

Auckland Bridge Club Inc

President's Report to the 2018 AGM

I want to commence my report with a very important matter. It's usually left to the last in annual reports, but I want to start with it.

Staff and volunteers

We are blessed that our paid staff and volunteers are highly competent and a major asset of the Club. There is a considerable programme of activities with regular club bridge every week from early January to late December, a considerable number of NZ Bridge sanctioned tournaments are run, and there is an extensive educational programme run via beginner lessons, weekly novice sessions, and improvers' lessons.

The individual attendance at ordinary club play is close to 25,000 per year in over some 400 sessions. If my maths is correct, that's about 10,000 boards and about 600,000 individual hands played big numbers and a lot of activity. And you might be surprised to learn that this doesn't just happen by itself.

The office began the year staffed by Debbie Tangney and Ann Weatherston. They had the Club ticking over very nicely. Then Debbie resigned to undertake a long deferred OE and after almost four years as Manager, we bade her bon voyage in early March. After a short gap we made a new appointment as Manager, but after a month in the position, the appointee decided that the job wasn't what she was really looking for so we were back to the drawing board. We then re-advertised and appointed Julie Mitchell as Manager; Julie commenced just a few days before balance date.

The Club owes a huge debt of gratitude to Ann, who stepped up and with a little help from others, almost singlehandedly kept the Club administration running for at least 4 months. She did get support from Committee members. Most members wouldn't have noted anything different – but I can assure you the situation was like a duck swimming – everything looked smooth above the waterline, but below, there were feet paddling like hell.

In the kitchen Barbara Mitchell continues to keep the day time members fed and watered. Emma Worthington and her extended "family" has been a tower of strength catering for tournaments and interclub. Good control is kept over the cost of tournament catering, and Emma has got the quantities well matched with demand.

Bridge Directors

We are very fortunate that we have an excellent Director in Patrick Carter. Club play is organised very efficiently, even if some of his movements are a challenge for the odd club member. Given the amount of play Patrick directs, the fact that only 2 complaints about his Director's rulings reached my ears over the year, that is as close to perfection as an ordinary mortal could achieve.

When Patrick is sick, on leave or playing in the Tournament or at National Congress, we have a number of Directors who substitute for him including Julie Atkinson. Mary Chamberlain, Christine Wilson and Tony Morcom.

Segway

Members, At this point I beg your indulgence to make a detour from my report

When we are at the table, whenever a problem arises the call is “Director.” I would ask you to imagine that there has been a major infraction involving all other players at your table and to call for the Director to appear.

2018 is a milestone in the Club’s history. 25 years ago, in early 1993, the Club appointed a youngish Bridge Director by the name of Patrick Carter. Today he is still here, thankfully, and we want to mark this auspicious achievement with a presentation. In this day and age, reaching 25 years in a single job with the same employer is a remarkable achievement. Patrick, here we have a Certificate of Appreciation for your FIRST 25 years of service. We also want to mark this by giving you a present – I admit that it doesn’t look all that impressive. I have asked Julie about what she would think would be a suitable present. [This is the second notable service presentation I have made this year – in the earlier one, on the advice of the wife, we presented the recipient with a new pair of expensive hiking boots] – in my view presents that are what the recipient would want are much more valued than a silver tray that we might think suitable but lies collecting tarnish in a cupboard forever. Anyway Julie told me “Patrick is a very hard person to buy for”. However she said Patrick (and her) is trialling for a few international bridge and scrabble tournaments in the next year and expects to be selected in at least one, so I have made the unilateral decision that we should give you a voucher for \$1,000 towards your travel accommodation uniform entry fees and or general expenses for an international tournament of your choice. Patrick 25 years is a hell of achievement. Well done. And in good cricketing fashion, I hope you wave your bat to the crowd and then settle back in for the next 25 years. And I invite the members to stand and honour you in the normal fashion.

Back to the normal report

Then we have our Educators. Janet Barnard and Julie Atkinson control Novice/Junior sessions on Monday Night and Thursday daytime respectively. Douglas Russell and Julie have conducted learner lessons during the year, and Douglas has done a series of 10 lessons for Improvers.

And then we have the volunteers who give so willingly to help around the place

I am going to single out to thank on your behalf a few individuals and groups of people:

- All those experienced players who give up their time to attend the lessons and Novice sessions to help introduce the newbies to bridge.
- “Sir” Russell Watt who does so much running the bar
- Jo Clark, Janet Barnard, Ann Gelb, Jennifer Perkins, Mila Hill, Brian Ashwell who regularly bring baking to club events and tournaments
- Joan Hunter brings the flowers to brighten up the place.
- Raoul Daroux, our odd-jobs man and Owen Hayward who keeps the chairs in order.

- Peter Hensman – who has organised evening standbys, and all the people on the stand-by lists whom our membership Manager calls “rare treasures”
- Tracey Lewis and Angie and Chris Fitzgerald for fundraising.

I invite the meeting to thank these people collectively.

And I sincerely apologise to anyone I have missed out. I will just have to blame my “staff”.

The Committee

Immediately prior to the 2017 AGM there was a SGM to consider resolutions to modernise the Constitution. Most of the resolutions were passed in either original or amended form

Serendipitously, because of the large number of Committee members who did not seek re-election, there was a seamless transition from the larger old Committee to the slimmed-down new Committee. Anne Barrowclough moved from President to Immediate Past President, Sharon Marryatt was re-elected Treasurer, Sue Reed continued as a Committee member, and Mark Robertson (whose vice president position was removed amongst the changes), Wayne Gyde, Terry Melhuish and I were elected to the Committee.

There was no nomination for President, so the position was left unfilled. I was elected Chair at the first Committee meeting, and a few months later, the Committee resolved to recommend to a SGM that I be appointed President at a SGM held in early March.

I was committed to completing the transition from a Management Committee to a Governance Committee as had been the talk, and I am pleased to report that at least I think we have achieved that aim. The Constitutional change proposed for this meeting to formally change the name from Committee to Board is to ensure that we lock in the change.

A Management Committee is a hands-on “doing” body. A Governance Board sets in place plans processes and procedures, but then empowers the management to actually carry out the tasks in accord with the parameters laid out

I thank the Committee for their efforts and support over the year

The Building

One of the first things the new Committee did following the 2017 AGM was to engage a professional painting company to paint the interior of the club rooms from top to bottom. New noticeboards were installed. At least I think the \$33,000 was well spent to lift the ambience of the premises.

The summer was quite hot, and we are aware of complaints about the inadequacy of the air-conditioning.

In the background, there are a number of members who think that we should be looking at redeveloping the club property. We have a valuable site which is worth \$10 million dollars or even more. The existing building is over 40 years old, and is a lasting testament to the vision of members of the time.

Of course we don't have all the things that might be included in a new build. But we currently have to have the best facilities of any bridge club in Auckland – who else can provide 24/7 50 tables in a single room? And run another 28 table event in a separate room at the same facility?

But we should always keep an eye on opportunities. I can confidently predict there will never be a shortage of real estate agents and developers who would love to take our site off our hands – but their objectives will be largely to make money in the short term – get in, develop, get out, take the profit and forget about that project as they get on with the next deal.

Newsletter

I asked the office to see if they could produce a regular monthly newsletter, and they have produced most of the time. This has kept everyone informed of the winners of club internal events plus a record of club members achievements in NZ Bridge sanctioned Tournaments. My belief is that over 50% of PR is keeping the insiders informed about what is happening. So I hope you have enjoyed seeing the regular production of a newsletter.

Financial

The Club is in good heart financially. We will see when we discuss the Annual Accounts. I would particularly like to record our thanks to Sharon Maryatt for sorting out the audit arrangements. We made a small surplus for the year, and were cash positive even after spending on the interior painting and allowing for the non-cash cost of depreciation.

We have the equivalent of over 6 months' expenditure in the bank, so we don't have any financial issues.

And finally you the Members

The Club exists primarily for the pleasure of the Members. We are a bridge Club. The activity is the playing of Bridge.

You turning up session after session is the lifeblood of the Club. If you stop turning up, the Club will die.

If you think that the Committee is not doing things right, please speak up.

But also don't be frightened to tell us when we are doing right.

It has been my pleasure to serve as President for the 2017-18 year, and am looking forward to a second term

Murray Weatherston

4 November 2018.

