

Palmerston North Bridge Club

President's Annual Report 2021

What a privilege it has been to be Club President during 2021 – our 75th Jubilee Year. Despite many of the challenges that we have continued to face in weathering the COVID storm, my over-riding sense is that, as a Club, we have enjoyed our bridge and the companionship of our fellow members. I have been reviewing the year, through our committee minutes, newsletters and pianolas, and present my report thematically.

Committee business

The Committee started the year with a strategic planning session held on a balmy Sunday afternoon with a BBQ. The meeting was driven because we were so well aware that our expenditure has exceeded our income for the past several years and that we needed to do something pretty quickly to identify how we could move towards a sustainable financial model. We confirmed our lovely Club Rooms as both our greatest asset and our greatest liability. As a committee of volunteers and dedicated bridge players, managing the business of the Club felt like a massive drain on our energy and resources and so we established two sub-Committees – a Building Sub-Committee and the Venue Hire Sub-Committee. The former was tasked with developing a comprehensive asset management plan for the building so we could schedule and fundraise for regular maintenance and renewal projects. The latter was tasked with maximising our income from venue hire through improved promotion and marketing. This certainly took some of the pressure off our committee meetings as these pieces of work were addressed in dedicated and specialist meetings. In addition, the Committee established Working Parties to undertake the Grading Review, the review of the Handicap System for multigrade events, and to fundraise for, and then oversee the building of, the Jubilee Courtyard.

Before going on to detail the work of these sub-Committees and Working Parties, I want to acknowledge my committee. I cannot imagine a more hard-working group of people – they have been amazing and have contributed so willingly across all our projects and programmes. Everyone is mentioned in the report that follows for their contribution to the Committee work. However, I wanted to particularly acknowledge and thank Julie Bunnell for her contribution. Julie stepped down as Vice-President in 2020 when she took up the position of Chairperson of Hokowhitu Bridge Club. Nonetheless, during my three-month break in UK, she stepped up and took on the de facto President role. Julie has indicated that she will not be standing again for the Committee (she has been a committee member these past 5 years). Her departure will leave a big hole in our drive and energy and in institutional and “bridge-based” knowledge. For me, personally, she has been a rock and has provided gentle guidance when needed across all aspects of our business. Our Club debt to her is immense.

Building Sub-Committee

This Sub-Committee, comprising Grant Elliott (convenor), Tony Fayerman, Zheng Zhang and Don Macdonald, has not yet met regularly so our maintenance and renewal remains somewhat reactionary. This needs to remain a focus for the Committee in 2022.

Nonetheless, the following work has been done during 2021:

Computer Upgrade: all computer equipment in the office has been upgraded with recycled machines from a local business (Plant and Food) at no cost to the Club. A working group of Tony Fayerman, Colin Tod and Duane Griffin worked with Lorraine and Bridge NZ to ensure a smooth transition from

old to new. The driver behind the replacement of the hardware was business continuity and risk management.

Men's Toilets: the regular flushing in the urinals was wasting quantities of metered water and so costing the Club quite a bit of money. We have invested in a sensor which means that flushing the urinals only occurs when they have been used!

Cleaning and re-polishing the vinyl flooring: the vinyl flooring in the toilets and kitchen has been stripped and repolished. This has been done once before in the past 25 years and is a maintenance task that needs to be done approximately every 10 years.

New blinds for the windows: the venetian blinds have been replaced with sunscreen blinds. These provide a much tidier finish to the windows.

Gardening: the gardens have been given a makeover thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of our gardener, Michele Kaye. Carolyn Brodie has been our gardener for many years and finally handed over to Michele this past year. Michele has put her own mark on the gardens, including growing pumpkins!

Venue Hire Sub-Committee

This Sub-Committee, convened by me with Susan Baty, Robyn Anderson, Tony Clear and Grant Elliott, met several times during the year despite the disruption to our venue hire business from periods of closure through COVID-19. The Sub-Committee confirmed minimum hire rates to ensure that all hires are a net contributor to Club funds. It developed a marketing and promotions strategy, focussing on attracting other community clubs and organisations to regularly use our Club Rooms, and identified social media as the primary marketing tool. The external sign has been refreshed and raised to improve visibility. Posters and flyers have been designed, produced and distributed.

Former president, Susan Baty, has been managing the venue hire business on our behalf for the past decade or so. During this time, she has built the business to securing upwards of \$10,000 to our funds each year. The work involved in this is substantial: from ensuring that our assets are safeguarded, passing all details to the Treasurer for invoicing, liaising with cleaning staff and other hirers and co-ordinating access and lock up. The work has been particularly challenging in the past two years as we have dealt with the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19. Susan indicated that she needed to step down from this role but would remain until a suitable person came forward to take over. The Committee accepted the Sub-Committee's recommendation that it may be necessary to provide some remuneration to compensate for the required hours, recognising how vital this is to our future sustainability. In late 2021, when replacing our cleaner, we were delighted when Maxine Keay agreed to undertake both roles (Cleaner and Venue Hire Manager). Maxine took up her new role in early 2022 and I wish her every success in the coming years.

As Susan steps down from this role, I want to record our thanks to her for her foresight and business acumen in establishing and building the venue hire business.

Grading Review Working Party

The Committee agreed to undertake a thorough review of our Club grading system and established a Working Party, comprising Julie Bunnell (convenor), Morgan Booker, Maxine Keay and Ray Kemp, to report back on any suggestions for change. Some of these were then consulted upon with the wider membership. In summary:

- 1) The Club grading system is retained with four grades: Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum.
- 2) All members have been assigned a grade, with those currently ungraded (and playing daytime sessions) initially assigned a "best guess" grade based on performance over the past 12 months. Although these grades are not used in our ungraded sessions, it does allow daytime players to compete in appropriate graded competitions if they so choose.

- 3) From 2022, all Silver and Bronze graded competitions will take place on Monday evenings and all Platinum and Gold competitions will take place on Tuesday evenings. This has the consequence that all Thursday evening competitions have become Handicapped Multigrade events.
- 4) Movement from Gold to Platinum grade will no longer require players to win “A” points but will require that they win the Gold Championship in 3 out of 5 years (rather than 2 out of 3 years as previously applied).

Handicap System Working Party

With an increase in the importance of handicapping in the Thursday evening Handicapped Multigrade sessions, the Committee subsequently established a Handicap Review Working Party, comprising Morgan Booker (convenor), Tony Fayerman, Michael Hardman, Jack James and Julie Bunnell, to review the handicapping system. The recommendation to use the XG Grades programme, adapted from a grading system used by the English Bridge Union, has been accepted by the Committee and will be applied to all future handicapped competitions.

My thanks to all those members who participated in the Grading Review Working Party and the Handicap Review Working Party: your time and expertise has ensured that we have consistent and coherent policies in both these areas.

Jubilee Courtyard Fundraising Working Party

As part of our celebration of our 75th Jubilee year, we instigated the Jubilee Courtyard project to create a beautiful and tranquil space outside of the former “smoko room” near the Cook Street entrance to the Club. The new Courtyard was conceived by Robyn Anderson, designed by Lyndsey Chadwick, project managed by Russell Harris and paid for and built entirely through contributions from members. Our master craftsman, Martin Carryer, undertook all the carpentry to craft the beautiful benches.

As part of this, the former “smoko room” has been cleared and refreshed to provide a suitable entry/exit to the new Courtyard. The new “Jubilee Room” has a display of photos/plaques from the celebration in May and a display of photos from the build.

The project has almost been completed as of 31st December 2021 and is due to be opened formally in mid-February 2022. The Working Party was convened by me and comprised Robyn Anderson, Lyndsey Chadwick, Suzanne Carpenter, Martin Carryer and Russell Harris. The list of people to thank for making this project a reality is extensive and suitably recorded on the Courtyard “wall of fame”.

Events and Tournaments

Tournaments

The Club planned to hold its Club Tournaments at each NZBridge grade. The Junior and Intermediate tournaments took place concurrently on March 27th, having been cancelled in 2020. We had a very healthy 18 tables participating. Unfortunately, our Open Swiss Pairs, which is usually held in early October and was able to be held in 2020, fell victim this year to the restrictions placed around the Delta COVID outbreak and was cancelled. Our Christmas Cheer tournament went ahead in early December under the newly introduced COVID Traffic Light System, with a My Vaccine Pass mandate and limited to 100 people (in effect 96 people or 24 tables).

Our Club also hosted the North Island Pairs on behalf of Central District’s region over a weekend in late July. There were 21 tables – slightly down on what the organisers usually expect.

These events take a lot of organisation with many, many people involved in making them successful. I would particularly like to acknowledge the Tournament Secretaries for each of these events who undertake to coordinate all tasks and inevitably undertake a lot of the work themselves, particularly

Liz Burrows (North Island Pairs and Christmas Cheer) and Ken Bateman (Open Swiss Pairs). (I acted as Tournament Secretary for the Junior/Intermediate tournaments on the basis that you should never ask anyone to do something you are not prepared to do yourself!). I would also like to acknowledge the catering managers and their teams: Robyn Anderson for the Junior/Intermediate and North Island Pairs tournaments and Gayle Leader/Lynda Guthrie for the Christmas Cheer tournament.

AGM and Quiz Night

We held our AGM on March 20th and followed it with a Quiz Night and potluck supper. We had 10 teams attending and lots of fun: a round on Bridge (about bridges) and a Sports round (mostly about Bridge).

Babich NZ-wide Pairs

It was our turn to host Feilding Bridge Club at the Babich NZ-wide pairs on November 12th and this year, we held an event with a difference. An organising team of Ken Bateman, Craig Killington and Clare Veltman got us all to dress up for High Tea and then we played the boards in our finery. Thirteen tables provided for a healthily competitive atmosphere.

75th Jubilee Celebration

We held a Champagne Lunch on 30th May 2021 to celebrate our 75th Birthday party. The lunch was followed by a round of bridge, a potluck supper and then a round of “retro bridge”. Local MP, Tangi Utikere, joined us for lunch, to unveil a plaque and to present Jubilee ribbons to our longest serving members. A second plaque was presented to the Club by Allan Morris, Chair of the Board of NZ Bridge. Our special guest, Scott Smith (who learned at the Club whilst at high school and has gone on to represent New Zealand nationally) gave an “after potluck supper” speech. The day was a wonderful and fitting celebration of our Club and my thanks to everyone who was involved in making it such a success. I particularly want to acknowledge Robyn Anderson and her catering team, Jenny Kelland for the amazing four-tier celebration cake and Evelyn Hurley for her work going through past Committee minutes to identify our longest serving members.

We initiated a “Member of the Year” award at the event. This new award acknowledges a specific contribution during a limited timeframe rather than the “long service” that is recognised through life membership of the Club. The inaugural recipient was Jack James. Jack’s contribution to the Club in 2020 was noteworthy for his support and mentoring of beginners from the lessons and others in the Bronze evening session, for establishing and maintaining a system where we could continue to play with each other online during the 2020 COVID lockdowns and for his meteoric success at the bridge table which had earned him 330 “A” points in the preceding 3 years. The award was presented at the 75th Jubilee Lunch by Bryan Northcott and received on behalf of Jack by his parents, Alistair and Claire James.

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Our Annual Accounts are attached. They show an increase in our nett assets of slightly over \$1.1 million. Our treasurer, Grant Elliott is good – I would go so far as to say great – but even he cannot produce \$1 million from his hat. The draft accounts were reviewed by our member, Alan Martin, and during the course of the review, the "fair value" of our land come up for discussion. In previous years we showed the "cost value" of \$250,000 and for the first time, in 2020, we showed the "Rating Land Value" of \$800,000 as a footnote. The Rating Land Value is now \$1,300,000. Alan and Grant agreed that this value should be recognised in our accounts to better reflect what the club assets are actually worth.

Nonetheless, the Club has turned a small cash surplus before depreciation is factored in. This is entirely due to Grant securing all the Government COVID subsidies that we were eligible to apply for. The total COVID subsidy payments are shown in note 8 to the accounts and amount to around \$9,000.

Without these efforts, and those of our fundraiser (see below), the Club expenditure would again have exceeded its income by approximately \$4,000. As reported during the year, Grant analysed our income against administration, playing and building cost centres to develop a better understanding of how we can reduce this deficit (or increase income). The accounts are presented in this new format which we hope will enable all members to better understand the financial position.

As a result, the Committee agreed to an increase in both subscription rates and table money for 2022 which directed income towards the relevant areas of expenditure. We have been pleased with the support from our membership for these increases.

For the future, we now have clear income targets for fundraising from philanthropic bodies and from venue hire. I believe these targets are realistic and, if, hopefully, life returns to normal in 2022, they can be achieved to bring the Club into a break-even position.

It goes without saying that Grant has played a huge role in moving our understanding of our finances onto a firm footing and to identifying how we can achieve this break-even. I know that all the Committee has been so very grateful for his guidance.

It is clear to me that we need to have someone with an accounting or similar financial management background on the Committee – not necessarily as Treasurer but to be able to provide that financial analysis and develop/monitor a successful business model.

A special thank you as well to Alan Martin who has reviewed the annual accounts for 2021 as a voluntary contribution to the Club.

Sponsors and Fundraising

I have already noted the many, many donations from members that provided for our Jubilee Courtyard project.

Committee member, Maxine Keay, holds our fundraiser portfolio and she has had a very successful year. We are grateful to her and to the following funding bodies for these grants:

Central and Eastern Community Trust: \$5,000 towards insurance and power costs

Pub Charity Limited: \$1,216 to purchase a cordless vacuum cleaner

The Lion Foundation: \$2,574 for playing supplies and stationery

New Zealand Community Trust: \$2,802 to purchase new window blinds

And sponsorship:

Mitre 10 Mega Palmerston North: sponsorship of the playing programme and the Christmas Cheer tournament

Julia Wallace Village: sponsorship of the playing programme and contribution towards the Jubilee Champagne Lunch

Naylor Palmer Optometrists: sponsorship of the playing programme

Martin Carryer Sculpture: sponsorship of the playing programme

New World: sponsorship of the playing programme and the Swiss pairs tournament (cancelled)

Brokenshire Plumbers: sponsorship of the playing programme

The Globe Theatre: donation of raffle prize

Bridge NZ: donation of raffle prizes

Membership

Lessons were held in March with Jack James as tutor and Maxine Keay as support/administrator. Six new members completed the course and have begun playing regularly in Club sessions.

Nineteen members did not renew their subscription for 2021. Along with the members from lessons, the Club recruited nine other members, either moving into the district or re-joining. Our membership stood at 149 as of 31 December 2021.

Sadly, several of our members and good friends passed away during the year. During 2021, we lost members Joan McIntosh, Elaine Todd and Kay Townsley and former Presidents of the Club, Selwyn Jebson, Rod Doherty and Evelyn Hurley.

Finally...thanks

There are always too many people to thank for their outstanding contribution - I have tried to include people who have contributed to projects and programmes as I have written this report but there are so many more!

Our Club relies on the voluntary efforts of our members. Some of us sign up to the tea towel washing or afternoon tea setting up roster, some of us arrive early to set the rooms up, some of us make sandwiches and cups of tea, some of us step up as reserve pairs and subs – so many ways that the Club is supported on a daily and weekly basis by our members. In addition to those already mentioned I would like to extend our thanks to those members who have undertaken “position descriptions” ex-Committee, to Ray Kemp who has prepared and edited our bi-monthly newsletters, to Goff Ashwell for undertaking to get our trophies and Award Boards engraved, to Jan Whyte, Bev Colville and Kay Townsley who have done 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 Lyn Wilson, Glyn Robinson and Carolyn Brodie for dealing boards, and to Lorraine Stachurski, Julie Bunnell, Val Pain and Graeme Donaldson for directing our playing sessions.

I would like to thank Lorraine Stachurski who yet again has supplied outstanding support and bridge acumen to me and the Committee, and to Kate McNamara, Anne Gordon, Daniel Soveini, Ryan Cliff and Zara Redmond who have all been employed or contracted to clean our club rooms between uses (during this time of COVID).

Of course, many thanks to the Room Reps and Session Hosts - you have made a real difference to how our sessions run for the enjoyment of everyone. 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 2022