

Report from the subcommittee

Decline in membership and session attendances

9 September 2019

The TBC needs to increase, or at least maintain its membership and attendance (particularly on Wednesday nights) in order to keep the club alive.

This needs to be **more** than a short term objective.

The “sources” we have available to increase membership and attendances are:

- Otago Bridge Club members
- New members

A further source to increase attendances are our current members.

How best to tap into these sources?

Current members

An analysis of the figures as at 1 July 2019, shows that firstly, the TBC had 110 financial members with 41 of these also being members of the Otago Bridge Club (OBC).

Further analysis, reveals that we have only about 80 “active” members after deducting those members who have not played for a long time and are unlikely to play (due to age, ill health, etc).

When we consider this figure, it is not a large number to draw on to increase attendances. 80 people is the number we had at our Cancer Society charity match recently. Also about half are also members at OBC so play at Otago as well as Taieri.

There are around 32 of our current members who play either 2 or 3 sessions at Taieri each week, and we do not think we can prevail on these folk to play more than they already do. That leaves around 48 members - who can be separated into:

27 Monday night only players

21_Infrequent players

The subcommittee has tried to contact by phone as many of these 48 people as possible. Generally, the folk we talked with, were positive about the club and bridge. Many had good reasons why they had not attended as often as they could. Several said they intended to play more in the future and also play on a Wednesday.

In general, the folk contacted were positive and have good intentions. But making sure they carry out these intentions is another matter.

The subcommittee’s recommendation regarding current members is that the committee is more **proactive** in promoting Wednesday sessions to the Monday nighters.

For instance, handicapping of several Wednesday night series has been introduced specially for Monday players. But the club does not appear to advertise or promote this fact.

This month's newsletter will include a few words in this respect, and it would help if the Monday convenor/or director would include an announcement to promote Wednesdays over the next few weeks.

Otago Bridge Club members

With the approval of the majority of the committee, we have issued an invitation to Otago members to come to Taieri and play either on a Monday or a Wednesday between September and the end of the year, without having to become a TBC member if they come more than the 3 times (as required by Rule 14).

Rule 14 does allow the committee to change the "3 times" condition. It also states that guests and visitors shall pay the **usual table money**.

Our club offers a number of advantages to OBC members and we can give them an opportunity to sample these and see what we have. Even if we do not manage to get new members we will have hopefully increased attendances for a few weeks.

New members

This is our best and most reliable source. Mosgiel and surrounding areas are continuing to be developed at a fast rate and this is bringing to the area a lot of people who are potential members.

It is clear that an aggressive and well organised approach to advertising together with an excellent tutor such as Kristen Collins are the ingredients necessary to get the optimum number of new members from the lessons. This is evidenced by the number of members this year arising from the learner classes.

The subcommittee strongly recommends that the TBC sets in place a similar or better advertising plan to what was used in 2019. The club should also ensure as soon as possible, that Kristen is willing and able to take the 2020 lessons.

Of course, having the learners sign up for membership, is only the first step. The next step is to do all we can to **keep** them (encourage them, provide mentors and partners, have improver sessions, etc).

The club should also be advertising at other than just at the time of the lessons. **A4 posters could be distributed around Mosgiel and surrounding area in appropriate places, such as medical centres, shops, library, businesses, supermarkets,etc.**

Marketing the club

Pat Chapple has suggested we contact the Marketing Department of Otago University for advice and assistance.

She has agreed to contact the University to obtain details of what they can do, how they would do it, etc. And then present these details to the committee. Pat will arrange a time and date for the presentation with Jenny.

The problems of declining membership and attendances have been on-going for many years and, in my opinion, the committee needs to look at establishing something more long-term (perhaps a specific “job” whether within the committee or not.)

**Christine Samson
(on behalf of the subcommittee)**