

It has been a busy 18 months at the TBA and a time full of challenges and opportunities. Throughout 2019, the focus of the TBA committee was to increase membership of the TBA and also participation of members in regular sessions.

Worldwide, and in some parts of Australia, bridge is in decline, but the TBA managed to buck this trend in 2019 and recruit more new members than most other states. If our club is to remain viable into the future, we must retain and increase our member numbers.

In 2020, our focus has been to survive through the shut down and social distancing restrictions imposed on us by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teaching and Membership

We have adopted a multi stage strategy to attract and retain new members to the TBA.

Firstly, we have changed our teaching approach from “Bridge in a Day” to a six week beginners class. This enables a more comprehensive introduction to the complexities of bridge with weekly revision and text book support. Sue Falkingham is to be congratulated on her professional and conscientious approach to the conduct of these classes which have been a great success in 2019.

Secondly, beginners have been supported with a transition path from their initial classes, through Monday Beginner’s Sessions and the Wednesday morning supervised section, and Wednesday evening supervised session before dipping their toes into regular sessions. In 2021 we will develop an additional supervised section on Thursday afternoons pending on demand.

Thirdly, we have introduced a “buddy program” to also assist beginners with their transition. Thank you to all those who have volunteered to be buddies, and especially to Margaret Gibbs and Geoff Green for their support of beginners on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Fourthly, we are conducting more “beginner focussed” events. Thank you to John Grosvenor for his endeavours in this regard and to Lynne Cooke for her work in organising our first ever full day “Teams of 3” to be held on April 5th. Sadly this event had to be cancelled in 2020, but we will introduce it as soon as COVID-19 restrictions allow.

Lastly, thank you to all TBA members who have assisted a new member to feel welcome into our club, and keep up the good work in this regard.

We plan to appoint a dedicated Membership Officer if we can find a suitable volunteer.

Intermediate and Advanced Training

David Robinson and Sue Falkingham both conducted series of lessons on during 2019 Wednesday afternoons at 2.00pm. These were well attended and we plan to increase the number of lessons being held on Wednesday afternoons in the next twelve months.

The TBA funded the visit of Philip Gue from SA in June 2019 to conduct a weekend of more advanced training for the State teams and anyone else who wished to attend. This session was also well attended, and we had arranged for Justin Mill to conduct the state training this year. Unfortunately due to COVID-19 this also had to be cancelled.

Playing Sessions

We have also tried to increase participation in regular sessions by improving the playing experience of members.

As a result of the Membership Survey we conducted in April last year, the following improvements have been implemented :

Thursday morning Session has an additional three boards

Sunday Afternoon bridge was trialled but struggled to find sufficient demand. (We are currently working on a new offering for Sunday afternoons)

A Payment Voucher system has been introduced as a temporary cashless alternative pending the completion of the ABF payment system

There has been Policy Clarification and Development on supervised and “no partner” sessions so people are not unnecessarily turned away.

Tournament Capability

In 2019, the TBA purchased an additional 2000 Boards to enable events such as the annual TFoB, (and less frequent ANC) to be conducted independently of the regular operations of the TBA. Malcolm Sherlock worked tirelessly on this project, measuring and calculating down to the last millimetre to ensure we adapted our storage correctly. We held two working bees to label all of the new boards as well as transfer the cards from the old cardboard folder to the new boards. Many thanks to Malcolm for his work on this and all those who assisted in the working bees.

Club Room Extensions

The Membership Survey revealed support for clubroom extensions to provide additional playing area, a separate teaching area and improved kitchen/dining facilities. The committee has progressed the extensions by the development of a concept plan, the lodgement of a Planning Application with Hobart Council and a submission for funding from the TCF grants program.

Safer traffic movements will also form a part of the new extensions.

Dealing

Life members, Keith and Shirley Graver retired this year after many years of dealing boards for the TBA. Their duties have largely been taken over by Committee members and other interested volunteers. Thanks to Lynne Cook for managing the Dealing Roster to allow for a successful transition with regard to dealing duties.

Administrative Support

In 2019, the TBA Committee decided to engage some paid technical and administrative support .

This was initially provided by Hugh Grosvenor, and subsequently taken over by John Grosvenor. I cannot thank John enough for his help and support over the last twelve months. He has a genuine interest in bridge and the fortunes of the TBA and without him, some of our most successful new programs would not have been possible. His work on our web site has transformed it into a “must read” by all our members, many of whom have commented favourably on it to me personally.

John’s technical capability has been recognised by the ABF who have asked him to provide advice to them during their technology upgrade. This gives the TBA a seat at the table during this process and ensures consideration of issues from a club perspective.

Vision for next 6 months

In the next 6 months the TBA will focus on the new areas of Youth Bridge, Committee and Director development and support.

Youth Bridge

The TBA with assistance from the ABF sent a team of six young Tasmanians from the North West Coast to Youth Week in Canberra in January 2020. One of our pairs (Ben Sproule and Taze Jackson) made it to the finals. These youth have been tutored by Cedric Parker through their school, and we wish them all the best for their future progress with bridge. The TBA thanks Cedric for his teaching endeavours with these young men, and for chaperoning them in Canberra, allowing them to have the great experience which they had during that week.

During 2021, the TBA would like to explore the possibility of doing some work through local secondary schools to establish a youth program through our club.

Sadly, our “Bring Your Grandchild to Bridge “ day scheduled for Friday April 24th and conducted by Bianca and Leigh Gold under the auspices of the ABF was another COVID-19 casualty. We will reschedule this event when COVID-19 restrictions no longer apply.

Operations Manual and Director Support

During the next 12 months we plan to develop a Director’s Manual to assist existing and aspiring Directors who wish to run TBA duplicate sessions. An Operations manual for the TBA is well under way.

These will include relevant TBA policies and procedures, Committee information, instructions around the Compscore2 system, and information on common movements and infractions.

In addition, our Chief Tournament Director, Simon Edler who has now reached National 1 accreditation, was to conduct Director Training sessions in all regions of the state in 2020, having completed this first (and last due to COVID-19) in Devonport on Friday February 6th.

Participation in State Events

We plan to encourage the participation in State Events by out of region participants by amending the playing hours of such events, and co-ordinating billeting and car pooling for these participants, once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Covid19

COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on bridge right around Australia with all large events having to be cancelled in 2020.

The TBA shut down on March 16th due to public health concerns and remained closed until June 26th when we were able to recommence with limited participation and with a COVID-19 Safety Plan in place. Thanks to all our club members who have returned to bridge under these difficult circumstances and made the necessary accommodations caused by the COVID-19 requirements.

The AGM had to be postponed until September 5th and still cannot be held in the traditional form of “feast” then bridge.

On Line Bridge

As a service to members, the TBA (in association with the ABF) was able to establish some regular on-line sessions though BBO during the shut down. Once members had registered their BBO user names, and stocked up with BBO dollars, they were ready to do battle with their “unpredictable” mouse, the unforgiving clock, wi-fi connectivity, and of course their online opponents, both human and robotic!

We plan to keep a few on line sessions running in the long term as they have provided an opportunity for bridge players from all over the state to play with players from our club which has been great.

TFoB 2021

Rather than cancel TFoB 2021, the Committee is currently working on a plan to hold a modified TFoB event in April 2021 incorporating COVID-19 safety measures and with social distancing in place. Members will be advised of details once they are finalised.

Committee and Volunteers

The TBA oversees the running of bridge at the State level, as well as the day-to-day running of club matters. The other seven Tasmanian clubs depend on us to ensure state-wide information is disseminated, and accurate, with regard to events held in Tasmania.

I would personally like to thank the hard working TBA committee and other volunteers for their assistance and support during 2019 and 2020. When you drink your tea or coffee or glass of wine – it has been purchased and brought to the club by a committee member or volunteer.

When you play a board at the table, it has been dealt by a committee member or volunteer. When something breaks at the club, its repair is carried out or organised by a committee member or volunteer. A committee member pays the bills so that the club keeps running. State masterpoints are managed by a committee member or volunteer. A committee member or volunteer maintains the notice boards etc

The TBA would not be able to operate without the help of its Management committee or volunteers so a big thank you from all club members for your work in 2019/20 I am looking forward to the TBA consolidating and building on the previous year as we move on into 2020/21.

Julie Rhodes
President, TBA 2019/2020