

1967-75

The Goulburn Bridge Club is fortunate to have the reflections of one of the foundation members of the club.

In 2008, Caroline McKellar kindly documented her memories of the initial development of bridge in Goulburn. Gladys Sawyers, who provided the club's first venue, has also kindly recorded her recollections of those times.

1966-67

Carol writes

My bridge memories after 32 years of absence.

To all past and future members of the Goulburn Bridge Club

Stage 1: How it became a first for Goulburn.

I am quite honoured to be invited to write stage one of the history of this club. What a happy time in my life. Do enjoy reading it.

Solo was the fashionable social card game and we who played in many different groups enjoyed happy hours of friendship and recreation. In the latter months of 1966 Dr Isabel Dunlop arrived from Scotland to reside. Dr Dunlop wanted to be closer to her only daughter Betty Marcus Clark and to spend more time with her many grandchildren. Previously, Isabel had won a course of bridge lessons on board a ship from England and now that she had retired she was very keen to have more social bridge. She invited Dr Joyce Russell, Dr Verleen Mullen and myself, Carol McKellar, to her home in Bryant Street for weekly lessons to test our likeness and ability for the game of rubber bridge. We struggled with various books on Standard American and later Acol, reading Goren, Sheinwold and Culbertson. After 6-12 months we felt a bit more competent.

Spreading the word to our solo groups that we were enjoying this game and would they give it a go for it was far more interesting than solo. It was not really a winner for some time, most were not convinced and could not understand how we were so smitten. Sadly, we did miss our solo groups, but found a willing convert to bridge who came from Bega, and had actually played a little social bridge there, and met Isabel previously at Bega. Gladys Sawyers became our standby player in our small group and we welcomed her with open arms. Her first game, which she remembers well, was at our home at 236 Cowper Street, Goulburn and she bid a slam on the first hand. We were very impressed and immediately invited her to be a permanent player and she was a great asset in many ways.

Gladys and George Sawyers came to the ANZ Bank in 1966 and stayed till 1968. They lived in the residence above the bank on the corner of Clifford and Auburn Street, opposite St Andrews Church, built in 1905. Later, by courtesy of the Sawyers family this residence became our very first venue for the Goulburn Bridge Club. For nearly two years. The piano was moved from the large drawing room upstairs to allow us to put four tables with a fifth, if it became necessary, on the landing.

A quick inspection by the four inaugural members, Isabel, Joyce, Verleen and Carol and we were on their way. We were able to use the kitchen and bathroom during our sessions which was very comfortable so we spread the word for any players, or would be players, to come along to our weekly bridge day. Play started at 10am, players brought their own lunch and play finished at 3pm.

My friends, Mrs Dorothy Jesner and Mr Bruce Morrison from the ACT Club arranged for Mrs Olive Lott to bring a four over from Canberra to show us how to set up for duplicate. Before long we had three tables of hopeful bridge players. This was called a matchbox (was this matchpoint?) movement. After a quick meeting of our original four we bought an old set of wooden duplicate boards (\$45) from Canberra and acquired some old packs of cards from friends and decided to start table money of \$1 per head to pay for our meagre equipment. "Everything went along amazingly well, no ripples, new members coming – happy times. Co-operative people, lots of fun and all agreeable in our private club. We were to be invited for a return visit to Canberra in the new year. 1967

In January 1967 my daughter Alice was born.

Bridge baby delivered safely to Carol and Noel McKellar, what delights Alice Caroline McKellar brought with her to our family and our weekly bridge days. Gladys Sawers arranged the luncheon time so not to deprive Baby Alice of her nourishment and so keep her unbelievably contented. What an angel.

1967-68

Good days, good times all those years ago and I know how fortunate we all were to be able to enjoy them. Unbusinesslike, without holding any inaugural meeting to form a committee the four foundation members battled on and made all the decisions, sometimes in passing on the stairs. We sailed through happily until mounting pressures from various ACT friends to form a duplicate club and to travel to Canberra for competitions. Wow, what are we in for?!

We were invited to Canberra to Kibitz a teams match between ACT and NZ and to play a social side game. Terrified as we were we had a great weekend.

1969-70

Gladys Sawyers writes

A six member committee was set up to explore the possibility of forming a bridge club.

Credit must be given to those gallant souls who joined Carol and Verleen to stimulate interest in arranging lessons advertising in the Evening Post and interviews at 2GN. They attempted to gather enough interested people to form an official registered Goulburn Bridge Club. Prominent among these were Mr Harry and Mrs Jeanine Bell and Mr George and Mrs Jill Bayliss.

John Brockwell from the ACT was of great assistance and arranged for registration and affiliation to the ACT Club.

Carol continues

Isabel Dunlop left the club and returned to the UK after the death of her daughter but returned in 1970.

In April 1969 the Sawyers were on the move to Sydney so the venue had to be changed. Many weeks of searching, Phillip Court Hotel and Ladies Technical College were all approached.

During this period there were many interested people phoning me to enquire about bridge lessons. On 16th February George Jesner began beginners and advanced lessons.

In 1970 Evening Post Reports keen interest in the new club.

The first Committee Meeting held on 16th April 1970. At the second Committee meeting of April 27th the committee agreed to arrange a permanent site for the club, The Bamboo Room at the Goulburn Hotel at a fixed weekly cost of \$2 for the morning session and \$5 for the Friday evening session. However, after one session running over time the rent was increased by \$2 per week. Table money 30c for day sessions and 50c for evening sessions.

However, by August it's clear from the minutes that the arrangement with the Goulburn Hotel is no longer satisfactory and the club has moved to the Phillip Court Hotel.

The bridge club is travelling quite frequently to the ACT for bridge and meetings. John Brockwell is Secretary of the ACT Bridge Association and he is very involved with the developing club. John is subsequently made an Honorary Member of the club for his enormous contribution

Inaugural meeting in the Goulburn Hotel. John Brockwell, George Jesner, Len Dixon, the Morrisons and Harry Bell were of great assistance. Dr Joyce Russell was the first President.

In 1971 the club held a charity day at Norwood by courtesy of Betty Kennett. Proceeds to the Crescent School. Verleen and Carol organized the bridge and directed on the day. The Crescent School committee served a superb chicken and champagne luncheon in the beautiful gardens of Norwood. Canberra was represented by Mrs Lott, Aino Morison and fourteen other Canberrans

A great day was had by all until home time when Carrol and Verleen lost two card tables from the boot of their car in a storm on the return trip. Quick fix. They dug deep into their pockets and bought two new tables for the club, their donation to the bridge club for a great day. They were so grateful that the storm held off till the evening as it certainly would have spoiled their "Garden Party."

April 1971 Minutes record the Acceptance of Eilis Magner and Helen Crisp as members of the club. Eilis, who at that time had recently arrived from Canada, spent some years in Goulburn as an English history teacher before moving to the ACT to study law. Eilis went on to be the Foundation Chair of Law at Armidale University and until just before her death in 2014 Eilis had held the position of Honorary Legal Counsel of the Australian Bridge Federation for 16 years. Helen continues to be a member of the club

1972

Great excitement for our very first Congress. Two days in the Phillip Court Hotel, Goulburn. Much assistance from Canberra helped to make this weekend a great success and club members felt that they were now on the Bridge Calendar. Don Evans, up and coming player from Sydney did the club proud.

Neil Mathieson and Paul Puusaari won the pairs and took off the silver trophy. A cup donated by A Zantis, (a Goulburn Jeweller). The winners had a great celebration drinking champagne from the cup as they walked down the main street to catch the train from Goulburn.

1973

David Hoffman and Tony Hancock directed the congress in the Lilac Time Hall

1974

Congress at St Patrick's College

The McKellars were transferred to Wollongong and the club lost a popular driving force. The Goulburn Bridge Club and members of the Canberra Bridge Club gave them a wonderful farewell at Goulburn Golf Club.

1975

Congress at Goulburn Teachers College

The GBC went on to hold a Congress each year until 1988. Helen Crisp was the Convenor and Jon Hunt the Director of that final Congress