

President's Report: April 2009 - March 2010

Introduction

The last twelve months have been a period of consolidation at the club, after some of the ups and downs of previous years. There is plenty to be positive about and I have tried to include the highlights without weighing down the report with too much detail.

Committee

We have been lucky in having a team that works well together and which just gets on with whatever needs doing without a lot of posturing and point-scoring that can sometimes be a feature of committees. Andrew Brodie and Teresa Thorn have put in a great deal of time and effort to move things along and Lorraine Stachurski, as always, is the hub around which everything revolves. At going to press, three members are standing down this year and we say thank you to each of them. Jim Esson has been an invaluable and hard-working member for several years, including, of course, a two year stint as president. Kay Townsley has been efficient as the Tuesday night rep, an organizer of directors, generating hands for us all to play and generally being a willing helper with many other tasks. Martin Carryer carried out a lot of the initial work on designing a suitable fence, as well as negotiating prices. Amongst other tasks he also previously organized the annual matches between Palmerston North and other clubs. To the rest of the committee who are staying on, keep up the good work!

Players

Our club has always prided itself on the high standard of players. We have eight grand masters, and most of them play regularly on Tuesday evenings. This can sometimes be daunting for the rest of us, but provides a challenge, and keeps us all on our toes.

Wayne Burrows continues to give the club a high profile. Last June, he and his partner, Pam Livingston, played for the New Zealand Open team in the Pacific Asia Bridge Federation tournament in Macau. They performed creditably, winning the South Pacific Championship Zone 7 playoffs. This month, Bob and Evelyn Hurley were successful in a four day trial held in Wellington. As a result, they will represent New Zealand at the Senior level at the PABF Tournament to be held during May in Hamilton. We wish them well.

During the year, our members also made their presence felt in many tournaments. In the Hawkes Bay Congress, Wayne Burrows, playing with Pam again, won the Open Tournament, with Elizabeth Kemp and partner winning the Swiss Pairs. At the Inter-provincials, Central Districts won at the Senior level. Ken Bateman was the non-playing captain, with the Hurleys, Alan Doddridge and Jenny Wilson as the mainstays in the team.

CD were also runners up in the open event, with Wayne Burrows again partnered by Pam.

At the club level, the end of year champions were Sean and Tammy Lynch (nee Smith) (Senior), Barbara Holland and Martin Carryer (Senior Reserve), Carolyn Brodie and Christine Compton (Intermediate), Leo Roache and Brenda Wallis (Junior).

Lessons

A club that is not attracting new players has a limited life expectancy. We are fortunate, then, to have Wayne conducting the lessons each year, not only for his street credibility as a player, but for his ability to introduce the game at a level that new recruits can understand. Many of his protégés have gone on to perform successfully not only at the Junior level, but in Tuesday and Thursday evening sessions, too. Some of those players are ready for the next step forward, and we thank the Hurleys and Wayne for conducting evening classes for improvers during the last year.

Weekly Sessions

The injection from the novices class has ensured that the Junior night remains viable, but there is no room for complacency. Unless we can attract more recruits then Junior bridge could be a thing of the past. If anyone has ideas for how we improve matters, then contact a committee member. In contrast, Intermediate night now has up to sixteen or seventeen tables during some months. Some of the intermediate and junior players are testing the deeper waters of Tuesday night bridge. It is good that they accept the challenge of playing at a higher level. I suspect that, with a little encouragement, a few more of the Intermediate night players could also give Tuesday evening bridge a go.

Friday lunchtime bridge numbers are small but Monday afternoon bridge continues to thrive. As usual, thanks are due to Don and Noeline Kenning who have done so much over the years to sustain daytime bridge at the club.

Communications

It is important that members are kept apprised of what is happening in the club. In addition to the website, maintained by Lorraine Stachurski, we have regular newsletters. More recently, we now circulate members who are online with timely messages. Thanks to Goff Ashwell for keeping us all in touch.

Membership

Membership has is hovering around the 230 mark. We welcome any new ideas for increasing numbers. There have been some sad losses during the year including former members of the club, Olwen Culpan and Marlene Paewai. They will be remembered.

Tournaments/Competitions

A number of tournaments were held at the club including Junior, Intermediate and Open events. The highlight of the year was the Christmas Cheer, for which Alister Stuck and his team again put on a great show. The winners were Jan Whyte and Alan Doddridge. All of our other tournaments were won by outsiders except the Charity Pairs which was claimed by Liz Burrows and Jan Whyte.

There were three inter-club competitions during the year with mixed results. We were eliminated in the National Interclub qualifiers, just losing out to Napier. Our team retained the Wilkin Cup against Wanganui but lost the three way match against Wanganui and Hawara. Thanks to Liz Burrows for organizing teams.

Finances

There has been an improvement in the finances in the last year, with the increase in subscriptions and a good level of attendance at most sessions. Teresa will give more details.

Miscellaneous

At last, we have a fence around the club which should enhance security. It has been a long time coming and has been talked about for at least ten years, to my knowledge. Many thanks to the movers and shakers who ensured that we got it through this time. Andrew Brodie and Lorraine Stachurski did a significant amount of initial work on this, with Susan Baty providing some crucial input later in the process to ensure we got the solution we needed. Then Ken Bateman showed us his entrepreneurial skills negotiating a good deal with Manawatu Security Fences. He has also liaised with the firm to see the project through to a successful conclusion.

Although the carpet was cleaned over Summer, it is deteriorating and will need replacing in the not too distant future. We will also need to consider new covers for the chairs and a new computer. Again, if anyone has any ideas for how we might get sponsorship or charity funding for these improvements, they would be very much appreciated.

A start has been made on amending the constitution of the club (in future to be known as "The Rules.") Some of the wording in the current constitution is outdated and unclear. Teresa, Andrew and Lorraine have already put a significant amount of time into bringing these Rules up-to-date.

Summary

There is every reason to be optimistic about the future of our club. At the top level we have a core of players who can hold their own at a national and international level. Even these players don't necessarily win all the trophies in the Senior Room. There is plenty of competition there. Senior Reserves and Intermediates each have their improving players, and there are some promising Juniors coming through. Daytime bridge, is mainly social, but it performs its function well, maintaining good numbers, particularly in the Monday sessions.

We have enthusiastic members who are willing to put in the time in order to ensure the smooth running of the club. A big thanks to them. Some members, like Bev Colville, are always working behind the scenes to ensure jobs get done. They provide the bedrock of the club.

There will be a significant number of fresh faces on the committee this coming year, and I am confident they will come with new ideas, and find ways of ensuring our club continues to prosper.

On a personal note, since this is my last duty as outgoing president, I would like to pay tribute to the committee I have worked with over the last two years. Our meetings have been productive, but even when we have had sticky issues to consider, we have maintained a high level of courtesy and mutual respect, and business has always been conducted with good humour and common sense.

Ray Kemp President