

The History of Bridgwater Bowling Club
1908 – 2008

Forward by the President

In writing the introduction to this history of Bridgwater Bowling Club, to mark the Centenary Celebrations, I must first of all express my sincere thanks to all present members for affording me the honour and privilege of doing so by electing me to serve as Club President in this landmark year.

On behalf of the Club I would express our gratitude to all who have worked so hard researching old records and photographs to make such a publication possible. This has been coordinated by the Management Committee under the Chairmanship of Peter Hinde, and special thanks are due to Len Elswood and Ian Hancock who have been instrumental in compiling the information.



To reach this Centenary there have been many stalwarts over the years who have made a massive input of time and energy to build the Club we have today and I just hope that over the next 100 years such stalwarts will still be forthcoming to continue the enhancement of what we are so proud of – a really Great Club!

Harold Punch
President

EVOLUTION:-

It would appear that the game of bowls (of a kind) in Bridgwater dates back to 1842, probably making it the oldest club in Somerset, when the proprietor of property 'Saltlands' offered friends the opportunity to use his 'pleasure grounds' for bowls one evening each week during the season at an annual subscription of 7s. 6d.

This facility, together with annual dinners at various hostelries in the town remained in force until November 1867 according to available records. A handsome framed photograph of the 'gentlemen' forming the Saltlands Bowling Society is on display in the Club pavilion to this day. However, there do not seem to be any records for the period 1867-1908.



Saltlands Bowling Society

Available records indicate that the Bridgwater Bowling Club, as we know it today was formally established on 13th November 1908 at a meeting held in the Young Men's Rooms, St Mary's Street, Bridgwater when Mr R A Sanders MP was appointed as the first President. The actual opening of the green on its present site took place on the 13th May 1909, when the Mayor and Mayoress of Bridgwater attending the ceremony.



Opening of the New Green by His Worship the Mayor (R.O.Sully, Esq) May 13th 1909

At that time it is interesting to note that 3 fixtures were in operation both home and away to Taunton Town, Taunton Avenue and Burnham-on-Sea. Clarence Park, Weston-super-mare was added to the fixture list in 1910 but Wellington and Crewkerne were declined because of the inadequate train service. A fixture with Watchet commenced in 1914.

In 1925 the Club was granted a lease by the owners of the green, Bridgwater Sports Ground Ltd., for a period of 21 years at an annual rental of £20 with the option of terminating same at the expiration of the seventh or fourteenth year. This lease is extended as and when appropriate, and at the present time the annual rent has increased to £1000.

The history of the Club's pavilion is somewhat interesting in that the first building was none other than a converted railway carriage, progressing to a small structure in 1912 with tables and chairs. In 1926-27 a more permanent structure was created with a `tea house` and a further extension in 1937 provided accommodation with better facilities for catering. These somewhat `old fashioned` facilities (although admired by visiting clubs) remained until 2001.

After much deliberation it was decided to seek planning permission to demolish the structure and erect a `first class` building with all modern conveniences and décor.



Club Pavilion - Pre 2001

This included a small dance floor and PA system at a cost of some £150,000. The new Clubhouse was officially opened by the President of the Club, David Heal, and attended by County and other dignitaries including the County Secretary, John Durston (former member of the Club) and representatives of Notts.County tourists.



Here mention must be made of Notts. County Tourists, who have toured the County of Somerset for the past 75 years. On each occasion they have played the Bridgwater Bowling Club in a seven-rink fixture. One member of the Club, Stanley Allen, played in every match against the tourists until his death in 2000. He was made an Honorary Member of Notts. County, and this is recorded in the Daily Telegraph as well as the local press.

At the conclusion of every match the Tourists gather together and, properly conducted, sing the following Anthem :-

NOTTS. ASSOCIATION

Tune – “Sun of My Soul”

**Here, on these bright and happy days,
We're thankful once again to meet;
And 'ere the parting of our ways,
New friends we'll make, old friends we'll greet.**

**And when the season's passed away,
And wintry days come, dark and drear;
Our thoughts to you will ever stray,
Mem'ries of bowling friends so dear.**

**So till we meet you all again,
May fortune's favours with you rest;
May life be just one glad refrain,
And you and yours with health be blest.**

A.H.B.



Just A Song at Twilight

Always looking ahead, in 1953 the Club erected an ex-service Nissen type structure on a former allotment site, which served as a single rink indoor green for a number of years, terminating in 1986. This facility was used by the bowling fraternity from as far afield as Weston-Super-Mare, Winscombe, Taunton and Burnham-on-Sea during the winter months. The Club was proud of the facility and older members have many happy memories of friendships during that period. As a matter of interest at the time of opening of the indoor green the match fee was 6 pence per head per game.



However, in 1985-86 the Club's forward approach to looking ahead for further improvements led to the erection of a two rink indoor bowling green housed in a traditionally built structure on the site of the old rink and an adjoining allotment site. This facility has proved extremely popular and has provided the Club with sufficient funds to significantly improve its facilities since that time.



The indoor green is used by over 300 members each season and supported to a large extent by members of other Bowling Clubs within the Bridgwater area.



Over the last year refurbishment of the bar and lounge area has led to a much improved viewing of both rinks.



The Club, together with the other 4 Clubs in Bridgwater, forms part of the Bridgwater Bowling Association. The Association has developed during the past few years into a well run and managed organisation. It contributes sums of money in excess of £1,000 each year to charitable organisations, mainly the League of Friends Bridgwater Hospital. In addition to inter-club matches, both indoor and outdoor, all clubs compete for the Trevor Cup, presented to Bridgwater Bowling Club by E.M.Trevor M.P. firstly on a league basis and then after a lapse of some years on a knock out basis.

Bridgwater Bowling Club was one of the 15 original clubs represented at the first meeting in 1914 to form the Somerset County Bowling Association. The subscription was set at 10s 6d for the first year and one guinea for the next year. Four-rink matches were arranged against the neighbouring Counties of Gloucestershire and Devon and each of the 15 clubs were asked to select one member to represent the County, with the County President being the sixteenth player.

The Club appears to have had members representing the County throughout its history but it was not until 1945 that Mr. W H Phillips became the Club's first County President. Mr. Phillips was also the Club President for some years and the 1945 minutes state "*Mr. Phillips has brought great distinction to our Club by his charm and popularity throughout the County and all members of the Club were gratified when he was so deservedly elected County President.*" The following year Mr. Phillips retired, married and resigned from the Club to live in Paignton.

The County Executive have visited the club on numerous occasions to celebrate various anniversaries. The first game was in 1922 but no results are available. The County visited to celebrate the clubs 21st, 30th, 40th, 50th, 60th, 70th, 75th, 80th and 90th anniversaries. Although the County Executive have won most of these matches it was noted from the Minutes of 24th September 1948 that the Club won their game against the Somerset County Executive over 6 rinks by 38 shots to celebrate the Club's 40th anniversary. The club also won the match in 1998 to celebrate the 90th Anniversary by 114 shots to 102.

In 2007 Mr R I (Ian) Hancock was proudly elected the second County President from Bridgwater Bowling Club. By this time he had been a member of the club for over 30 years and served the club in numerous offices including Competition Secretary, Captain, Child Protection Officer and Vice President.



As a member of Bridgwater Bowling Club he has represented the County every year since 1978 and is now one of the most capped players, making well over 150 appearances for Somerset County Bowling Association. During his year in office several additional games were organised at the club, where he received tremendous support from the club President, members and the catering ladies. In June 2007 as part of the Presidential year the County Executive played Bridgwater Bowling Club where a very exciting and enjoyable game resulted in a 3 shot win for Bridgwater 117-114 shots, indicating the improving strength of the club in recent years. Other members taking County Offices include Mr Gerry Gridley who has been

appointed a County Vice President with Mr Len Elswood a County Honorary Vice President. Mr Bill Upham is a Vice President for the County Indoor Association.

During its history Bridgwater Bowling Club has achieved limited success from the playing point of view. In 1930 a Bridgwater rink was the runner up in the County Fours Competition and in 1932 Mr H H Allen (Stan Allen's father) was runner up in the County singles. In recent times the Club has been far more successful. Mr David Heal won the County Honorary Secretary's competition in 1998 and in 2002 Mr Vernon Hughes won the same competition, Mr Len Elswood winning the County Champion of Champions competition in 2002, a major achievement for both himself and the Club.

Since the introduction of the County League, the Club has won the South West Division 1 on two occasions progressing to the Premier Division, in which they will compete in 2007.

In 1995 the late Owen Alford and Eric Shackelford formed a visually impaired section of the Club. This became affiliated to the Bridgwater Bowls Club. In 1996 this group called themselves the Bridgwater V.I. Bowls Club and joined the English National Association of Visually Handicapped Bowls (ENAVHB). This is a registered Charity with approximately 56 clubs throughout the country. Our Club currently has 16 members, 4 totally blind and the rest with varying sight levels. Members of the Club come from all parts of the Sedgemoor area and meet weekly, both outdoor and indoor, for roll ups and a nucleus of 7/8 players enter local and national competitions with a high degree of success.



Bridgwater V.I. Bowls Club

The highlight of the year 2007 for the Visually Impaired Bowlers was the selection of Eric Shackelford, Pat Lovell and Ian Robertson to represent Disability Bowls England at the World Championships in Sydney, Australia.

With regard to green maintenance, up until 1997 the maintenance of the green was undertaken by volunteer labour and it must be stated that the playing surface was not conducive to good bowling despite valiant efforts and expert advice received from varying sources. In 1997 the Club entered into a contract with Avon Sports Ground Maintenance Co. and a vast improvement has taken place encouraging the Somerset County Bowling Association to request the use of the green on numerous occasions for County Friendly Matches and County Competitions, including the honour of hosting the 2004 County Finals.

The work of the Contractors, supplemented by the sterling and time consuming work carried out by the Club's Green Stewards Mike Ball and Norman Allen has ensured that the future of the green is secure and members can enjoy their game of bowls, whether competitive or 'roll ups' on a good playing surface.

Not to be left out of the computer age, the Club now has its own website:

<http://www.bridgwaterbowlingclub.co.uk>

If you have a computer and an internet connection you might well be reading this there. The site went live in April 2006 and has had over 12000 visits. Information available on the site includes indoor and outdoor fixtures and scores, lists of honours since the Club began, this history of the Club and the current list of officers and contacts. For the visitor to the Club it also provides a map of how to find us.



Opening Day April 2007

The Club has developed during the hundred years 1908-2008 and with certainty it can be said will continue to develop over the next hundred years given the enthusiasm and willingness to progress shown by the majority of its near 100 members.

This continuity may, in some way, be due to the fact that within the last hundred years there have been only 12 Hon. Secretaries and 11 Hon. Treasurers. Furthermore the appointment of a Chairman of the Club over the past 10 years has been beneficial in the co-ordination of the Club's activities and this post has been filled very efficiently during that time by Mr Peter Hinde.



The Club had, at the last Annual General Meeting, 4 Life Members:-

Fred Tapscott, aged 93 years, who, over the past 30 years, served as President, Trustee and Treasurer and even during the last outdoor season was always willing to help out as barman on Match days. Sadly, Fred passed away during the early part of February after a relatively short illness. A very popular figure, he will be greatly missed by all members and all those around the county who came into contact with him.





David Heal aged 80 years who, over the last 16 years, has served as President, Captain, Trustee and Fixture Secretary and, up to December 2007, still walked to the Club in the early hours every morning to open the Club premises for members' use.

Len Elswood aged 80 years, who, over the past 25 years, has served as President, Captain (2), Trustee, Patrons Representative, County Delegate and Secretary and is still willing to help out as barman when required.



Les Male, aged 76 years, is the second longest serving member of the club, joining in 1976. He has served as President, Captain and Indoor Convenor. He is the club's most recently appointed life member, elected at the AGM in November 2007.

Mention must be made of the untiring service given by the ladies of the Club who have provided excellent catering for Members and visiting teams over the years for both afternoon and evening fixtures. The Club has indeed been fortunate to be able to call on the ladies' assistance at all times and our sincere appreciation of their services is here recorded.

During the Centenary Year a programme of representative matches including one against the EBA has been arranged. The Opening Day of the outdoor season will be 19th April and will feature a match between the President's and the Captain's team followed by a buffet for members, wives and invited guests.

Presidents

1909	R O Sully	1973	C G Nash	1992	W M Turner
1928	J McMillan	1975	J P Mills	1994	D W Look
1931	T Eveleigh	1978	G J Yates	1996	A W Westlake
1933	Rev. E de Ste Croix	1980	W H Day	1998	L C Elswood
1937	W H Phillips	1982	C H Barnett	2000	F D Heal
1946	M Barnett	1984	K W Giles	2002	K G Maskell
1967	R W Minns	1986	F H Tapscott	2004	W O Holland
1968	W Y Orton	1988	T W Wilcox	2006	H G Punch
1971	S W Palfrey	1990	L Male		

Captains

1909	H C Darbey	1946	C T Hadden	1980	L Dixon
1911	R Morrish	1947	H J Tredwin	1981	L Male
1912	G J White	1948	W Y Orton	1982	G Lillico
1913	R Morrish	1949	B Baxter	1983	T W Wilcox
	H P Cawley	1950	C L Fisher	1984	A Perry
1914	W Bowden	1951	T Davies	1985	K A Shore
1915	H Peirce	1952	C G Nash	1986	A D Whiting
1917	R Morrish	1953	C Hooper	1987	L C Elswood
1918	J J Colsey	1954	M Barnett	1988	W M Turner
1920	A E Edwards	1955	S A Allen	1989	G F Mitchell
1921	J Rich	1956	R W Minns	1990	F D Heal
1923	F G Kidner	1957	J P Mills	1991	D A Northam
1924	Rev. W de Ste Croix	1960	C G Nash	1992	A D Young
1925	W C Abbot	1961	W J C Hocking	1993	J A Tarr
1926	A W Valentine	1962	E J Bragger	1994	O F Alford
1928	T Eveleigh	1963	J Standing	1995	H G Punch
1929	H H Allen	1964	G J Yates	1996	K G Maskell
1930	W Bowden	1965	R R Sellick	1997	P R Hinde
1931	E Wadmore	1966	J Strange	1998	W O Holland
1932	W Chard	1967	F S Williams	1999	A R Perry
1933	G Hier-Evans	1968	G J Yates	2000	R I Hancock
1934	R W Minns	1969	F S Williams	2001	J A Saunders
1935	CH Chappell	1970	G Daniel	2002	K G Maskell
1936	A J Friend	1971	W H Day	2003	K A Peppin
1937	W J Came	1973	C H Barnett	2004	N A Jones
1938	H F Tottle	1974	J R Barrow	2005	E Shackelford
1939	G B Hargreaves	1975	W C Nicholls	2006	G Stamp
1942	E W Munden	1976	D O N Ritherdon	2007	K A Peppin
1943	F H Price	1977	H Pear	2008	A J Moore
1944	A R Brown	1978	P G Worman		
1945	J Clarke	1979	K W Giles		

Secretaries

1908	W Bowden	1942	E W Munden	1965	K W Giles
1926	G J White	1947	W Y Orton	1972	G J Yates
1933	P B Herbert	1956	E A Brown	1986	L C Elswood
1937	G J White	1962	W L Lewis	2001	S W Vincombe

Treasurers

1908 H Bradbeer
1912 T Everleigh
1927 A W Valentine
1946 F H Price

1954 G B Hargreaves
1963 W J C Hocking
1972 F B Williams
1976 F H Tapscott

1987 A W Westlake
1998 C N Turnbull
2004 W H Wilkinson

Life Members

1975 C G Nash
1986 S A Allen
1990 T W Wilcox

1995 G J Yates
2002 L C Elswood
2006 D Heal

2006 F H Tapscott
2008 L Male