



20 July 2021

Newsletter No: 2 for 2021

Greetings and Salutations

Our People

Regrettably Covid 19 continues to impact our lives; something we will have to contend with for quite some time, I suspect. All we ask is that you apply a sensible regime and care for your fellow humans. As previously shared, we lost two dear friends of the game: Karen Martelletti and Evelyn Hurley.

Both major contributors to the game locally and nationally. At a national level, board and members of the executive have stepped up and are dealing with the functions and activities undertaken by Karen. At this stage there is no immediate need to second someone to the board.

Over the years Evelyn, as our archivist, had been able to establish and record much of our history, to the point where it is mostly up to date. In order to build on her work, and maintain our records going forward we are looking for someone to take on this important role, which includes scanning articles and records as they come to hand, and maintaining a dedicated archives page on the website. If this interests you and you want to know more, please contact Alister.

NZB has been very fortunate to have both Graham Wakefield's bridge knowledge and legal brain as both a past board member, and as a long-standing contributor to the Conduct Discipline and Disputes Committee. He has tendered his resignation from this Committee, and we thank him for his huge contribution. We wish him well for the future.

Posting Tournament Results Online

There is an expectation nowadays that tournament results are made available online, either on Club websites or those maintained by the scoring programme providers. Sometimes delays are inevitable as scores are finalised and sometimes technical issues prevent posting results soon after each session or event.

To assist and minimise frustration from those who are looking we recommend on such occasions that organisers add a short note to their website to let people know there will be a delay in posting of the results.



Membership Recovery

We all know that membership numbers reduced last year, primarily because clubs were forced to suspend the bulk of learners' classes. Our numbers dropped by around 1000, circa 7%. Other jurisdictions (Australia, America) have fared worst.

On a positive note, our numbers are up this year. In the last 2 months we have seen a net increase of 721 members. The increase is due to the effort clubs are putting in with beginner classes and achieving very good attendance, and conversion to paying members. A special mention must be made of the Wanaka Club. The club promoted the game at their latest A&P show and through hard work have 34 new members. Well done to everyone. It is great to see the game on the rise.

To all our new players welcome, we hope you will enjoy this wonderful game as much as we do.

The Future

There are two things I want to share. The first deals with an article written in May by Christopher Leach, President of the Victoria Bridge Association. The second deals with some of the challenges facing the game and what we are planning.

In the article written by Christopher he questions why people leave bridge including not pursuing the game after a beginner's course. His summation which I think we all know is worth repeating if only to remind ourselves that our actions have consequences.

"While we all understand bridge is a tough game and inevitably there will be some new players who decide it is more complex and demanding than they bargained for, the surveys undertaken across the country are unequivocal with regards to the biggest reasons we can control. These are all connected to the club environment the new player finds themselves in. It is very simple. New players expect and deserve a welcoming, comfortable, and non-critical place to play bridge. They do not like to be the recipients of rude, boorish, and critical behaviour or to witness other pairs engaging in the same, including berating each other for mistakes. The biggest reason people leave bridge is because of bad behaviour and a non-welcoming environment. The biggest reason for the success of some clubs is precisely because they create a place to play bridge where such things don't occur or have been eradicated under the influence of a warm, welcoming culture, completely averse to anti-social behaviours.

In my long journey through the game, I am sad to say that I have observed that, although some top players can be aloof and unfriendly, the worst behaviors are often exhibited by intermediate pairs, lording it over beginners. This is a total turn-off!

As a club proprietor, club committee member or Director, you need to be profoundly aware of the impact that various types of rude and unfriendly behaviours have on your cohort of new players. Perpetrators need to be spoken to, monitored and, if necessary, sanctioned, because they are inordinately destructive to the growth of your club and indeed to the growth of the game everywhere. And beyond ensuring that good behaviour prevails, you should implement a cultural overhaul that ensures friendliness, player comfort and a safe and welcoming environment.

The ABF research reveals again and again that you can have top teachers, spick and span clubrooms and every creature comfort, but that will hold little weight if the culture is off".

Now to the future. If Covid has taught us anything we need to be always thinking about the future. We face issues and challenges never contemplated.

We all want the game to remain healthy, prosper and grow. Clearly the observations and comments made by Christopher (see above) are pertinent and we should be doing what we can to ensure the game is enjoyable for everyone.

So, what else do we know or can observe. In no particular order

1. There will be a Covid legacy, whether that be social, financial or employment. Will the level of discretionary spend mean we will lose players? At the moment that does not appear to be the case as we observe new numbers over the last 2 months. Perhaps golf is a good comparison where that game is seeing record player numbers.
 2. Volunteers - there is evidence that busy or changing lives has an impact on the time available for any discretionary activity. We at all levels are dependent upon volunteers. Finding volunteers will become harder due to age or people being time poor or daunted by increasing obligations or liabilities assumed when we take on these roles.
 3. The length and time of events may well impact participation in the future. We know nighttime bridge is under pressure, particularly in some urban areas.
 4. New Zealand Bridge's touch point is low. Unfortunately, our message is not always shared and regrettably those referring to the website is low.
 5. Online bridge will have an inevitable impact. Some of it will be positive and some negative.
 6. Impact of technology.
 7. Decline of regional New Zealand
 8. Change in the player profile- age, ethnicity, location
- and I am sure many more.

Our focus must be on retention and membership growth. With that in mind Anna, Alister, Richard and regional bridge mates are gathering in early August to work on our marketing, retention, and growth plan. It is intended also that we will refresh the marketing material for clubs and make updated copies available. To ensure we remain aligned, we are undertaking a mini survey as to what is important for Clubs. If you are interested in participating in this, please contact Alister who will arrange for a member of the Board to talk to you.

National Conference

At the end of May we hosted a full day conference in Wellington with representatives from all of our Regional Committees. This was a very productive and worthwhile session from which a number of initiatives were earmarked for the next year. The key areas included membership growth and retention plan (see above) and the roll out of a comprehensive plan to train and accredit more directors.

We know clubs and those organizing events are challenged in finding qualified directors. Training and education of directors is high on our list. All I can ask is that you judge us in 6 to 12 months that we have made inroads in the numbers and quality of directing around the country.

Congress

Plans are well in hand for our National Congress at a new venue in Mt Maunganui. Richard reports entry number look good so far, including a number of players from Australia (assuming the bubble is open). Fingers crossed all proceeds as planned. The programme is exciting, so you are encouraged to register.

Annual General Meeting

Last week Alister sent a notice of meeting to all Clubs. Our AGM will be held at the Tauranga Bridge Club on Friday 24th September at 6pm. Each Club is entitled to nominate one voting delegate to represent them at the meeting. Of course, all players are welcome as observers.

World Bridge Federation (WBF)

Last month we were invited by the WBF to provide feedback on their evolving plan of combating online cheating. We reiterated our zero tolerance to cheating of any kind and have called upon the WBF to work closely with online providers to deal with this perverse behaviour.

Palmerston North Bridge Club

In late May Palmerston North Bridge Club celebrated being 75 years young. A fantastic day with refreshments, lunch, dinner, and some interesting bridge.

The evening session turned the clock back with old boards, written bidding and manual scoring. For some of us as we get older our hearing declines as does our memory. It made for some interesting auctions!

Volunteer of the Month

We are very keen to reinstate volunteer of the month. I think with Covid this has fallen aside. So, you are encouraged to nominate someone and send the information to Richard.

West Coast Bridge

Just this weekend, our friends on the West Coast have been hit hard with floods and bad weather. Fortunately, members of the bridge club are rallying around and helping where they can. Civil Defence have seconded the bridge rooms as we write this, so no bridge for a few days. Our thoughts with you all.

Stay safe, stay well, and enjoy your bridge.

Cheers Allan