

## BRIDGE IN SOUTH LAND

(Translated by David Cohen, Blaxland, NSW)

*Jouer Bridge* has gone to the end of the world to explore the enormous Australian continent. The continent does not overlook Bridge, as is their heritage in the pure Anglo-Saxon tradition. Australia had the reputation, according to Latin scholars, as an unknown land. In fact the hypothesis about the existence of a Terra Australis Incognita [unknown south land] had been proposed as an unknown continent in the Southern Hemisphere to provide a counter balance to those of the Northern Hemisphere and thereby enabling the earth not to fall off its axis. It was then the European explorers, Portuguese, Spanish or British who contributed to the discovery of these lands.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Australia became a British Colony where the occupying power used to send convicts. In 1901 the country acquired its independence but remained a member of the Commonwealth, whose regime is that of a Parliamentary Monarchy. Their majesty, her Royal Highness, the Queen of England, is considered their reigning Sovereign.

An immense territory of 7,686,850 Km<sup>2</sup>, Australia has a population of 22,607,571 inhabitants, making it one of the least densely populated countries in the world.

### A Bridge Going Forward

The English who often give evidence of a more dry sense of humour have the habit of describing this country of Down Under, which could be translated as upside down. It is true that in the Southern Hemisphere things do happen back to front, but bridge in Australia does not lack direction. On the contrary, it seems rather well structured and organised, even if the number of practitioners reflects the overall demographic scene. The Australian Bridge Federation, founded in the 1930s, now has about 35,000 affiliated members. Of these only 236 are juniors. Among the States of the Federation it is New South Wales, historically the first state settled, which has the greatest number of licensed players, about 14,000. In spite of the vastness of the territory the Australian Federation is chipping away at all points of the compass. Even the island of Tasmania has about 1,000 affiliated members.

The demographic and socio-professional profile has no surprises for bridge players from other countries since the majority of players are more than 55 years old and come from the most comfortable strata of the population and of whom a large majority are women (65%). There are about 350 clubs in the country, some of whom have a profit goal, but the majority are run by volunteers.

The aim to promote Bridge, characterising the ABF, allows one to predict considerable progress in the years to come. Keith McDonald, the ABF President, has borrowed a formula made famous by JF Kennedy as he urges club leaders in these terms: "Do not ask what the Federation can do for you, but ask yourselves what you can do for it!" This president is the author of a hand-book for the use of bridge players in his country. In it he highlights the educational virtues of our favourite game in praising the beneficial effects on the development of intellectual faculties. He also emphasises the respect for ethics and the fellowship necessary for the practice and development of bridge. He has even advised less experienced players not to let themselves be overwhelmed by the plays that more experienced players present to them!

## Tournaments and Leading Figures in Australian Bridge

The Australian Bridge Federation is eager, like others, to attract a large number of young people to bridge. A page is especially devoted to them on the ABF website and the nation can be proud of a victory of the Under 21 team at the Asia-Pacific Zone Championships, which took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in June 2011. The youngest are also able to compete in the competitions which are specifically reserved for them throughout the year in the main cities of the country.

Major national competitions are organised annually, including the large Summer Festival of Bridge and the Gold Coast Congress, which regularly attracts between 1,600 and 2,000 participants.

Australia's geographical position assures her presence in just about all the world championships. The country is a member of Zone 7 of the World Bridge Federation and this Zone has only three other countries: New Caledonia, French Polynesia and New Zealand. Even if Australians have not enjoyed any major success in the world championships, nevertheless legendary champions figure among the continent's Bridge players.

Foremost among these has been Tim Seres. Born in Hungary in 1925, he lost his parents during World War II. He was able to flee the country of his birth after the war and immigrated to Australia via France and Vietnam. Outstandingly gifted in all card games, as well as chess, Tim Seres fell particularly in love with bridge. Just one year after his arrival in his new country, he won the national title with the New South Wales team. Gaining Australian nationality, he became a member of the national team and has represented his country in all the major international competitions from the 1960s. His partners included Dick Cummings, Denis Howard and Roelof Smilde.

An amazing technician he is an inventor of a squeeze, which bears his name. His BOLS Tip delighted all bridge players. A brilliant rubber bridge player, Tim Seres proudly announced that it was not necessary to be a mathematician to play bridge well and at rubber bridge, the odds always went in his favour at 60%.

He competed in the Asia Pacific Zone Championships right up to the early years of this century. Struck down by Parkinson's disease, he passed away in 2007, leaving the memory of an unusual bachelor who all his life refused to drive a car.

### RON KLINGER AUTHOR AND CHAMPION

Born in Shanghai in 1941, Ron Klinger has lived in Australia since 1946. As a student he abandoned his law studies for bridge and rapidly became one of his country's best players. At the same time he also became an author (of bridge, of course). Having published to date over 50 books, he is undoubtedly one of the most prolific authors of his generation. His books, often pedagogical and laced with humour – in line with a well-established Anglo-Saxon tradition – are helpful to all players, regardless of their level. One could quote the famous *Kosher Bridge*, written in collaboration with David Bird, in which the card adventures of a happy Rabbi are followed. It is sad that many of his works have not been translated into French, which restricts their use to those who read only English. Constantly on the move, Ron Klinger has an internet site ([www.ronklingerbridge.com](http://www.ronklingerbridge.com)) where bridge players can benefit from his advice and delight in resolving the problems that he regularly publishes there.