

Captains report for the year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

Membership

Financial membership has grown modestly. On the 1st March, it stood at 44 although I suspect this number includes a few people who have actually left. During the year, membership took a new direction in the sense that we have developed two categories of membership; “financial members” who can and do attend both the Tuesday Club meetings and the Thursday “singles” sessions and another small set of members who attend only the Thursday meetings. “Financial members” are noted in the records kept by the treasurer. The Thursday-only members do of course make a financial contribution to the payment that the Club makes for the hall on Thursdays. While my comments now upon this division do not constitute a suggestion that changes be made to any membership or attendance rules, I believe that this division should not take place unacknowledged. It does mean that our “financial membership” figures do not accurately reflect total attendance, and should the previous membership upper bound of 50 become relevant again, these two categories of attendance may need to be taken into account. In saying this, I assume that, prior to the existence of the Thursday meetings, the upper bound of 50 was adopted only to minimise the likelihood of members having to sit out two games sequentially.

In general, it is our better players who play on Thursdays and I have noticed that those in the middle of our rankings are now taking advantage of the opportunities to play with our more advanced members that the Thursday sessions allow. We can accommodate a few more and I encourage all members accordingly.

Attendance

Our post-Covid attendance is well down on our pre Covid numbers with Tuesday attendance fluctuating typically in the range of 22 – 26. These figures contrast with attendance figures in the low 30s prior to Covid. Our current attendance figures do have the advantage that no-one has to sit out two games sequentially. Thursday attendance is typically in the 11 – 15 range. Tuesday attendance thus fully pays the costs of the hall hire, while the Thursday attendance usually falls a little short.

Change of Table Management

The 2023/24 year has been notable for a significant change in the way the Tuesday Club days are organised. For quite a while, several members had viewed the way in which table teams were arranged via the quasi-random “across and down” method of board management led to too few occasions when all members at a table were of approximately the same standard. The consequence was that in nearly every game, there was a large differences in ability within a table’s four players. This in turn led to the better players either having to play below their abilities or making shots that were well beyond the ability of other players to respond to. The view was expressed that this arrangement was unsatisfactory and a change of system was required such that members would play with others according to skill levels rather than by the traditional mixing. There was considerable opposition to this proposal. I had letters from several members forcefully expressing the view that the social nature of the club would be undermined and that unwelcome divisions would be introduced. The matter was debated at length within the committee in the later months of 2023. Eventually, a compromise solution was proposed: prior to tea time, the traditional method would be employed but after tea, whoever was managing the board would divide that day’s attending members into two groups of the more and less advanced members and use the across and down

method to arrange games independently within these two groups. A duty fell upon me to explain the Committee's rationale for the change and respond to the letters. I hope that I was able to do this adequately.

The committee decided to introduce the change on an experimental basis for the last months of 2023. In the new year, it decided to make the change permanent. As a middling member who can fall into either group according to who happens to be present on any one Tuesday, I find the new regime congenial and enjoy playing with people not too far from my ability, whether they are all more advanced than me or less so. Having played in both groups has led me to believe that the change has now been found acceptable by a large majority of members. None of the feared social divisions seems to have appeared.

Interclub Matches.

2023 proved to be one of the best, and perhaps the most successful year, in the club's history for interclub matches. We won against Kapiti, Waikanae, and Martinborough both at home and away, and we won our home match also against Levin. They won when playing at home but this year, who knows? I would like to congratulate all the players who participated in any and all of these matches. We should be getting a reputation as opponents as illustrious as our hospitality reputation which is always admired, to which Pam Cassells' contribution is both notable and reliable.

I must thank Maarten and Annette for making the arrangement with their opposite numbers at our neighbouring clubs for the work they put in to finalising the dates, the mode of play, the recruitment of our teams, their food contributions and the recording of match results. It is a time-consuming task and I am grateful that they relieve the captaincy of it. I would also like to thank all the players who constituted our teams, particularly those who played inter-club for the first time. There are other members who could represent the club, and I would like to mention again that interclub matches are not just for our better players. We choose teams partially based upon the wish to play interclub and not just on likelihood of winning, so I encourage all those who have not yet played interclub to do so. Don't be shy. It's the playing that matters.

Club Championships

As usual, we played the traditional set of championship matches. I could mention all the winners and runners up now, but the opportunity to congratulate them will take place during the cup award ceremonies later in the meeting. Their names will be indelibly recorded for all time on the cups and on certificates and in the minutes of this meeting.

Hall Rental.

The arrangement by which the hall is sublet to the club by the Wellington Red Hackle Pipe Band may have to be slightly modified. The secretary of the Band has informed us that another sub-tenant, a ballet school, no longer uses the hall. The ballet people performed the much-appreciated weekly function of cleaning the hall prior to use, thereby relieving other users of this necessity. It has therefore become necessary to find an alternative arrangement, which might have financial consequences. Mr Ian McKenzie, the band's secretary, and I have established telephone contact and are due to discuss details and options in person at the end of this week. I will be bringing these to the committee shortly afterwards with a view to finalising arrangements with Mr Mackenzie by the end of May at the latest.

Thanks to the committee

I must express my appreciation of the contribution made by the committee members of the club. I have already mentioned Maarten and Annette's contribution but all members add value. Terry has of course performed his many duties with the diligence and competence we have all relied upon for so many years. Today is notable for being the day on which he retires from these. More on this later.

I would like to express my thanks to John Kyne for agreeing to take on the duties of treasurer. We know that he has done sterling work in this area for other organisations so we are lucky to have him available and willing.

This year as club captain has taught me how valuable it is to have an industrious secretary in Graeme who works without much fanfare or prominence but nevertheless ensures that the administrative affairs of the club are kept in order and up to date. I wish to record my gratitude for the contribution he makes to the smooth running of the club.

Barbara has once again shone in her role as organiser of social occasions, driving a hard bargain on occasion. She organises the catering both at matches and on occasions such as today's, so I thank her for this too. Patsy has continued as organiser of sweepstakes and contributor to the financial health of the club and is much deserving of our appreciation.

May I also thank Pradip for the quiet reminders he gives me from time to time, ensuring that topics that should be mentioned are and tasks that should be attended to are not forgotten. He has exemplified the wisdom of having a past captain on the committee.

Special event

I referred earlier to today as the day on which Terry finally retires as Treasurer but also as advisor, historian, archivist and general good guy. Last June, at a mid-winter lunch, we awarded Terry a life membership in appreciation of his decades-long contributions to the club. Graeme and I composed a certificate and conjured up a portrait from past records and presented them to him. However, they were separate documents and Terry expressed a wish that we assemble them into something worthy of display. We did this but were frustrated in our wish to make another formal presentation by health-related issues. These now appear to have been overcome. It is therefore my pleasant duty to make this award and I do so now. Please bring out your cameras.

Peter Clemerson

Club Captain