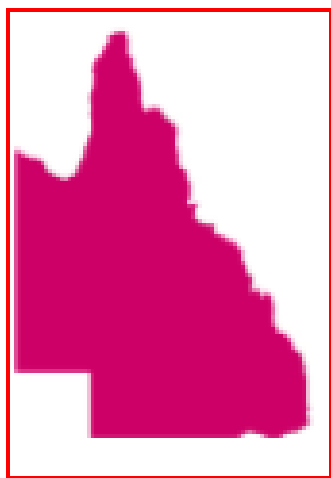


The Early Days of Queensland Bridge

Part Four

The Queensland Bridge Association and the Brisbane Bridge Club



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The Queensland Bridge Association and the Brisbane Bridge Club

The formation of the QBA in February 1934 a pivotal moment for bridge. It was formally affiliated with the Australian Bridge Council and brought opportunities for national competition to Queensland. It was, for several decades, the venue where the greatest number of top players regularly met for duplicate contract.

The history of the QBA has three main stages. Stage one is the period 1934-39 in which the QBA had two main tasks. It first had to establish its presence in Brisbane, including forming a relationship in 1937 with the Brisbane Bridge Club and Mick Sullivan.

Secondly, it had to establish Queensland as a legitimate competitor in national competition. In the thirties, this involved both the annual interstate championships and the national and international par point events.

The second stage was the period of World War II—a period of major disruption for bridge as for most other things.

The third and final, stage of the story covers the recovery from the war years and the attempts to form the basis for the new era that would come in the 1960s.

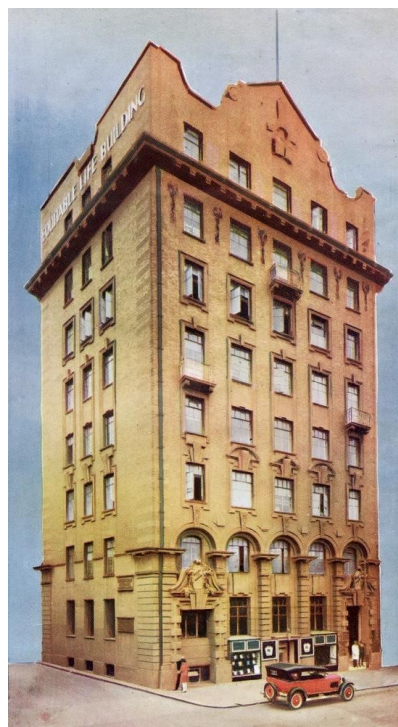
The QBA 1934-39

Locations

Griffiths House, Queen St, 1927

The QBA was formed probably in the building café.

(Photo: Qld State Library)



Equitable Building, Queen St

Location of the Portland Bridge Lounge—home of the QBA for most of 1934.

(Photo: Qld State Library)

The QBA of the 1930s was a very different organisation from that of the present. It was essentially a relatively small club operating one session a week, with an average attendance of between 40 and 50 players.

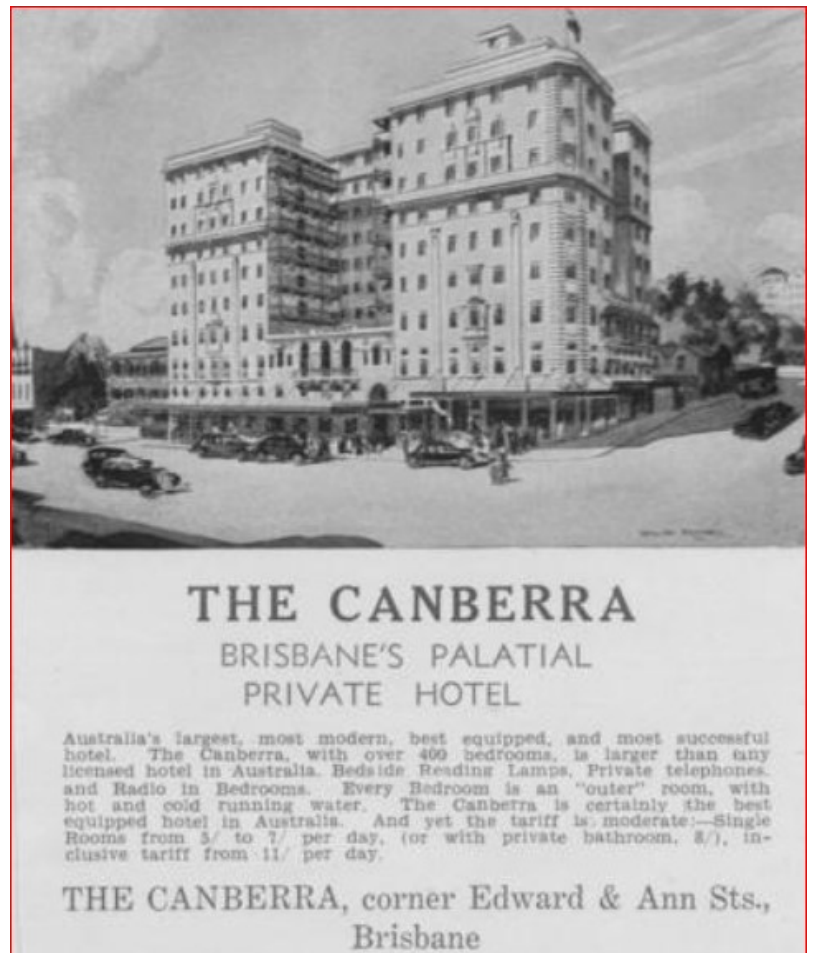
The QBA's first venue, the Portland Bridge Lounge opened in October 1933 as a place to play bridge but also for receptions and morning and afternoon teas.

The QBA stopped playing regularly there at the end of 1934 but the lounge survived, at different venues, at least into the 1950s.

In February 1935, for the start of the new year of competition, the QBA moved to the Canberra Hotel, where it stayed until late 1937.

It then made its final move for the 1930s to the Brisbane Bridge Club in the Edwards & Co Building at 455 Adelaide Street, Petrie Bight.

The move to the Bridge Club, where Friday nights became devoted to QBA events, was an important milestone for the QBA—in particular, because it marked a new association between it and Mick Sullivan, that would be very influential over the next twenty years.



1935 advertisement for The Canberra.

Photo: Queensland State Library



455 Adelaide Street (Ground Floor not visible). Site of BBC and QBA. *Photo: Queensland State Library*

QBA Office Bearers 1934-39

Frank Cayley's tenure as initial President of the QBA was quite brief as he returned to Sydney in September 1934. After this, the Presidents were generally well-known figures in the Brisbane business or medical community.

Richard Baxter, a prominent member of the Queensland and national wool industry, took over for the remainder of the 1934.

From that point, the Presidency changed every year until 1939. Henry Douglas (1935) was the Managing Director of Rothwells, a major Brisbane department store and clothing company.

Otto Hirschfield (1936) was a prominent physician and later, in the 1950s, Chancellor of the University of Queensland.

Austin Lennon (1937) was a stockbroker.

Tom Moore (1938) was Chief Engineer for the Brisbane gas network. He was also a quiz expert and a member of the Queensland quiz team in the interstate competitions held in 1947 and 1948.

Valentine Willis (1939) was a medical practitioner (and also President of the Royal Queensland Golf Club).



Dr VNB Willis

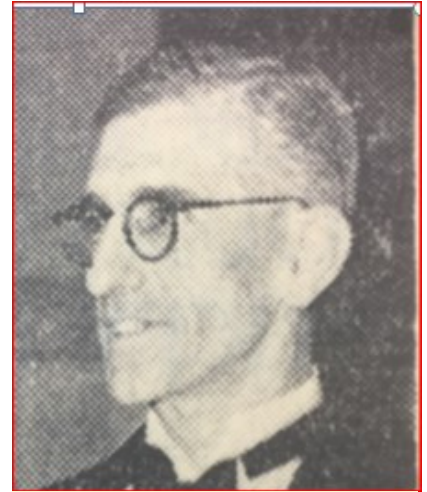


Otto Hirschfield



Tom Moore

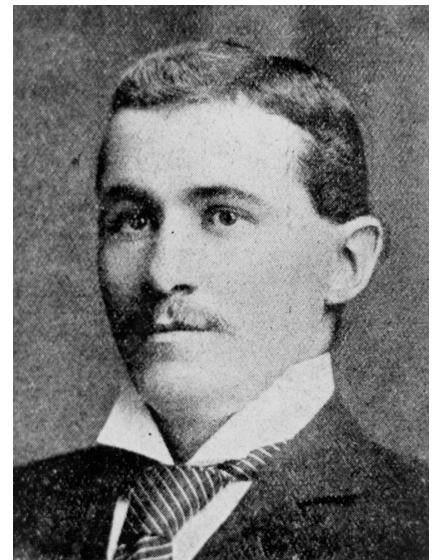
Austin Lennon (1934) and Henry Douglas (1937) also filled the role of Secretary. In 1937 they became respectively President and Secretary of the Australian Bridge Council, as under the system of the time, these offices moved to whatever State was hosting the interstate championships.



Austin Lennon

The other Secretaries were Henry Kivas Tully (1935), a prominent solicitor, and Henry Davey of the Australian Estates Company (1936).

As was the case elsewhere in Australia, the positions of President and Secretary, were largely regarded as male domains, with women generally confined to committee membership. However, Sue Brenan held the position in 1938.



Henry Douglas

Sue Brenan was also a member of the first State Open team in 1935, was President of the Moreton Club, and, during the war, head of the Queensland Red Cross.

When the QBA collocated with the Brisbane Bridge Club Mick Sullivan had been appointed Tournament Director. 1939 saw the beginning, as Secretary, of his involvement in the QBA executive.



Sue Brenan

In addition to the President and Secretary (who seems to have also performed the role of Treasurer), the QBA usually had six or seven committee members.

For the pre-war period, we only know the names of the committee members for 1934, 1936 and 1939. For the years we do know, the committee members tended to be drawn mainly from the top female players at the club who featured in the Women's and Open Teams through to the mid-1950s.

1939 saw the first appearance of Tom Hiley and Frank Garnsey, who had taken over the *Courier Mail* column from Wilf Boyce.



Leila Baxter



Freda Davey



Mary Brodie (left) and Ida Macdonald



Grace McGuinness



Cecilia Douglas



Alexandrina
McCready

The QBA Committee 1934-39

Year	President	Secretary	Committee
1934	Frank Cayley Richard Baxter (after Sept 1934)	Austin Lennon	Leila Baxter, Cecilia Douglas, Otto Hirschfield, Grace McGuinness, Sylvia Soares, Kivas Tully
1935	Henry Douglas	Kivas Tully	Not known
1936	Otto Hirschfield	Henry Davey	Austin Lennon, Tom Moore, ME Allen, Cecilia Douglas, Mary Brodie, Barbara North, Ida Macdonald
1937	Austin Lennon	Henry Douglas	Not known
1938	Tom Moore	Sue Brenan	Not known
1939	Valentine Willis	Mick Sullivan	Frank Garnsey, Tom Hiley, Adrian Epps, Sue Brenan, Dorothy McNaught, Alexandrina McCready, Mary McNab



Tom Hiley



Mick Sullivan



Henry Kivas Tully

The 'Par' Competitions

Among the contract competitive opportunities opened up by the QBA, where the state really punched above its weight was in the **par competitions** that were popular in the thirties.

These competitions were, in some respects, the predecessors of the bidding forums and competitions in bridge magazines, where players were asked to bid on hands and get marks depending on the views of the moderator on their quality.

The emphasis was on declarer play rather than defence. Players received pre-dealt hands with the aim of finding the optimal makeable contract as viewed by the judges.

Once bidding was finished, players would be told what the contract should be. They would then play in that contract, regardless of the bidding, often with a prescribed lead by the defence.

Marks would be given for both the bidding and the making of the contract. A perfect score was a 'par'.

During the 1930s there were two major par competitions each year—both called Olympiads or Olympics.

A world-wide competition connected with the Culbertson organisation took place usually in February-March.

A second competition, restricted to Australian and New Zealand players in September-October (initiated by the Sydney Bridge Club but later taken over by the Australian Bridge Council).

Queensland in the World Olympic

These Olympiads were conceived by Culbertson and initially run by a non-profit organisation established by him, the National Bridge Association. As might be expected, the par scoring tended to heavily favour pairs using the Culbertson system. The American Contract Bridge League took over the running of the competition in 1938. It ceased after 1941, when America entered the war.

Queensland produced two winners of the Australian section before the war—Hirschfield/Moore in 1936 and Sullivan/Layard in 1939.

Year	Players	Winners of the Queensland section
1934	40	NS Dr E. McGuinness—Grace McGuinness EW Austin Lennon—Frank Cayley
1935		NS Otto Hirschfield—Tom Moore EW Kivas Tully—Max Allen
1936	56	NS Otto Hirschfield—Tom Moore EW Mr & Mrs H P Davey
1937	32	NS Otto Hirschfield—Tom Moore EW Wilf Boyce—Eugene Ulrich
1938	32	NS Mrs E T Fenton Robinson—Mrs E Petrie EW Mick Sullivan—AJ Layard
1939	32	NS Frank Garnsey—Kivas Tully* EW Mick Sullivan—AJ Layard

**In 1939 Mrs Robinson and Mrs Petrie were initially declared NS winners by local scrutineers but this was overturned by the American organisers after consideration of the detailed play of the hands.*

The Australasian Olympic

This par event, open to Australia and New Zealand players, was initiated in 1935 by the Sydney Bridge Club. It was usually held in October/November each year.

Queenslanders had considerable success in this event. In 1935 the Queensland winners were 2nd overall. In 1936 Boyce and Ulrich were outright NS winners while the EW winners, McNab and North were runners up. Boyce and Sullivan won in 1937 and Sullivan repeated the victory in 1939 with AJ Layard.



Mary Brodie, Ida Macdonald, Mary McNab and Myrtle Macdonald playing at the 1937 Olympic at the Canberra Hotel. All were committee members of the QBA in the 1930s to 1940s and the Macdonald sisters were members of Women's teams at the interstate championships.

Year	Winners of the Queensland Section of the Australasian Olympic 1934-39
1935	NS Mr and Mrs V N R Willis EW F R Boundy—R G Graham
1936	NS Wilf Boyce—Eugene Ulrich EW Miss M McNab—Miss B North
1937	NS Otto Hirschfield—AJ Layard EW Wilf Boyce—Mick Sullivan
1938	NS Harold Hiley—E C Shaw EW Mrs A H Perry / Mrs E T White
1939	NS Mick Sullivan—A J Layard EW Harold Hiley—W J Elliott



Mick Sullivan with the 1937 Australasian winners' trophies

Photo: Queensland Contract Bridge Club

The Australian Open Par Point Pairs

This event was organised directly by the ABC and ran from 1937 until 1962. It was the only national event to run throughout the war, with the exception of 1942. (The only other missed year was 1952).

In the period 1937-54, it was held over three sessions of 16 boards each. For the first contest, each state was required to nominate 12 players, but after that, it seems to have been open to all.

In terms of Australian placings, Queensland initially did not have much success. Some of the local reaction to the 1937 event and Queensland's lack of success pointed both to some of the problems with this sort of event and the culture of Queensland bridge at the time.

Immediately after the last session of the event in 1937, Wilf Boyce launched a scathing attack on the choice of hands for the event.

Three criticisms bear repeating. The first was that Queensland had been disadvantaged because the hands were taken from actual play and did not necessarily have any 'catch' in them. He complained that this tripped up Queensland players who were used to looking for (often arcane) hidden problems.

A second criticism was that many of the hands (half of which had been set in Sydney and half in Melbourne) had been published in the Southern newspapers, which Queensland players were less likely to have seen and which, by implication, contributed to the high scores by some southern pairs.

His final major criticism was that the bidding pars favoured players using the Pachabo (strong club system), promoted by William Noall of Melbourne, who happened to be chair of the committee that set the hands.

William Noall published a strong rebuttal some weeks later and challenged Boyce to list the hands that he alleged had been published. We have been unable to find any further discussion of the issue.

Mick Sullivan, in his commentary, was less critical but complained that he, and others, had been deprived of a par score because opponents had made a weak non-systemic overcall that made it impossible for him to find the right contract. He argued that he should be given the par by default.

This was the nub of the problem of par contests. In reality, competitive bidding is a zero-sum game—one side tries to get the other to lose.

Par contests assumed cooperation—no disruptive bidding and even false carding in the play of the hand was regarded as unethical. In early 1937 Boyce had felt that Queensland success in previous par contests meant that victory in the coming interstate was “more than a possibility” - but a different real world awaited them.

Interstate Championships 1935-1939

Queensland sent open teams to the 1935 and 1936 interstate championships in Sydney and Adelaide. In 1937, the championships were held in Brisbane and both Women's and Open teams were entered.



The 1935 Queensland Open Team:

Tom Moore (left) and Otto Hirschfield, Sue Brenan (left) and Violet Russell.

Tom Moore and Sue Brenan were President and Secretary respectively of the QBA in 1938.

Otto Hirschfield was President in 1936 and Captain of five of the seven open teams between 1935 and 1949 and a member of six.

No teams competed in the 1938 championships, which were to be the last such events until after the war in 1946.

Queensland Open Teams 1935-1937

Queensland does not appear to have ever used competition as a direct basis for selection (special events in which the winning pairs automatically become members of the State team). The approach seemed to be for a board of selectors to use their judgment, guided though not governed by results in events or special trials. The judgments were a cause for controversy on occasion

Year	Captain	Members
1935	Otto Hirschfield	Sue Brenan, Tom Moore, Mrs H C Russell
1936	Otto Hirschfield	Claude Turner-Paul, Wilf Boyce, Eugene Ulrich
1937	Otto Hirschfield	J A Layard, Claude Turner-Paul, Eugene Ulrich, Harold Hiley (reserve)

Queensland Women's Team 1937

The Queensland Women's Teams seem to have been selected on a similar basis to the Open. In the pre-war period, a Women's Team competed only in the Brisbane congress.

The representatives were Ida MacDonald (captain), Myrtle Macdonald, Grace McGuinness, Jessie White and Sue Brenan.

The Tyranny of Distance

Queensland did not attend the 1938 Championships in Hobart and after 1949 attended only the 1952 and 1954 championships that were held in Sydney and Brisbane respectively.

A women's team travelled only once in the period 1946-54, participating only when the championships were held in Brisbane.

It was not unusual for a smaller state to miss occasional championships. Travel was far more time-consuming and expensive than now. Most players were relatively affluent but attendance still involved a major commitment of time and money.

In the case of the smaller states, the relatively small likelihood of success and the gruelling nature of the competition would have had some effect in decreasing enthusiasm.

The problems could be quite acute in the 1930s, when even the outwardly-seeming well-off, could have had their savings dramatically reduced by the stock market crashes.

Wilf Boyce reported in 1936, when two of the members of the team were of relatively modest means, that it had only been possible to send a team to Adelaide because of the generosity of sponsors—particularly William Rankin, a prominent Toowoomba bookmaker and owner of a lottery outlet, who promoted himself and his business as “Lucky Billy”.



Billy Rankin

Interstate Performances: The Post-Mortems

As far as results went, the 1930s were 'years in the wilderness' as the Queensland Open Team won only one match in the three interstate championships in which they participated (defeating South Australia in Brisbane in 1937).

The Women's Team lost all three matches in its only appearance in 1937.

Not surprisingly, the lack of results in the interstates, caused a certain amount of soul-searching.

The early poor performances were attributed largely to inexperience in playing long hard matches in public; loss of morale faced with early disaster; and inexperience in dealing with psychic bids and aggressive competitive bidding.

The ongoing puzzle for Queenslanders was the contrast between the over-performance in par bidding and play competitions, compared with the struggles in the interstate.

In reality, the differences between the two types of competition could not be greater, more so in the conditions of the 1930s than now.

The 1930s were the Wild West when it came to psyches and light bids. Even in high level competition, people psyched with a regularity and in patterns that today would often be regarded as collusion and, therefore cheating.

Then, as now, the psyches often backfired on the bidders. However, coping with this was an important part of winning matches and not a strength for the Queensland teams.

Sullivan reported that the 1935 team was “inferior in tactical bidding, missed many games bid by opponents, were vulnerable to pre-empts, and missed many opportunities for lucrative doubles”.

Partly to stop being bluffed out of bidding, Boyce, for the 1936 championships developed his own system, called the ‘Boyce No Trump’, which was used by the whole team. .

Under this system, a bid of 1NT, whether as an opening, overcall or response, was always artificial and forcing, requiring partner to show the number of “honour tricks” in their hand.

The system was in action on the hand below.

Boyce	Hirschfield
♠ A J T 9 8 6 4 3 2	♠ K
♥ 4	♥ K 7 5
♦ K 9 5	♦ Q 6 2
♣ —	♣ K J 9 7 3 2

Boyce, much to general astonishment at the championships, opened 1NT with his nine spades and club void. Hirschfield responded 2H, showing two honour tricks and Boyce bid 4S.

4S was also bid at the other table but Boyce cited it as an example of the success of the system—as under other bidding systems, with their being only one honour trick in the East hand, he felt that West would open 3S, which would be passed out.

Use of the system in the 1936 championships did succeed in causing some discomfort to opponents because of its strangeness and lack of preparedness of proper defences to it.

However, overall, it brought no more success than the Culbertson system of 1935 and probably caused its users as much trouble as the opponents.

In his 1936 reporting, Sullivan again lamented the fact that the team had not practised together a great deal before the competition but went on to say that “to make matters worse, they were using a new bidding system, the application of which to many ... bidding situations had not even been considered, yet alone definitely determined.”

Boyce had a very different view, feeling that the team’s problems had been mainly in the play of the hand, and that his system was gaining support in the South.

He continued to develop and promote it for a number of years—but it was never used again as the official Queensland system in an interstate match. The team reverted to straight Culbertson in 1937 and 1938.

The Interstate in Brisbane

The Brisbane interstate in 1937, which was held in McWhirter's auditorium, was generally regarded, within the bridge community, as successful and well run.

It also attracted a reasonable amount of publicity in the local and interstate papers. Not all of this publicity though would have been particularly helpful in attracting new players to the game.

Much of the coverage treated it as an oddity—with an emphasis on the chain smoking that tended to go with bridge and photos of players with odd expressions of concentration.

The social background of the players was also a subject for satire. When it came to social class, bridge in the 1930s had a big image problem—not just in Queensland.

The bridge administrators and representative players of the time tended to come from the section of society that featured in the social pages; and were members of, or strongly connected to the commercial and political elite of Brisbane society,



Austin Lennon, President of the QBA, presenting the winning trophy to Victoria in 1937.

mostly on the non-Labor side of politics. In a traditionally Labor State, such as Queensland, this was always likely to be an issue.

Even the generally conservative Brisbane newspapers found the atmosphere at the McWhirter's auditorium, festooned with Union Jacks and operating with a high degree of formality, somewhat over the top.

'In all innocence I went last night to the inaugural inter-State contract bridge tournament staged in Brisbane ...Natty lines in tropical mess-jackets and waist-coats were shown. They were worn with that air of bearing the white man's burden not usually carried off with such distinction outside the Gold Coast or the Long Bar at Singapore.

With the Union Jacks and the mess jackets, the neatly trimmed moustaches and the general high-mindedness, one could feel that all was well with the Empire and confident, with the president of the Queensland Bridge Association, that the best traditions of the game would be maintained.'

Report by a Special Correspondent

Courier Mail, 28 September 1937

Publicity did not have to be satirical to be harmful to aspirations for increasing the QBA's membership. Mick Sullivan had got bridge onto the sports pages, and Wilf Boyce and Frank Garnsey had given it a similar status to chess—but the pull of the social pages reporting was very strong.

The ostensibly admiring report below on the opening of the QBA for the 1940 season would have given second thoughts to any average middle class person considering dropping in for a game.

Deeper blue table covers echoing the colourings in the pale blue mottled walls , and special chairs upholstered in two shades of fawn, provided attractive surroundings in the Brisbane Bridge Club's rooms last night, when the Queensland Bridge Association held their opening for the season and visitors night

Mrs McNaught's frock of wine matone displayed shoulder draperies and at the neckline she wore a blue pendant. Black velvet bands to match the bow on her bodice, trimmed the sleeves of Mrs McCready's striped marquisette frock in several shades of pink.

Mrs Norman Markwell wore an attractive frock of navy crepe patterned in multi-coloured conventional design, to which she pinned a large pink rose, and over her frock of black maralaine, Mrs E.S. Petrie wore a matching coat embroidered in white Chinese design.

With Mr Perry Ross was Mrs Ross whose frock of black cobweb lace was made with short puff sleeves. Mrs A. A. Davis wore a matching jacket with her black cellophane striped frock, and Mrs Robert Jackson's jacquard [sic] satin frock introduced all the gay Mexican tonings.

Courier Mail, 3 February 1940

Mr Boyce Causes a Controversy

Wilf Boyce managed to cause a controversy at the very end of the 1937 championships in his toast to the winning teams.

His exact words at the presentation were that “you must be an accomplished liar to succeed in bridge. You must be able to bid two clubs without a club in your hand and without batting an eyelid. I think that goes to show the honesty of the losing teams at least.”



From later remarks, in response to the controversy this caused, it seems clear that Boyce was referring to psyching, rather than use of conventional bids (the 2C opening, showing an undefined strong hand had been invented by then, but, seems unlikely to have been used by any of the teams in the 1937 championships), who were all playing either straight or slightly modified Culbertson or Sims.

The accusation of ‘lying’ was a common criticism from auction players in the early days of contract bridge. In response to criticism, Boyce stressed his remarks were intended as a joke—which they probably were—but there was an undertone of grievance—partly justified by frequent psyching — but perhaps also some reluctance to deal with real world competitive bidding compared with the ‘purity’ of the par competitions.

The War and Bridge 1939-45

Brisbane and some other regional centres in Queensland were probably more directly affected by the war than other parts of Australia because of its proximity to fighting and its use as a staging point for Australian and allied troops.

The war impacted on bridge in many different ways. Relatively few members of bridge clubs were young enough to be called up but there were other effects.

In part, it produced a boom in bridge parties run by charitable organisations large and small. In addition to the usual charities, there were a range of new causes created by the war and linked to supporting injured soldiers and providing comforts for those at the front. The bigger events could commonly attract more than a hundred players.

The period also saw the establishment of temporary new bridge clubs supported by the armed forces comfort funds, primarily for officers. One such officers' bridge club played a challenge match against the QBA.



Guests arriving at bridge party for Women Australian Air Force at the Training Centre 1942 *Photo: Queensland State Library*

For the QBA and the Brisbane Bridge Club, the war years had a quite different and much less positive impact.

The War, the QBA and the BBC

In contrast to the charity bridge scene, the Brisbane Bridge Club and the QBA were badly affected by the war. In Brisbane, the combination of the blackout and large numbers of soldiers on leave, stationed or in transit, meant that the central business district at night was often regarded as not safe for women.

As their numbers were already quite low, they could not afford much loss of patronage. Their main events were at night, in the central area, and relied heavily on women coming in from the suburbs.

Beyond this, there was a certain loss of rationale. Charity bridge clubs boomed because of the number of causes to be supported—but people probably also felt less comfortable about continuing with normal competitions.

The Brisbane Bridge Club did not survive the war. In the early years of the war, it hosted many charity events and tried to find a different market by running regular euchre events with cash prizes. In 1940, in addition to the bridge club, Mick Sullivan started running bridge sessions at Finney's Department Store.

In 1941 it was running 'smokes for soldiers' card evenings, with any card game to be played. By early 1943, the Thursday night auction tournament was abandoned, with the room being hired by one of the army-related bridge clubs.

Around July 1943, the rooms in Adelaide Street seem to have finally been requisitioned for military use (this had been fore-shadowed in late 1942). This seems to have proved to be the final straw.

The Brisbane Bridge Club seems to have stopped operating at this point. Like many other things about his life, Mick Sullivan's source of income, if any, during this period is a mystery.

It's Air Conditioned !
**Let's go to PENNEYS
for BRIDGE !**



A Weekly Auction Bridge Progressive Tournament will be held in Penneys Cafe every Tuesday Afternoon from 2.15 p.m. to 5 p.m., COMMENCING NEXT TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6th.

The Tournament arrangements are under the supervision of Mr. M. J. Sullivan, Australasian Olympic Winner.

Cards and Scorers will be provided.

Entry Fee of **1/6** will include daintily served Afternoon Tea

Weekly Prizes of Open	1st Prize	£1 1 0
Orders on Penneys will	2nd Prize	10 6
be given—	3rd Prize	5 6

In addition to these prizes, Orders for £1 1 0, 10 6, and 5 6, will be presented to players holding the best total score each month.

Make your reservations early by ringing B1652, or after 8.30 p.m. B1653.

PENNEYS CAFE
2nd Floor, Penneys Air-Conditioned Building.

Advertisement for Mick Sullivan's bridge sessions at Penneys 1940.

The QBA survived the war but only barely. When the BBC premises were requisitioned by government, the oral history recorded in *Mind Games* is that it moved to the Town and Country Women's Club in the Queensland Deposit Bank Building, 231 Albert Street, where it seems to have lingered on through the war with five or six tables.



The Queensland Deposit Bank Building (photographed in the 1890s). Home of the QBA from 1943 to 1945.

Photo: State Library of Victoria

QBA Office Bearers 1940-45

Information on QBA office bearers is only available for the years 1940 to 1942. For all of these years, Mick Sullivan had the role of Secretary. Dr Willis had a second term in 1940 and was succeeded by Frank Garnsey for 1941 and 1942.

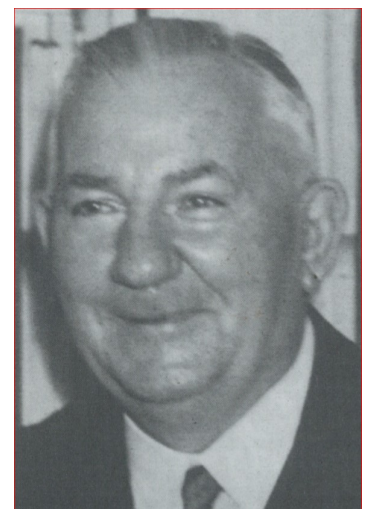
Year	President	Secretary	Committee
1940	Valentine Willis	Mick Sullivan	Mrs V Jackson, Sue Brennan, Alexandrina McCready, Dorothy McNaught
1941	Frank Garnsey	Mick Sullivan	Adrian Epps, Harold Hiley, Tom Hiley, Kivas Tully, Mrs N W Markwell, Mrs VN B Willis, Mrs F Wilson, Ida Macdonald
1942	Frank Garnsey	Mick Sullivan	Kivas Tully, Adrian Epps, Marion Robinson, Kathleen Connor, Marjorie Gall, Marjorie Epps, Mrs F Wilson, Myrtle Macdonald
1945	Harold Summers	Mick Sullivan	Not known



Marjorie Gall



Harold Summers



Frank Garnsey

War-time Competition

The interstate championships were suspended for the duration of the war but some par competitions continued. The Culbertson Olympiads were held in 1940 and 1941 before America entered the war. The results in Queensland were:

- 1940 NS Otto Hirschfield—Frank Garnsey
 EW Mick Sullivan—Harold Hiley
- 1941 NS Barbara North—Mrs V Jackson
 EW Mick Sullivan—Harold Hiley

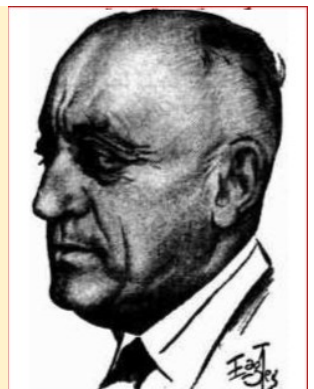
The Queensland winners were automatically listed as winners of the Australian region as no other State decided to participate. In 1941, 16 pairs competed.

The Open Pairs Par competition continued throughout the war with the exception of 1942. Local results are not available but, Australia-wide, Otto Hirschfield and Frank Garnsey won in 1941 and Mick Sullivan and Harold Hiley in 1943.

There was a new, one-off, event in 1943, the Australian Intermediate Par Point Pairs. 'Intermediate' was broadly defined as somebody who had not been a state representative or place-getter in previous par events. The event was won by the Queensland pair of Lillian Whitehead and R P Yates.



Lillian Whitehead and R P Yates:
Winners of the 1943 Australian
Intermediate Par Pairs.



Post-War: The QBA 1945-54

Information about the QBA in the post-war period is quite scarce. There are no surviving organisational records and bridge had a lot less newspaper coverage than in the 1930s.

For the organisation, it was to be primarily an era in which the players of the 1930s and 1940s managed to keep the organisation alive until a greater interest in contract and the influx of new clubs and new players from a broader section of society in the late 1950s and 1960s would transform the Queensland bridge world.

New Arrangements

The Brisbane Bridge Club did not resume. Mick Sullivan took over the Crystal Café in Ann Street in 1946, which did not include bridge in its services. He became involved in the Queensland Caterers' Association. In 1948, he was Chairman of the Association and highly visible in debates about price control and other issues affecting cafes. He would earn at least a little money from bridge in the 1950s but this would be through the Australian Bridge Council.

With the end of government requisitioning in 1945, the QBA moved back to the Edwards Building at 455 Adelaide Street, sharing the premises with the Chess Club, where it would stay until 1956. With the loss of the Brisbane Bridge Club, the QBA seems to have acquired the title in common usage, sometimes also known as the "contract bridge club".

Par Point Competition

The Australian Open Pairs Par Point Championships continued (with the exception of 1952) and Queensland continued to enjoy some success here.

We do not have much detail on local results or participation in this event. In 1951, 32 players from Queensland competed, eight from Toowoomba and the rest from Brisbane.

The Australian title went to Queensland three times before the competition ceased in 1962—Sullivan/Hiley in 1950 and 1956 and Hirschfield/Garnsey in 1955.

1951 was Australia's Jubilee year—50 years since Federation. To mark this, Mick Sullivan proposed to the Australian Bridge Council that it be opened to players world-wide, along the lines of the old Culbertson Olympiads.

The proposal was that he would set the hands and do the work of contacting other national bridge organisations, helped by Harold Hiley who would check the hands and help with the scoring.

This was a huge amount of work, when he was also running his business, and it was agreed with the ABC that he would be recompensed should there be a profit.

The event, which was won by the Melbourne pair of Thwaites / Field was a practical and financial success. Sullivan proposed that it be repeated but a further world-wide event was not held until 1962, sponsored by the World Bridge Federation, with hands set by Mick Sullivan and Bob Williams.

Interstate Championships

After the war, Queensland entered an Open team each year from 1946 to 1949 and then in 1952 and 1954. Two of the championships were held in Brisbane—in 1949 and 1954. The venue in both cases was the City Hall.

A Women's team competed only in 1946, 1949 and 1954.

During this period, Queensland's difficulties in interstate competition continued. The Open team won only two of the eighteen matches played. The Women won two out of nine.

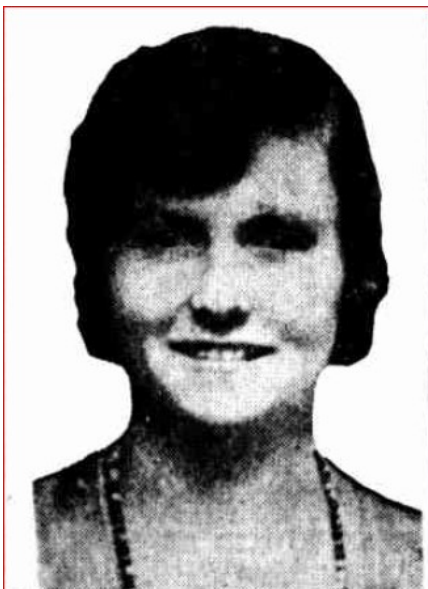
The membership of the Open teams consisted largely of pre-war players, with the exception of Ken Clarson, Austin Boyce and George Stephens and the appearance of the new generation in the form of Don Neill in 1954.

Queensland Open Teams 1946-1954

Year	Captain	Members
1946	Otto Hirschfield	Frank Garnsey, Mick Sullivan, Harold Hiley
1947	Mick Sullivan	Frank Garnsey, Harold Hiley, Marjorie Gall
1948	Mick Sullivan	Otto Hirschfield, Frank Garnsey, George Stephens
1949	Otto Hirschfield	Austin Boyce, Harold Hiley, Mick Sullivan, Kivas Tully
1952	Harold Hiley	Mick Sullivan, Austin Boyce, Kivas Tully
1954	Ken Clarson	Frank Garnsey, Harold Hiley, Don Neill, Mick Sullivan, Kivas Tully

The Women's team was a greater mix of pre-war representatives and new faces.

Queensland Women's Teams 1946-1954		
Year	Captain	Members
1946	Lilian Whitehead	Kathleen Connor, Phyllis Petrie, Alice Carroll
1949	Marjorie Gall	Kathleen Connor, Ina MacDonald, Grace McGuinness
1954	Josie Power	Molly Dawson, Ina MacDonald, Joan Maxwell, Theresa Strambini, Prudence Wallis



Alice Carroll



Josie Power



Prudence Wallis



Grace McGuinness



Austin Boyce



Joan Maxwell (Kent)

QBA Office Bearers

The President from 1945-47 was Harold Summers, a journalist at the *Courier Mail* and prominent war correspondent. 1949 saw the beginning of the contribution to administration from Ken Clarson, the Principal of Sandgate State School.

Otherwise, the QBA was relying heavily on members from the 1930s. In 1950 Mick Sullivan took on the Presidency for the first time. His Presidency in 1954 also made him Chair of the Australian Bridge Council.

Year	President	Secretary	Committee
1946	Harold Summers	Mick Sullivan	Not known
1947	Harold Summers	Kathleen Connor	Harold Hiley, Mick Sullivan, Kivas Tully, Austin Boyce, Frank Garnsey, Mary Summers, Lillian Whitehead, Mrs F Wilson, Marjorie Gall
1948	Not known	Not known	Not known
1949	Otto Hirschfield	Ken Clarson	Not known
1950	Mick Sullivan	Ken Clarson	Austin Boyce, R Hagel, HJ Summers, Kivas Tully, Otto Hirschfield, Rubena Hicks, Mary Summers, Prudence Wallis, Josie Power
1951	Mick Sullivan	Harold Hiley	Ken Clarson (Treasurer), Austin Boyce, R Hagel, Harold Summers, Kivas Tully, Otto Hirschfield, Rubena Hicks, Mary Summers, Prudence Wallis, Josie Power
1952	Harold Hiley	Ken Clarson	Rubena Hicks, H A McGuinness, Josie Power, Austin Boyce, Mick Sullivan, Harold Summers, Kivas Tully
1953	Not known	Not known	Not known
1954	Mick Sullivan	Ken Clarson	Not known

The administrators had plenty of things to worry about. By 1948, Sullivan had the view that the QBA needed a major change of direction if it were to have any chance of success in 1949.

To ginger things up, under the heading "Bridge Has Tricky Bridges to Cross" he published a highly critical article about the organisation of which he was an office-bearer.

The main points of the article were that the players needed to apply themselves more to improve their game and their stamina; and that the organisation needed to broaden its base and particularly to attract more younger people—a theme that is very familiar to bridge associations worldwide today.



Several long-serving State representative players and QBA committee members pictured in 1951 setting up duplicate boards. From L to R—Josie Powers, Mick Sullivan, Prudence Wallis, Harold Hiley, Rubena Hicks and Mary Summers.

The 1948 Sullivan Critique

"Queensland's main deficiencies appear to be:

1. Inability of its players to produce the sustained concentration indispensable to success in a protracted and strenuous championship carnival.
2. Lack of a reserve player to lighten the strain and stress of continuous play—an advantage enjoyed by practically all opposition teams.
3. Lack of real competition for places in the State side—thus encouraging the certainties to rest on their laurels instead of striving to attain still higher efficiency.
4. Haphazard and inadequate preliminary training of selected teams.
5. Failure to provide selected teams with sufficient regular match practice against strong opposition.
6. No eye to the future by the Queensland Bridge Association which for many years has made no real effort to secure, encourage, and develop youngsters as replacements for its diminishing older brigade.
7. Lack of the parochial pride and public interest in their champions and local associations that is so pronounced in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

M J Sullivan in the *Brisbane Telegraph* (6 November 1948)

Aiming for new directions

We know very little of how the QBA evolved on the ground in the early 1950s. Occasional snippets do show some desire for change.

In 1950, the AGM agreed to the appointment of a manager 'to build up membership to improve prestige and national status'. It was also noted that conversion of its premises to a modern bridge club and teaching academy similar to those in southern capitals was planned.

In 1952, the annual meeting agreed to "widen metropolitan activities and to launch a campaign to promote the game throughout the State by providing teaching facilities and advice, assistance, and equipment for duplicate tournaments."

It is not clear how many of these intentions were realised and the outcomes seem to have been quite modest in the short-term. Nevertheless, by the mid-1950s, the QBA appeared to be going forward rather than backwards.

It was still quite small, running at about 14 tables, but still significantly better than the war years. The club was running handicap events to encourage participation; and some younger members, like Joan Kent and Bruce Neill were coming in and joining the committee.

A major leap forward would need, among other things, a significant increase in the popularity of contract, and this would rest largely on the efforts of individuals in the suburbs and regional areas. This is the subject of the next part.

The Barriers

While not unreasonable, a lot of this was easier said than done. From the 1940s on, the QBA executive occasionally announced intentions to recruit more contract players and build the organisation, but little had come of it.

There is no question that the QBA committee members were strongly committed to the future of bridge but they faced several major problems:

1. ***They were really busy.*** Looking at the biographies of most of those involved in the QBA, one is struck by the range of activities they undertook. Most were highly active in other sports and organisations, in addition to full-time work in the case of the men. They only had so much time in the day for bridge.
2. ***They had virtually no resources.*** The QBA's only income was the table money from the relatively small number of people who attended the once-weekly session. Presumably, a significant proportion of this went to the Brisbane Bridge Club who had to rent the premises.
3. ***Auction bridge was still really popular.*** This was the case almost everywhere in Australia but was very strong in Queensland, including among better competition-oriented players who elsewhere had tended to go for contract.

Ironically, Mick Sullivan himself was probably partly responsible for this, as he provided the opportunity at the

Brisbane Bridge Club to play duplicate auction against other good players.

4. ***They were unconsciously intimidating.*** They may not have meant to be — but they were. The members of the QBA were predominantly highly successful people and, in addition to their own efforts, often came from prominent families.

Cecilia Douglas, for example, was the daughter of TC Beirne, reputedly the richest man in Queensland. Austin Lennon was the son of a former Government Minister. Kivas Tully's father was a leading solicitor and Brisbane alderman.

Tom Hiley was a leading politician, later to become Sir Thomas, Deputy Premier of Queensland. Otto Hirschfield would be Chancellor of the University of Queensland. And so on.

Many players came to bridge in full evening dress. Joan Kent's account in *Mind Games* gives a good example of how people at the club could demonstrate both helpfulness to a newcomer combined with an off-putting display of wealth and status.

This was not a problem confined to Queensland but the small numbers made it more acute.



Cartoon by Dudley Gordon of the main personalities in the QBA in 1952.
 From *Contract Bridge in Brisbane Since 1952* (typescript) by Nell Francis.
 (Copy held by Queensland Contract Bridge Club).

Local Bridge

As Queensland bridge grew and enjoyed increased success from the 1960s onwards it was building on two foundations laid in the previous decades.

The first foundation, already discussed, was the formation of the QBA and access to national competition. The second foundation consisted of the large number of local-level bridge clubs that had been forming since the 1920s and which kept the game alive in local communities.

Many of these clubs were private affairs, with membership restricted to friends, and games played in each other's houses. It was also common, at a time when religion was a major factor in more people's lives, for churches to organise bridge clubs.

The high-society charity bridge clubs were replicated at local level as local committees tried to raise funds for local charities such as the ambulance service, local hospital, hostel, school or help for the poor.

As they had in earlier days, sporting bodies such as bowls, golf and croquet clubs; soldier's clubs; and women's organisations, particularly the Queensland Country Women's Association, were major drivers of the local bridge scenes that are described in the rest of this Part and in Part Five of this history.

Metropolitan and country local bridge clubs

We have relatively little information on local bridge clubs in the Brisbane area. The most prominent was the Wynnum School of Arts Bridge Club. This was formed in September 1931. Mr G C Watson was the long-serving President. The club's Director over the decade was Mr E C Neilsen.

The club was still operating in 1940 although its numbers in the late 1930s had reduced to between two and four tables. The School of Arts also had a Ladies Bridge Club that met in the daytime.

Other Brisbane bridge clubs mentioned in the newspapers were the Sandgate Sea View (in aid of the Sandgate Ambulance League) (1931); Yeronga (1935); East Brisbane (1937); St Colomba's (Clayfield) (1937); St Peter's (Wynnum) (1938); and the Postal Institute (1940).

There is a lot more information about the formation of bridge clubs in the country than the city. There is also more evidence in the country of what we would regard as modern-style bridge clubs—standalone organisations, reasonably open to all-comers and existing solely for the purpose of bridge competition.

This may partly be due to the difference in coverage of country papers compared to the metropolitan dailies but, overall, it probably reflects the reality.

There was a greater tradition of community activities in the country. Regional towns were not classless paradises but the practicalities of getting enough people for activities meant that social boundaries probably were a little more elastic when it

came to joining organisations.

Bridge enthusiasts were driven to form independent clubs because the other organisations with which they might be associated did not have enough bridge players to justify supporting a bridge club.

Even where the bridge club was sponsored by another organisation, such as a church or charity, they were more likely to be open to all-comers in the country.

On a state-wide basis, the local branches of the Queensland CWA were far and away the most important promoters, teachers and organisers of bridge—both for men and women. But many others were involved. Soldiers' clubs, churches, schools, the YWCA, the local Ambulance Leagues, bowling clubs and the Schools of Arts all made a significant contribution.

Readers of *Mind Games*, the history of Queensland bridge primarily from the nineteen-sixties, will have been struck by how many of those who were to be leading Queensland players originally came from the country.

This was no accident. Country bridge clubs were a major part of both the pre-1955 era and the events that followed. This project ends, therefore, in Part Five, with a listing of the pioneering pre-1955 country bridge clubs identified so far—a first attempt to reconstruct this important part of bridge history