

## **A HISTORY OF ASHBURTON BOWLS CLUB**

**There is a saying that the days pass like grains of sand through the hourglass and those members who have been with the Ashburton Bowls Club through it's first 30 years can vouch that the years have gone like that.**

**The Club General Committee therefore decided that the time was ripe to chronicle the Club's activities up to the present time so that, in years to come, members will have the basic details of those activities through the years.**

**It is hoped that this story will be a "live" concern, updated at regular intervals to keep with the present.**

**This narrative will refer constantly to the "Ashburton Bowls Club". Purists will be quick to point out that, until recently, the correct term was "Bowling Club". The RVBA decided, in it's wisdom, to change the original term to "Bowls Club" so that lawn bowls could be differentiated from the ten pin bowling, which uses the term "Bowling Club".**

**Before turning to the story of our Bowls Club, we should first take a look at the suburb of Ashburton.**

**The year 1945 saw the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and signalled the start of developments that led to the Ashburton we know today.**

**From early days Ashburton had a small community of mainly rural dwellers with a few traders. It's main claim to fame in those days was the Ashburton Forest which covered a large area from High Street south to Gardiner's Creek. This was a popular picnic spot for day-trippers by train to the end of the line at Ashburton. This line, from East Camberwell, was part of the Outer Circle railway line which originally, when first built in 1880, extended right across Gardiner's Creek and the now East Malvern Golf Course to the line near East Malvern railway station.**

**In the early war years, the Ashburton area was considered as the site for the Repatriation Hospital, which was finally located at Heidelberg.**

**There was little housing development before 1945 in the area where the Bowls Club is now situated. Stocks Dairy occupied High Street opposite along with paddocks for the Milko's horses and extended down to Fakenham Road. The Ashburton Oval and park were there, having been established in the early days. The most prominent landmarks in the area were flower and vegetable farms, and daffodils abounded.**

**Even in to the 1950's Warrigal Road was the boundary of the Metropolitan area and Sunday trading, illegal in the suburbs was legal from the Ashwood side of Warrigal Road onwards to the hills. Many a motorist from the inner suburbs made the Sunday trek to garages in**

Warrigal Road to fill their cars with Petrol. There was usually a long queue for service.

When the War ended in 1945 there was a great demand for housing construction which had practically ceased through the war period. The Housing Commission took over the area covered by the Ashburton Forest as well as other adjacent areas and closer settlement began for Ashburton.

By the mid 1950's a close-knit community had come into being and it was then that a group of men, headed by Roy Faulkner, decided the time was ripe to start a bowls club. A preliminary meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1955 was attended by 9 people. The meeting decided to place an advertisement in the local paper, the Progress Press, calling a meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1955, and all interested in bowls were asked to attend.

This meeting was attended by 19 men and 4 ladies, together with Councillor Warner of Camberwell Council, who carried the meeting and Bill Lowe, Chairman of the RVBA Greens Committee. At this meeting Mr Lowe was able to give sound advice on the formation of a Bowls Club, and also made contacts with other bowls clubs. The meeting concluded with a motion by Mr. J. Ballinger, seconded by Mr. T. Bennett, that the Ashburton Bowling Club be formed. They were obviously men of action at this meeting, as office bearers were elected forthwith, together with a provisional committee, as follows:-

President	Mr. J. H. Ballinger
Secretary	Mr. M. C. McCarthy
Asst. Secretary	Mr. E. H. Whelan
Treasurer	Mr. M. L. Storie
Committee	Messrs Pearce, J. Ross, H. Faulkner, J. McDonald. Ray, Sturzaker, Bush, Bennett And Mrs. D. Sturzaker.

Striking a further quick blow, Messrs J. Ballinger, D. Scott, J. McDonald and T. Bennett were asked to meet with RVBA expert, MR W. Lowe, on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1955 to inspect possible sites available. This inspection would be quickly followed by a further meeting of the Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1955.

After hearing this sub-committees report on the sites inspected, the Committee decided to apply to the Camberwell Council for allocation of the site now occupied by the Club. The Council approved this application in September, 1955.

To publicise the forthcoming new club, an advertising campaign was begun through the local papers, the Progress Press and the Camberwell Free Press, together with leaflets for letter boxing, and ads in local picture theatres at Ashburton, Gardiner and Hartwell.

Meeting again on the 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1955, the Provision Committee decided that the Club should have a joining fee of 5 pound (\$10) per member and that each be asked to take out a 15 pound (\$30) debenture or make a gift of 10 pound (\$20), payable over 12 months. At the same time, Ladies joining fees were set at 3 guineas (\$6.30) per lady with the proviso that if she be a wife or daughter of a male member, the fee be 10/- (\$1) less.

It is interesting to note that all of these details were finalized and given as a fait accompli to the First General Meeting of the Club held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 1955. The same meeting set the limits for membership at 150 men and 50 ladies. A few months later the ladies maximum was increased to 60. At the date of writing, 1988, the same limit applies to men but the ladies limit has been raised to 120.

To cope with the expected flood of membership applications and subscriptions, it was agreed that the Club's first bank would be the E.S. & A. Bank, Ashburton.

The First General Meeting of the Club was held in Ashburton Football Club pavilion on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1955 and the following men were elected to immortality as the First General Committee of the Ashburton Bowling Club. The President, Vice-Presidents, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, and Treasurer were elected unopposed but there were 12 nominations for Committee, of whom 6 were to be chosen.

The guiding lights for the first hard year, when so much hard work and planning were needed before a bowl could go down, were as follows:-

Preseident	Mr. J. H. Ballinger
Vice-Presidents	Messrs H.N. Faulkner, R. Somers, H.N. Crawley
Secretary	Mr. M. C. McCarthy
Assistant Secretary & Press Correspondent	Mr. K. E. Smith
Treasurer	Mr. M. L. Storie
General Committee	Messrs R. Leadbetter, K. Hicks, C. Petterson, A. Turner, G. Richards, E. O'Brien.

In the bowls year 1987/88, Roy Leadbetter is the only initial member of the Committee still with us, Geoff Richards having transferred to Dromana Country Club in recent years.

The first monthly meeting of the new Committee, held on 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1955 appointed Mr. Don Morrison as Works Manager and asked him to attend Committee meetings. The Club obviously owes Don much for the planning and hard work put in by him in designing the lay-out of the greens as they are today. Don is still and active member of the Club in 1987/88.

**The Ladies got into top gear when they held their First General Meeting, and elected their first Committee comprising:-**

<b>President</b>	<b>Mrs. N. Smith</b>
<b>Vice Presidents</b>	<b>Mrs. M. Ballinger, Mrs. J. Ramsay</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Mrs. C. Hicks</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Mrs. V. McIntosh</b> <b>(Verna is stil Lady Treasurer in</b> <b>1988 – What a record!)</b>
<b>Committee</b>	<b>Mesdames Brett, Guthrie, Mitchell,</b> <b>Anderson, Tharle, Jenkins and</b> <b>Sturzaker.</b>

**Verna McIntosh is the sole original Committee woman still holding office in the Club in 1988.**

**Having elected their Committee, it was now down to the hard work of getting the Club established and operating on the greens. The General Committee met regularly in the Ashburton Football Club pavilion, for which a few was paid to the Reserve Committee. These Committee meetings were open to all interested Club members.**

**August 1955, saw the first change in the Committee due to the death of Mr. R. Somers, Vice President. Mr. Jim McDonald, MLA, was elected Vice President to fill the vacancy. While Mr. McDonald remained a club member for some time, he never bowled. Presumably his duties as a member of State Parliament and also Manager of his Company, J. D. McDonald Engineering, occupied most of his time.**

**Social Committees are a very important part of a Bowls Club and this was recognized when the General Committee meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1955 decided to form a Social Committee. The first Social Committee of the Club was elected and started a long history of endeavour, surrounded by fun and frolic, which has been a boon to the social and financial life of the Club. Those elected were:**

**Messrs Rupe Anderson, Ken Bridgeford, Ken Smith, Ken Pincott, Jack Chipperfield, Dave Scott, Mrs. N. Smith and Mrs. D. Anderson.**

**This Social Committee immediately set in train a number of social evenings, including indoor bowls and cards. Burwood Bowls Club were most helpful in providing their premises and equipment for social occasions, particularly for the indoor bowls. With the latter, we were so keen, that Burwood eventually sold their indoor bowls mats and equipment to Ashburton.**

During this formation year, monthly general meetings open to all were held in between the General Committee also met at the homes at the homes of Committee members. A busy life when one considers they were also engaged in earning their daily keep.

At the General Committee meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1955 the Secretary tabled a letter from the Camberwell City Council awarding the Club permissive occupancy of the site now occupied in Samarinda Avenue, Ashburton.

Also at this meeting, Mr. M. L. Storie tendered his resignation as Treasurer. Reading between the lines it appears that he took umbrage at remarks about his accounting methods. The letter to Mr. Storie accepting his resignation attempted to smooth over troubled waters. Mr. Charles Bourne was appointed to succeed him.

Now that Council had finally awarded the Club a site, plans went ahead full steam to see the fruition of the members dreams. At this stage Mr. Don Morrison was busily engaged in preparing contour plans and specifications, arranging for tenders and organizing working bees to fence the site with a 4' 6" cyclone fence. Originally it was planned to have only a 3' 6" fence around the property, but this was quickly abandoned due to the vandalism experienced.

An interesting sidelight was a letter from the Committee to Camberwell City Council seeking the use of the Council flame-thrower, apparently to assist in clearing the area of noxious weeds. Perhaps a member or two had acquired previous experience operating flame-throwers during the war.

Before site construction could begin, two big gum trees had to be removed and the Committee decreed that the cost of the removal must not exceed 10 pound (\$20). For the same service today the cost would be in the hundreds of dollars – so much for inflation.

The Bowls concept finally started to take shape when the Garner Bros. were awarded the job of excavating at the greens site for a contract figure of 550 pounds (\$1100). Excavation work commenced in February 1956, under the watchful eye of Don Morrison, ably supported by Charlie Young. Concurrently Harry Lee supervised the erection of a shed in the south-west corner, when completed, the shed was fitted with electric urns and served as a kitchen for the ladies. Workers were served through three shuttered openings in the northern wall. Similarly in the first few months of bowls in the Club, bowlers were served their afternoon teas.

The First Annual Report thanks the many members who turned up consistently every weekend to help in these endeavours but does not name them individually. At the time of writing, 1988, many of these members, our foundation members of 30 years ago, are still active in the Club. At the time of retyping in 2008, only 2 remain. When you realize that in 1956 all of these men worked for a living during the week and then turned out to work for the Club at weekends, those who have come afterwards to reap the benefits, owe them a great debt of gratitude. The records of the Club show that 88 men were involved in the working bees, but they also show that there was a strong feeling that not enough members were attending the working bees.

Today we have two greens beautifully situated on two separate levels on what began as a paddock with a 23 foot steep slope from the northern boundary, close to Samarinda Avenue to the south eastern corner of Warner Avenue. The whole area was virtually a rubbish tip. During the war many slit trenches had been dug across the paddock to prepare for air raids. Over the years since then the trenches had become a handy spot to deposit old tins, bottles and other rubbish. Before work on the greens could be started all the rubbish had to be removed.

By the date of the first Annual Meeting work was proceeding and there was light at the end of the tunnel. The meeting was held in St. Matthews Church Hall, High Street, Ashwood, on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1956. It was reported that the Club now had a shed, was fully fenced and the ditches were ready to be placed in position when the greens were completed.

It was hoped to sow the seed in September, 1956. In fact something went wrong because the seed was not sown until Anzac Day, 25<sup>th</sup> April 1957. Members did the job under the supervision of Bill Lowe, the RVBA greens expert. However this initial sowing came to a sad end. Who better to quote than the Green Director on the subject. "We appointed a greenkeeper about the time we sowed the seed moist to prevent it blowing around. The day after the sowing a strong northerly blue up so I went to see how the greenkeeper was getting on. He had disappeared never to be seen again – we did find he was in Mont Park. However 90% of the seed was in the south ditch. A couple of us had to collect it and resew the green. Mick Burke, who was employed at the Housing Commission, offered his services and was appointed Greenkeeper and served the Club well for many years."

An indication of the enthusiasm for the Club is demonstrated in the First Annual Report which stated there were 140 members fully subscribed and they were yet to put down a bowl. For the coming year they were told that subscriptions were again due, 6 pound (\$12) for men and 3 pound (\$6) for ladies.

The report also confirmed that a contract had been let to Messrs Hooper & Woolger to construct the stone walls at a cost not to exceed 325 pound (\$650). Don Morrison reports that during the whole construction period the only contracts including labour were:-

(a) The Fence.

- (b) The Stone Wall between the Greens**
- (c) The Roof of the Clubhouse**
- (d) The electric wiring of the Clubhouse**

**All the other work was done by voluntary labour of members.**

**The next twelve months to June 1957, saw a repeat performance of the previous year – much work from all those willing workers mentioned above, but no bowls, except for the lucky ones invited to play on occasions at Burwood Club.**

**The Second Annual Meeting, held in the Ashburton Methodist Hall on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1957, gave the news that the two greens were now complete and should be ready for play early in the new season. Mr. R.E. Burke was still the Club Greenkeeper and Don Morrison was appointed the initial Green Director.**

**Carl Petterson had planned most of the work on the surrounds and the planting of suitable trees and shrubs.**

**The Clubhouse we know today was designed by Don Morrison and before work could commence numerous discussions with Camberwell Council took place. Finally the foundations were laid on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1957, and building got underway, with Charlie Young in charge. For two years Charlie was at work on weekdays and spent Saturday and Sundays working on the Clubhouse. Today he cannot understand how his wife put up with it. Charlie was assisted by a number of members who had various carpentry experience, principally Cliff McIntosh and also the only retired member of the Club at that time, Hartwell Jones, who spent a lot of time on the finishing work inside the rooms.**

**Among its members the Club fortunately had Roy Lamborn who was an MMBW inspector. He was able to mastermind the plumbing activities of the members, doing much of the skilled work himself. His knowledge of MMBW requirements save the Club greatly in time and expense. Charlie Young reported that when Roy retired he moved to Mt. Eliza where he was still and active bowler.**

**In referring to the Club's volunteer slaves the Second Annual Report states "these men have created a brotherhood of felling which will make our Club one which will be known for its fellowship in bowling circles." Very true words, as that feeling still permeates the Club today.**

**On the financial side Treasurer Charles Bourne reported that thanks to a loan of 4000 pounds (\$8000) from Camberwell Council and the buoyant membership, the Club was coping well with its teething problems. With the prospect of bowls at last a reality in the coming season, the fees were fixed for 1957/58 at – Men 10 Pound (\$20), Ladies 5 pound (\$10), plus a joining fee of 25 pound (\$50) for Men and 5 pound (\$10) for Ladies.**

<b>ASHBURTON BOWLING CLUB</b>	<b>1955 – 1981</b>
<b>ASHBURTON BOWLS CLUB</b>	<b>1981 – 1986</b>
<b>ASHBURTON BOWLS CLUB (INC.)</b>	<b>FROM 1986</b>

## **CONTINUING HISTORY FROM FOUNDATION**

### **1955 – ONWARDS**

## **INFORMATION RE CLUB HISTORIAN**

The idea to record the history of the Club was first initiated by the late Gordon Pitman, Past President 1985/86, and was put into effect by Frank McFaull, Past President 1987/88 who wrote the initial history of the Club covering the years from the Foundation of the Club in 1955 until 1992. Frank collapsed at the Club in 1993, and passed away soon after.

Stuart Balding took up the task and covered the history from 1992 until 1996 before he moved interstate.

Des Harris, Past Secretary 1983/95, has produced the history covering the years from 1996 onwards.