintenance issues as they arise. Whether it is fixing something small or getting the plumber down to unblock the men's toilets Tony has worked hard for the Club to ensure that the little things and the big ones get the attention they need. Also we are grateful to Don and Barbara MacDonald who take care of the lighting for us. I would like to thank Carolyn Brodie and Roxanne Brassington for their work on keeping the grounds, and to those who have assisted with the working bee. Thanks to Tony Fayerman for cleaning the windows.

With the cost of upkeep of a building being extremely high it is suggested that the incoming Committee set up a maintenance fund so that an annual sum is set aside to cover future costs. It is also recommended that whenever practical we make use of funding organisations like Pub Charity to assist with expenses for maintenance.

Finances

No doubt you will have picked up the thread throughout my report that there is concern about the club finances, and this is reflected in the Club financial statements. We have made a loss for the last couple of years due in part to our expenses exceeding our income. An increase in operating costs and costs associated with the upkeep of the building, along with a drop in subscriptions and table money, are the main problems necessitating a complete review by the incoming committee. The cost of Master Points is also hefty. The current Committee has been investigating ways to better track our expenditure and make more accurate forecasts of future spending. Thanks to William Laing (our treasurer), Denise Servante, and Debbie Marcroft who have been involved in this. The incoming Committee will be reviewing membership fees along with table money and exploring ways to reduce costs but it is likely that an increase in subs will be necessary in 2020.

Honoraria

Many of our core group of volunteers are devoting enormous amounts of time to the Club because the load is no longer shared out as much among members as it once was. Yet there are honoraria payments attached to only a couple of key positions. There is, therefore, an argument for reviewing honoraria amounts. Last year the AGM voted to reduce the Secretary's honorarium to nil due to the argument that the Secretary role has shrunk with the addition of the Administrator.

The reality is that the roles of President, Treasurer and Secretary have changed to some degree largely due to changes in technology but the responsibilities and duties of the positions remain demanding and time consuming. I think that it is not reasonable to expect individuals to take up these positions without being reimbursed in some small way for their time. I recommend that we charge the incoming Committee with the job of reviewing honoraria for all roles as part of its financial review in 2019.

In Summary

Despite our expenditure issues and falling membership the club is still in a good position. We have an excellent facility and dedicated members who do a lot for the Club. We have also got a very active membership who love their bridge and get a lot of enjoyment out of this fantastic game. Long may it continue!

What would make the Club really rock is an increase in new members and some more volunteers to help spread the load.

Some changes and areas to concentrate on are that we:

- prioritise developing systems to more closely monitor finances, including detailed budgeting and forecasting
- access funding for projects and capital items where appropriate
- review membership trends and preferences
- implement the recommendations from Jane Stearns regarding a recruitment drive
- focus on communicating with members effectively about Club activities
- review playing sessions, subscriptions and table money
- review honoraria for all key roles within the Club
- continue with building upgrades and set up a maintenance fund for upkeep and fittings
- continue to focus on employment compliance
- continue to monitor and meet compliance for the bar
- consider reinstating some of the previous events we have let go

Final Word

As you are aware I am standing down as President after only one year in the chair which may be a surprise to some of you given that it is usually a two year position. I took the presidency up again rather than see the club without a President, however I have discovered that the role has mushroomed and that expectations of what the President will do have increased markedly. Being in full-time employment I simply do not have time to fulfill all these expectations and obligations and to do the job justice so I have decided to step down to make way for someone with more time and energy.

Historically there has been an expectation that the outgoing President will remain on the committee as the Immediate Past President however that role has not been observed in recent times. I will ensure continuity is maintained by liaising directly with the new President as needed and may attend Committee meetings as required.

I would like to extend a special thanks to all Committee members who have just got on and got the job done. Thank you again to our Administrator, Directors and Volunteers. We have all been able to achieve a lot in this term even if it has mostly been keeping the Club ticking over. And finally to all members I wish you every success at the table and happy bridging.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sue Lynch', written in black ink on a white background.

Sue Lynch (President)