



RORY's EDITION

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Finesse

July 2026

Newsletter of the Hutt Bridge Club



**Hutt
Bridge Club**

PRESIDENT'S PATER

Ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou.

Hi everyone, and welcome to the middle of winter – excellent bridge-playing weather. It's a good time to enjoy bridge in our warm clubrooms while the weather outside is less inviting. Perhaps it's also a good time to try the odd local tournament.

I'm writing this from our little "bolthole" in Mount Maunganui, where we're repairing our bathroom after a flood and helping with school-holiday grandparent duties.

Our new bridge committee is functioning well, and our club continues to be a great place to be, as shown by the steady stream of visitors. Since our last birthday edition of *Finesse* in April, we've been very busy, including running the well-supported Hutt Swiss Pairs tournament and a Junior tournament held at the same time. Although we had a few IT scoring issues in both tournaments, the players didn't let this interrupt their enjoyment of the day. Thanks to everyone involved, especially our 'phone a friend', Chris Jarad, who came along with Heather and got us going again.

Our sponsors, Gee & Hickton and Robyn Fisher representing her father's **Ron Fisher Trust**, were both at the tournament for prizegiving, and Robyn was there all day helping.



Perhaps the most interesting news of the last quarter was our club's appearance on *Seven Sharp* in a story about our prodigy, seven-year-old player Rory McDowall. Thanks to AJ for initiating and managing this event, and to Simon Webber and Philippa (Rory's mum) for going through the lessons with Rory and making it possible for her to play bridge. You'll see the plaque in the foyer, crafted by Simon, recognising Rory's achievement as the youngest registered bridge player in New Zealand in 2026.

Many of you will be aware we've had water-leak issues at the club for a few years during severe northerly storms. Having a building expert on the committee has really paid off. Simon Webber, working with Brian Ross, our body corporate partner, has found we have a substantial leaking problem in the top-storey roof and walls. Our insurance claim to repair the damage caused by the leaking has been accepted, but first we must fund the fixing of the leak by replacing the roof and flashings ourselves. We've applied for grant funding, however if our application is unsuccessful, we'll use club funds.

Enjoy your time at the bridge table and the rest of the winter.

Mā te wā,

Doug



Doug at his Mt Maunganui bolthole

SERIES WINNERS



April	Event	Winners
Monday	Stellin pairs	Tani Blackburn & Sharyn Bowen
Tuesday	Eastbourne Pairs	Ren Davies & Martyn Dowman
Wednesday	Pharoah Construction Pairs	David & Christine Tourell
Thursday	Vil Gravis Back to the Future Teams	Team: Jerry Craanen, Eleisha Hawkins, Marian Loader, Deidre Stallinger
Friday	Muritai Pairs	Madeleine Askew & Mary Rundle
May	Event	Winner
Monday	Trevor Williams Pairs	Tani Blackburn & Simon Webber
Monday	Learners Buddy Series	Chris Manson & Jane Langlands
Tuesday	Margaret Oxnam Memorial Pairs	Paul Badcock & Eleisha Hawkins
Wednesday	Queens Pairs	Steve Denholm & Dianne Fitzgerald
Thursday	Ramone Partnership Pairs	Jeffry Craanen & Martyn Dowman
Friday	Totara Pairs	Lindsay Byron & John Ansell
June	Event	Winner
Monday	Lincoln Pairs	John Ansell & Candice Ng
Tuesday	Battah Davie Maskell Lawyers Handicap Pairs	Claire Stainton & Christine Chowchuvech
Wednesday	Naenae Pairs	Blake Morrison-Bell & Genevieve Pronk
Thursday	Shona McFarlane Retirement Village Pairs	Simon Webber & Eleisha Hawkins
Friday	Jan Devereux Memorial Pairs	Ruth Brucker & Trish Dive



*Ramone
Partnership*



AROUND THE REGION

Tournament	Congratulations to...	Placing
Victoria Multigrade	Eleisha Hawkins & Walt Davis	6 th equal
Upper Hutt Junior Pairs	Chris Manson & Claire Stainton	6 th
Upper Hutt Intermediate Pairs	Jeffrey Craanen & Simon Webber	3 rd
	David Haines & Lesley Haines	4 th
Wellington Congress Intermediate Pairs	Martyn Frew & Andrew Cushnie	1 st
	Genevieve Pronk & Jacob Pilalis	2 nd
Wellington Congress Intermediate Teams	Neil Sargisson©, Jacob Pilalis, Diana Snethledge, Peter Snethledge	4 th

Wellington Region Representatives

Senior Grade	Vil Gravis & Tani Blackburn
Intermediate Grade	Eleisha Hawkins & Jeffrey Craanen, Martyn Frew & Andrew Cushnie
Women's Grade	Christine Chowchuvech & Ruth Brucker, Ellie Malloy & Helen Climo

2026 HBC REGIONAL CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS TEAM

Open	Russell Dive & Vil Gravis
Restricted Open	Madeleine Askew & Marian Loader
Intermediate	Jeffry Craanen & Simon Webber
Junior	Amy Haste & Mel Rowe
Novice	Dianne Fitzgerald and Fiona McArthur





Graduation

The graduates of our first set of lessons for the year gained their 'badges' on Wednesday, 27 May. What a lovely night.

We had our auspicious ceremony with a few words from Peter Newell, NZ Bridge President, who popped in especially for the occasion. He's in the bottom picture, with our youngest graduate Rory MacDowall.

Friendly bridge games eased our nervous newbies into it, and the awesome supper proved yet again, how welcoming we are.

Our playing room even looked a million dollars with flowers and new welcome signs.

CONGRATULATIONS to all our new members:

Michaela Askew, Peter Burke, Jamie Burrell, Pam Cavanagh, Suzanne Eastwood, Kevin Grimes, Paul Logan, Sharyn McCann, Philippa McDowall, Rory McDowall, Gail Nicholson, Mark Ratcliff, and Chris Walker.





Rory MacDowall, aged seven-and-a-quarter

Our youngest ever playing club member

When club tutor AJ (Alan Jennings) learned the youngest student in his Class of 2026 was just seven years old, it sparked his imagination.

"How many clubs in have a seven-year-old player?" he wondered. NZ Bridge's Youth Coordinator Mereana Cullen confirmed Rory MacDowall of the Hutt Bridge Club was New Zealand's youngest playing member.

Both Rory and her Mum Philippa MacDowall both graduated together, with Rory receiving her graduation pack from New Zealand Bridge President, Peter Newell who said, "She must be a very bright young girl."

To recognise the honour, Rory was also presented with a special plaque, made by Simon Webber her 'buddy' for the learning sessions. It now hangs in our foyer beside the honours board and will be a constant reminder to us all of Rory, our youngest ever playing club member. Take a look at it as you pass by.

But AJ hadn't finished there...



Rory and Hutt Bridge Club on TV1's Seven Sharp

Being the youngest bridge player in NZ is something to celebrate, so AJ hatched a plan to let the world know – well, NZ at least.

He got in touch with TVNZ and Rory and the Hutt bridge Club featured on Seven Sharp on 5 June. Daniel Faitaua and his cameraman, spent time with Rory, at her school and at our spruced up clubrooms filming and interviewing Rory and some other key people.

What an awesome story they told. Philippa told us she watched her Grandad play and counted with him and her school principal told us how "extremely proud and thrilled" they were for her. However her friends still think bridge is what you drive over!



If you haven't watched it yet, there's behind-the-scenes photos and the Seven Sharp footage on our Facebook page.

Player profile - Paul Henry Joseph Browne



I was born Paul Henry Joseph Browne in January 1948 to an Irish/Scottish father and Samoan/Fijian mother. Henry was after an uncle. Both parents wanted to name me Joseph but did not want the name shortened to Joe, so I became Paul by default. And what about the Browne surname? If I had a dollar for every time I had to correct "Brown with an E" I would be a wealthy man.

My father visited Ireland to delve into his Celtic heritage and was informed by a priest "You are not truly Irish, your ancestors only arrived in Ireland with the Normans!" To avoid years of counselling, is it any wonder I chose bridge over troubled waters!

My early years were spent in Dunedin, where I joined Public Trust for my "cradle to the grave" career. I also had the opportunity to study at Otago University, initially with the goal of becoming an accountant and/or lawyer. Instead, I found a subject far more interesting and graduated with a degree in Economics.

At age 28, I did what many mainlanders were doing at that time by uprooting my young family and drifting north for job opportunities and career advancement.

Mid 2010 was my introduction to bridge under the tutelage of Anthony Ker, the champion bridge and chess master. Of the 16 years since, I would only have played a total of approximately 5-6 years in 3 short stints. So, each time I returned, I had to repeat the training classes. My second teacher was Bryan Cunliffe (I think) and third time last year the indomitable AJ. Hopefully the lessons will stick this time with additional assistance from the likes of Paul and Kathryn Badcock, Vil Gravis and others, along with the excellent training notes in the NZ Bridge website.

Hutt Valley Bridge Club is fortunate to have so much support from its playing numbers assisting in all activities which make up a successfully run club, e.g. the trainers, directors, committee, and other volunteers as the need arises.

But essentially, success is down to the players who bring a friendly, positive and respectful attitude to the game. Special thanks to my playing partners prepared to forgive my numerous mistakes.

Two pieces of advice I have received from recent partners have been:

1. Always try and achieve at least 50% success rate at every session.
2. Have fun.

This advice appears to be counter intuitive, but I am trying to achieve both with each session.

P.S. I need to mention my wife Nancy. We shared our 57th wedding anniversary last month. There are so many nice things I could say about her. BUT, she has absolutely no wish to join me in playing bridge!

Elsie's Etiquette


*Be pleasant and polite,
it creates an enjoyable
atmosphere for everyone*


*Rudeness won't be
tolerated. If you
encounter it, call the
director please*


*Arrive on time.
We like you seated 15
minutes before play*


*Pop your phone on
silent. If it's on for
emergencies, let the
director know first*


Greet your opponents


*Maintain a 'poker-face'.
Expressions and body
language shouldn't be
able to be read*


*Thank your partner:
- To confirm their lead
- When dummy goes down*


*Don't touch another
player's cards during
play - including dummy!*

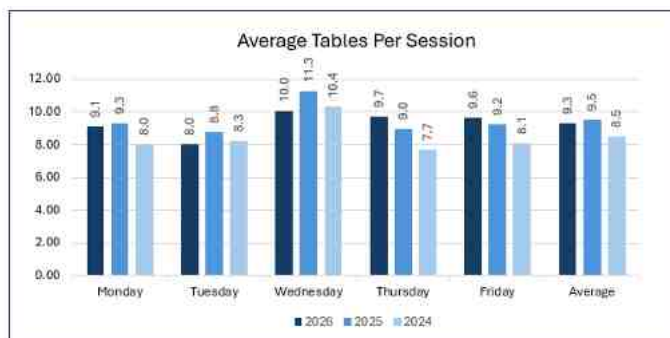

*Call for the
"Director PLEASE"*



When's a good time to play at the club

We're lucky, we can play bridge at our club every day of the working week. At weekends we usually have learning sessions, and then there are tournaments, usually held at weekends too.

If you're new to the club, and want to play just a session or two a week, which one might fit best for you? Here's a general overview showing the average number of tables at each session, over the last three years. Let's play more!



Saturday learning sessions

We have two sessions, usually on alternate Saturdays, both with games to play and talk about.

- ♦ **AJ's revision class.** Great for beginners. An informal session about any topic YOU like.
- ♦ **Improvers class with Kathryn & Paul.** Lessons on a specific topic for people with more experience than beginners.



What a lovely Matariki Day afternoon with our bridge whanau.

We began by acknowledging club members and special pets who have passed over the previous year. We shared a huge table full of Kai and later took home plants and seeds we'd shared for future generations to enjoy.

The winners were Candice and Simon Grant (N/S) and Steve Denholm and Madeleine Askew. (E/W)



Monday afternoons

Generally, retirees or those available for the afternoon. A mix of experience and grade.

Tuesday evenings

Confident players and people wanting to make the step-up from Wednesday evenings. Play with and against experienced and higher graded players.

Wednesday evenings

Beginners and people less confident. For this group, we encourage partnerships with a more experienced player as it helps people learn. Partner's preferable but not essential – you're guaranteed to play. A more social evening, and less competitive.

Thursday evenings

Confident players and people wanting to make the step-up from Wednesday evenings. Play with and against experienced and higher graded players.

Friday afternoons

Generally, retirees or those available in an afternoon. A mix of experience and grade.



Piccies from the last three months

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Andeana & Jacon Pilalis
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Hutt Open
Swiss Pairs 5A
and
Junior 3B
tournaments



Eleisha & Stephanie
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