

The 30th **National Bridge Congress** took place at Hamilton's Kingsgate Hotel from 28 September to 3 October and many local players took part – many of them regulars, while for others it was a new experience.

The two “main events” of Congress are the **New Zealand Pairs** and the **New Zealand Teams**, with both events being 25A status. The Pairs was first up. 141 pairs competed with the top 78 qualifying after two rounds. In 5th place were **Yuzhong Chen** playing with Cambridge's Herman Yuan. In 7th was **Cynthia Clayton** playing with Tauranga's Judy McLeod. **Michael Neels** qualified in 11th with Rotorua's Heini Lux while **Brett Glass and Gary Foidl** were 17th. Just missing out by one position was **Ian Clayton**. A number of other notable Hamilton players did not get through this year. To be fair it can be a bit of a lottery and no doubt they'll be back and doing their best to get in the mix next year.

Then into the semi-final where the top 28 would go on to qualify for the final rounds. Two more sessions and that was the end of the line for the Hamiltonians. Cynthia Clayton missed out by one position, mirroring her husband's result in the qualifying stage! A mention must be made though of former Hamilton member **Dong Gao Bi** who qualified for the final and finished 16th. A superb effort for an Intermediate!

Those who didn't qualify after Day one were able to play in the **Congress Pairs**. Three top 10 finishes for the Club in this – **Blair Fisher**, with partner George Masters from Hastings, finished third, thus allowing them to also compete in the **Plate** section of the NZ Pairs along with the next 25 pairs who missed out from the semi-final. **Malcolm Smith** and Tokoroa's Vera Verhaegh were 4th, while **Liz Fisher**, and regular partner Pam Canning from Akarana were 9th. The **Plate Final** saw **Blair** and George finish 2nd.

At the same time as this was going there was the **Novice Pairs** and it was great to see a number of Hamilton newbies getting involved. Well done to **Maggie Fisher and Karen Harper** who finished 2nd North-South with 55.2% and to **Josephine Gordon and Barbara Andrews** who were 4th East-West with 57.1%. Also running was the **Restricted Open Pairs**, a new event for players with less than 500 A points. A special mention here to **Enid Trower**, Congress's most mature player at 97 years young, who finished 18th of 48 pairs playing with her son Chris.

Onto the **Teams** and several teams from Hamilton in the fray here. Last year's beaten finalists, the **Fisher** team were involved as was the **Carter** team which included **Barry Jones and Jenny Millington**. This team is always involved in the latter stages of the competition but are still striving for that elusive win. With 16 teams qualifying after 10 matches the **Glass** team featuring **Brett Glass, Gary Foidl** and **Richard Hooper** were battling the Fisher team for one spot. Conceivably a close result could see both teams miss out! However a comfortable win to the Glass team meant they went through in 13th place with the Carter team in 2nd. For those who missed out there was a range of other events to choose from. Into the round of 16 and the Glass and Carter teams found themselves in the same group of 4, with the top 2 qualifying for the quarter-finals. It was looking good for the Carter team but they had a heavy loss in the last match. They still had a decent chance of qualifying though but the Glass team had an even bigger defeat, meaning that both teams missed out!

The Fisher team re-grouped as the Canning team and played in the **Point-a-Board Teams**, finishing 2nd equal in this.

The **Intermediate Teams** was a six match Swiss. Hamilton was conspicuous by its absence here – hopefully a team or two will compete in this next year. At the same time was the **Senior Teams**. The **Emms** team featuring **Di Emms and Michael Neels** as well as the **Clayton** team competed in this, both finishing around mid-table.

The **Mixed Pairs** saw **Blair** and **Liz** finish 7th, and **Barry** and **Jenny** finish 11th of 56 pairs. The **Same Sex Pairs** featured **Dallas Dagg** playing with Auckland's Tracey Lewis. They finished a good 4th of 49 while **Yuzhong** and Herman placed 11th. Not much joy for Hamilton in the **Senior Pairs** with **Cynthia**, playing with Rotorua's Ian Moore being our best performer, finishing 15th of 58. The **Intermediate Pairs** saw **Karen Thomson and Kim Thompson** win their first full A point by winning a session. Only 499 to go to Grand Master status! They finished 15th of 62 pairs overall. Also doing well was **Cherie Aston**, playing with Invercargill's Yvonne Hughes to finish 7th. **Nick Yeoman and Mark Thomson** had a consistent day to sneak into the top 20.

Then it was time for the **Swiss Pairs** events. The big story here was in the **Open Swiss Pairs** where **Richard Fletcher** was called in to play at the last minute to avoid an odd number. He partnered Waikato's Alan Parkes, an Intermediate, to win the event! Just behind them were **Brett** and Herman so a nice 1-2 there for Hamilton. **Tim and Helen Healy** also had a good event with a 7-2 win-loss record to finish 14th of the 116 pairs while **Karen Harris**, playing with Wellington's Dean Sole had a 6-3 record to finish 16th.

In the **Open Restricted Swiss Pairs** there was not a lot of local success. Best of the Hamiltonians was **Ed Roggeveen**, playing with Thames's Jena Robinson, who finished in 9th place with a 7-2 record. Their final match was against Hamilton legends **Joan Egger and Lucie Armstrong** who finished 12th of 54 pairs.

Also running was the **Intermediate Swiss Pairs**. An excellent result here for **Mark Thomson and Jeffrey Chang** who finished 7th of 48. They only had a 5-4 record but the wins were much bigger than their losses. **Karen and Kim** also played this event and continued their good form to finish 13th, also with a 5-4 record. **Jol and Cath Glyde**, both Juniors, played this event also and finished very strongly to get up to 16th. They had 3 very small losses and on another day could well have been right up there.

Also running was the **Top Club** event. Hamilton were the Waikato-Bays representatives we finished 3rd of the 6 teams in the competition. Auckland were runaway winners – fielding incredibly strong teams in all three divisions. The **Open Team (Ella Gray, Tipa Goodwin, Richard Hopper, and Lindsay Reid)** had 2 wins and 3 losses to finish 4th. The **Intermediates (Marilyn Webby, Nick Yeoman, Nigel Gresson, and Ian Ross)** had a tough day but recorded a massive win in their last match to finish 5th. The **Junior Team** had a close loss, a big loss and then three good wins to finish third. Well done to the relatively inexperienced team of **Raewyn Grylls-Thomas, Roger Gunning, Catherine Cameron, and Melinda Wang**.

Hopefully everybody who attended had a great time, and for the first-timers it will convince them to come back and maybe try some different events next year. We are fortunate to have this event held just down the road from us, giving our club players a prime opportunity to get involved and be successful. We look forward to more great results in 2016.

Ed Roggeveen