

A Short History of
ARDROSSAN BOWLING CLUB
Instituted 1842

Compiled from Minute Books and other papers by David M. Houston.

Foreword

This short history was originally produced to mark the 150th Anniversary of Ardrossan Bowling Club. It can by no means be termed a deeply comprehensive history of the Club. This would have taken years to compile, as so much has happened over the years since 1842.

I have perused the Minute Books from 1842 till the present day, all of which are in the Club's possession, and have, of necessity, had to include the more interesting items over the years and omit the trivial.

It became easy to recognise the trivial items, recorded faithfully meeting after meeting, as these are the same items which have to be dealt with by today's committee – only the names have been changed!

Over these 150 plus years each generation has produced, and is still producing, a small band of members who are dedicated to the well-being and advancement of the club. These are the members who give of their cash and kind, and even more important, their time and a great deal of their lives, to ensure the continued progress which we believe has given us one of the finest clubs in existence.

It suffices to say, without mentioning any names, past or present, that without such members no club can survive and prosper. We, the members of today, owe all of these dedicated members a "hearty vote of thanks".

As has often been said 'we are only caretakers of the Club', and the caretakers of all these years till now have handed down a magnificent legacy to us. Let us, therefore, ensure that this legacy, with our improvements, is handed on to our sons and daughters that they in turn will be proud to do likewise for their offspring.

On a personal note, all my thanks are due to every Secretary since 1842 till the present day, for the detailed Minutes and the safekeeping of records, which enabled this history to be compiled. Special thanks are due to Thomas Guthrie who compiled the first history of the Club in 1901 to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of the opening of our present No. 1 green and the 60th Anniversary of the club on the following year – much of the earlier events have been taken from his work.

'Of all the pastimes which speed away the sunny summer hours, that which most generally commends itself to intelligent Scotsmen, is bowling. In making this statement I do not wish to cast any reflection on golf, tennis, or any other game or inclination that others may indulge. In this age of high pressure we cannot have too much recreation, and if it were not for the danger of interfering with ones right of choice, some form of amusement should be made compulsory'.

The above is part of a speech made in the House of Commons in 1891.

If this was true of the pressure in 1891, how much more true is it today, 100 years on.

David M. Houston
Hon. Secretary (1977 – 1992)

OFFICE BEARERS 1842

**Patron:
The Right Hon. The Earl of Eglinton**

**President:
Mr Robert Hunter**

**Secretary and Treasurer:
Mr David I. Mack**

**150 years later
OFFICE BEARERS 1992**

**Honorary President:
Alex C. Bryan**

**Honorary Vice-Presidents:
William B. Bryson, David M. Houston,
James Muir.**

**President:
Gordon Gray**

**Vice-President:
William Hunter**

**Secretary:
John Ferrol**

**Treasurer:
David M. Houston**

**CURRENT
OFFICE BEARERS
2015**

**Honorary President:
David M. Houston**

**Honorary Vice-President:
Bill Crawford**

**President:
Andy Galloway**

**Vice-President:
Paul Fisher**

**Secretary:
Ewan Sloan**

**Treasurer:
David Rodgers**

CHAPTER 1

The Beginning

“On the 29th April, 1842, at Ardrossan and within the hotel there, (Eglinton Arms) met the following gentlemen for the purpose of forming a society, to be called the Ardrossan Bowling, Archery, and Quoiting Club,” viz – Mr James Moffat, Mr Hugh Orr, Mr Francis Russell, Mr David I. Mack, Mr Robert Young, Mr William Ford jnr., Mr Robert Paton, and Mr John Hunter jnr.

Mr Moffat was unanimously chosen Chairman of the meeting and D. I. Mack interim Secretary and Treasurer.

So reads the first entry in the first Minute Book of the club. However, much discussion must have preceded this first formal meeting, as an offer had already been made to Lord Eglinton’s factor for “the small park, or enclosure, attached to the Pavilion (Lord Eglinton’s House) for the purpose of erecting butts, (for archery) making a bowling green etc.

The factor, a Mr Johnstone, had already informed them that this offer would be accepted in all probability, and a committee was appointed to get the ground ready forthwith.

The ground committee formed, it was moved and passed that each existing member be levied five shillings (25p) to defray expenses. One of the members of this committee was a Dr. Macfadyean to whom the monument still standing on Castle Hill is dedicated.

On 9th May following, the first Rules and Regulations were drawn up, and were unanimously adopted at a general meeting held on 13th May. The rates of admission were:-“Residenters” (which shall be considered parties residing within seven miles of Ardrossan) – one guinea (£1.05) annually; “Non-Residenters”, half a guinea (52.5p) annually: Summer Visitors – 5 shillings (25p) per month and Casual Visitors – 3d (1.25p) per visit.

Initially these fees may seem very reasonable, but when one considers that the average wage in 1842 was 4d (1.6p) per 12 hour day or two shillings per 72 hour week (12 hours per day and six days per week) then one guinea membership for this club was the equivalent of 10.5 weeks wages. In 1992, anyone willing, or even able, to work 72 hours a week, would expect to earn at least £400 for their efforts and it is easy to see that

the one guinea fee was as affordable to the ordinary man as membership fees of £4200 would be today!

Bowls was therefore, in 1842, and for many years, a game to be enjoyed by landowners, shipowners, bankers, doctors, lawyers, and the landed gentry. This, in fact, is one of the biggest changes which we find as the years progress over the last 150 years, as gradually the game changes from “an old mans’ game” (one had to be old and have made your name and money to afford to play) to a game played by anyone in the community, rich or poor, young or old, in a spirit of comradeship, friendliness, and camaraderie which is the envy of every other sport in the world.

However our forefathers appear to have had similar problems to these which we have to this day. The green was duly opened in June and each resident member was then instructed to bring his own bowls, 6pairs having been got for non-resident members.

The officer (green baillie) was instructed “to prevent clothes, etc. in future being put on the green,” this being a use not provided for in the constitution. The members seem to have had a great desire for privacy, either on account of their ‘first attempts’, or with a view to save further calls on their finances, as on the 7th July it was unanimously agreed that “no person residing within 5 miles of the green be permitted to enter the grounds to view the players unless on a payment of 3d for each visit, and if they are admitted to play they will notwithstanding be obliged to pay the usual sum of 3d over and above.” This rule seems to have been inoperative and a complaint was made on the 30th September that “sundry individuals were allowed to play without paying the usual fees,” and the officer was instructed to exact the fees in every instance.

The minutes of 17th October, 1842, “on the evening of Tuesday last, the 11th October, or on some other evening in the course of last week, Mr Barr (later to become Provost Barr of Ardrossan) at the gate of the bowling green, charged the Committee with showing partiality to persons frequenting the green and stated that their conduct had been disgraceful and expressed his determination to bring it before the public and used other insolent expressions which Mr Hunter, the President, considered ungentlemanly. The foregoing charge having been read over to Mr Barr, he admitted having used the expressions that the Committee had acted with

partiality and that he would bring their conduct across the coals, but denied having used violent or ungentlemanly expressions on the occasion.

The Committee adjourned consideration for a week, but the matter appears to have been dropped, more serious trouble having arisen.

On the following day (18th October) a party under the charge of a Mr. A. Young, the only member of the club among them, turned out to shoot at the butts.

To parody Longfellow –

‘They shot their arrows in the air

Which fell to earth, they cared not where.’

Certainly they failed to hit the butts, and as the townspeople were inclined to take their walk along the path close by, their marksmanship! Was considered dangerous to life and limb. On seeing this, Mr Moffat and Mr Paton, two of the Committee, went forward to advise the party to be more cautious, with the result that some hot words passed between Mr Young and them. A special Committee meeting was held that evening and Mr Young was censured. Here the matter lay for over a month, until the Committee met on the 18th November when a letter from Mr Young was read, but owing to Mr Moffat’s absence, it was allowed to lie over until the next meeting.

The “next meeting” was held on the 10th January 1843, and it was agreed to hold a special meeting of the club to consider the minute of 18th October, 1842. The special meeting took place on the 8th April in the Eglinton Hotel. There were 12 members present and three proxies were also produced. The finding of this meeting was to approve the action of the committee by a majority “exclusive even of proxies”.

A letter from Mr Young’s solicitor was read at a committee meeting called on the 16th April which threatened legal proceedings against Mr Moffat. The committee “conjunctly and severally agreed to support Mr Moffat or any other members against whom legal proceedings may be instituted at Mr Young’s instance respecting this matter”

The next meeting was held on 15th May, 1843, and as disruption was in the air it seems to have affected members of the club. It was decided to dissolve or remodel the club and a sub-committee was appointed to consider and report.

They reported for discussion and formation of a new club. Their report was approved by committee on 19th May and it was resolved to call

a special general meeting to dissolve the club, only one member dissenting, Mr Paton. Mr Mack, at the same meeting, resigned his position as Secretary and Treasurer and on the 27th May his accounts are squared off.

Here practically the curtain is dropped on the young club's play. There is no minute of the special meeting and for over a year the club lay dormant.

The minute book of the Ardrossan Archery, Bowling, and Quoiting Club closes with the accounts as at the 30th November, 1843 and it continues without even one blank leaf with the first meeting of gentlemen "desirous of re-establishing a club to be called The Ardrossan Bowling Club". This shows that considered themselves merely as a continuation of the former club. This meeting was held on the 20th June 1845 and the parties in attendance were – James Moffat, Robert Hunter (Arran Place), Hugh Orr (Solicitor, Saltcoats), James Russell, John Paton, Robert Hunter (Chapelhill), and John Moffat, and their first job was to appoint a sub-committee to prepare Rules and Regulations. Those were identical with those of the first club with the exception that there was to be no fixed subscription for members, as members were to be "liable for the rent of the ground and maintenance of the green and current expenses of the club."

It was also decided at this time to acquire a new bowling green and it was reported that the Earl of Eglinton had agreed to a part of Nurseryholm (the Holm Plantation) for a new green. In fact, the Earl had the green formed for the club at his expense. (The outline of this two rink green can still be seen at the Plantation about 60 yards from the gate at the South Beach Railway Station.)

The move having been made it was decided to appoint the Rev. Mr Wilson of Ardrossan as chaplain to the club and elect him as an Honorary member.

1846 passed without incident with only one minute being in the book and by it, members resident within 5 miles are ordered to provide their own bowls.

In 1847 only 3 minutes are entered. By the first a Dr. D. Houston and Mr P.D. Moffat are admitted as members. It was moved and carried at the A.G.M. on the 30th April that the Secretary and Treasurer should have a vote at meetings of the committee. The committee, on 3rd May, decided that no bowler should "play or deliver his bowl unless the right foot is placed on the mat, under a penalty of 6d (two and a half pence)". This rule obviously makes no allowance for left-handers!

1848 came and went with nothing of any importance recorded. However over the last few years the club membership has risen from 17 to 42 gentlemen and the two rink green was too small to cope.

5

The committee were remitted by the A.G.M. on the 15th May 1849 “ to arrange with the tenant of Nurseryholm for an extension of the green and also to treat for the use of the park between the green and the Stanley Burn for the purpose of the club and, if no objections are made, to conclude a bargain”.

Also at this A.G.M., Rules and Regulations for the guidance of members on the green were submitted for consideration by the meeting. These, after small amendments, were approved and adopted and the secretary was instructed to have them printed and circulated to each member. These rules are remarkably consistent in many ways with the rules of today, and they are reproduced here as an illustration of the diligence of our founder members.

“REGULATIONS”

I The society shall be called “The Ardrossan Bowling, Curling, Archery, and Quoiting Club.”

II The Office Bearers shall consist of a Patron, President and Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary, (the latter two offices may be held by one person) along with 6 other members of the club who shall form a Committee, three of whom at any Committee meeting shall form a quorum.

III The Office Bearers to be annually elected at the General Meeting in April.

IV Applications for admission shall be proposed and seconded at one meeting of the committee, and balloted for ay the next one – a majority of black balls shall exclude the applicant.

V The rates of admission shall be as follows: viz.

All new members shall pay£1.1/-(£1.05) for entry money and all members shall pay an Annual Subscription as fixed by the Committee; and those

residing beyond three miles from Ardrossan shall pay half the Annual Subscription.

VI That the Annual Meeting of the Club shall be held on the 1st Monday of April each year at the place and hour to be fixed by the committee for

6

the time being: eight days previous intimation to be given to each member by the Secretary.

VII Seven of the members shall form a quorum at all Annual and other General Meetings.

VIII That the Committee shall exclusively have the power to superintend the General Management of the Green; to fix the times for opening and closing the Green; to regulate the amount of Annual Subscriptions; to arrange all matches with other Clubs; and to call meetings of the Club for any special purpose at such times as they shall see proper.

IX The Treasurer and Secretary shall be Collector and Custodian of the Funds and his accounts shall be balanced on the last Monday of March annually. He shall keep records of the whole proceedings of the Club, and shall intimate the Meetings to the members.

X On the admission of a member, the Secretary shall immediately intimate the same to the applicant and the subscription shall be forthwith paid to the Treasurer, and failing such payment within one month from the date of the intimation made to him, the admission shall be null and void.

XI A member who shall not have paid his contributions for the season at the Annual Meeting in April and shall fail to do so before the first of July following, shall ipso facto cease to a member of the Club.

XII No member in arrears shall be allowed to vote at the Meetings or to play on the grounds.

XIII These Rules and Regulations shall be in force until the same shall be altered; but no alteration, addition, or new rules or regulations shall be made without the consent of the majority of the Members present at a special meeting to be called for that purpose.

XIV Each member shall be supplied with a printed copy of the Rules and Regulations.

As, at this time, there were no National, or County Associations, each club, if they were to keep order and avoid arguments, had to form their own code of how the game should be played. At the same time that
7
the Rules and Regulations were formulated, our forebears, with great diligence, and a lot of thought, also drew up the following:-

LAWS OF THE GAME

- 1 When members are about to play promiscuously the sides to be made up by ballot – each side naming its own director, whose business it shall be to arrange the players and direct the game.
- 2 When two or more players come upon the green they may commence playing, it always being understood that the members must, if they wish it, be admitted into the game in the order that they arrive, until the party amount to eight. On the arrival of one or more members after this number is made up, they can claim from the party playing, the last two members who joined the game, provided there are no more than twelve players on the green. The number of players in a game never to exceed eight.
- 3 When the members are about to play a Club Match, the players to be divided as equally as possible by two of their number agreed upon at the time, who shall toss up for the choice after the sides are chosen.
- 4 When about to engage in a Match with any other Club, the Skips to be selected by the Members, and those so selected to name the players of their rinks and arrange the order of play.
- 5 All Private Matches to be finished by 4 o'clock p.m.
- 6 The game to consist of 13 points unless otherwise arranged.
- 7 The throwing of the jack and playing first to be decided by a toss

up by the leaders, the winners to have a choice, it being always understood that the player who has the throwing of the jack may throw it to any part of the green that is unoccupied.

- 8 If the jack is thrown into the ditch on any occasion, the opposite party to have the privilege of throwing it anew (but not of playing first) and it is not to be afterwards moved if six feet clear of the
- 9 ditch in front of the players. This rule not to apply at the side ditch from where the jack must be nine feet distant to allow both fore and back hand play.
- 10 All players must keep the right foot on the cloth; the cloth to be placed properly by the leaders and not afterwards moved.
- 11 All players to stand alongside of the line of play and not nearer the jack than two yards. On no account is anyone to stand behind the jack in a line with it, except the directors.
- 12 A bowl touching the jack at anytime during its course of the green, is called a toucher, and counts the same as any other bowl, though in the ditch. If a bowl, which is not a toucher, goes into the ditch, it must be laid upon the bank by the opponents.
- 13 If the jack, or bowl after touching the jack, is run into the ditch the place where either rests may be marked, the jack or bowl, placed at the edge of the ditch and both replaced when the end is played or their places may be marked by white pegs stuck in the bank.
- 14 If the jack is burned, or displaced, otherwise than by the effect of play, the opposite party to have the option of playing out the end, or beginning it anew.
- 15 When a bowl is burned or displaced, otherwise than by the effect of play, if belonging to the party in fault, it is to be put off the green; if to the opposite party, to be replaced by them as near to its original position as possible.
- 16 If a bowl is marred by an opponent, it shall be in the option of the

Party playing to let it rest or play it over again. If it is marred willingly by an opponent, it may be placed anywhere at the pleasure of the player. If a bowl is marred in either case by the players party, the opponents to have the same privileges.

- 17 If a bowler plays out of turn, the opponent may either stop the Bowl; allow it to remain where it rests, or cause it to be played over again in its proper turn; if it has marred either jack or bowls the opponent to have the power to demand a new end.
- 18 when a person plays by mistake a bowl belonging to the opposing party, it is to be replaced by his own bowl; if belonging to his own party it must remain.
- 19 No bowl to be stopped until it has passed all the bowls on the Green; if a bowl is stopped, it is to be considered a burned bowl.
- 20 When playing in the dusk, a cap may be placed on the jack, but it must be removed as soon as the player has delivered his bowl.
- 21 No player to change his bowls during a game, the party doing so Loses the game.
- 22 The position of the players not to be changed during the game, unless with the consent of the two directors.
- 23 After an end is played, neither jack nor bowls to be touched until the game is counted, and all the parties are satisfied; and no measuring allowed until the end is played.
- 24 The person chosen director to be the only one who is to direct, Although the players on the same side may consult with, or advise him; and the director to name the person who is to take his place when he goes to play, and count the game.
- 25 No person to throw his bowls upon the green, under a penalty of threepence for each offence; no person to injure the grass of the green.
- 26 No player to be guilty of anything that may be considered a nuisance on the green.

- 27 Should a difference of opinion arise as to the meaning of these laws, it is to be determined by the two directors of the game, and if necessary they are to have the power to call in a third party.
- 28 None of the preceding Laws or Regulations to be altered or amended; but by a General Meeting of the Club called for that purpose.

These laws were requested by W.W. Mitchell, a Glasgow solicitor, along with other clubs laws, to assist him in drawing Laws of the Game to be used by all clubs. This he did in 1849 but it was not until 1864 that his book “The Manual of Bowl Playing” was published, and this publication contained Rules and Laws of the game which were accepted by most clubs and eventually formed the basis of the Laws of today.

Incidentally, W.W. Mitchell, accepted as the foremost authority of his day on the game, started playing at the age of eleven (the old mans’ game?) and is reported to have at the age of 76 played for four hours on Willow Bank Green at Christmas 1879. He was President of Willow Bank B.C. in 1864 and 1865 and died, not seeing the National Association that he worked to form, in 1884. The Scottish Bowling Association was formed in 1892, eight years after his death.

CHAPTER 2

The New Green

During 1850 the Club continued to improve in membership, among others who joined that year being Dr. Stevens whose medal is still being played for in the Club Pairs. It was in this year that John Bell was appointed greenkeeper and was to prove a veritable thorn in the flesh to succeeding committees.

Having not got far with the request for extended use of the Holm Plantation, it was considered by members, towards the end of the year, that a change of green be made and the place fixed on was “BEHIND THE FEUS OF THE SOUTH CRESCENT”, the present green. A circular was issued on 25th December calling a special meeting “to consider the propriety of making a new green, the present one being thought too small.”

At that meeting, Provost Barr was in the Chair and Mr John Moffat produced a plan of the proposed green, and estimated the cost, including a footbridge over the railway, at £80. As this sum was considered too much for the Club, he had submitted the plan to Lord Eglinton, who approved of it, and promised £20 to assist in its execution. Other donations were intimated from members amounting to another £20, and it was unanimously agreed to proceed with the new green, and a committee of seven was appointed.

The committee reported on the 5th April 1851 that they had obtained possession of the ground, levelled the site, erected the banks, and contracted for turf from Bogside, and it was expected to be delivered on 1st May. It may be noted that the whole railway traffic between Kilwinning and Ardrossan was worked by three engines. The slag with which the green is bottomed was brought from Kilwinning

Ironworks, A gap was opened in the wall, a spur line laid and when the railway traffic for the day was over, the wagons were taken out and wheeled through the gap. The work was done principally by men employed under Lord Eglinton at the harbour.

The General Meeting was held on the 7th April, at which it was decided to collect one guinea (£1.05) from each member to defray the expense of the formation of the green, and that the club should continue to use the old green for a time.

The secretary, Mr Russell, calls the Club in the minute of that meeting "The Ardrossan Bowling, Archery, and Quoiting Club."

In May the green was reported as finished, the bowl house built, and the bridge ready for erection, and it was suggested to plant some of the ground with flowers. At a meeting on the 17th July the accounts for the work were laid on the table, and amounted to £100, the increase on the original estimated sum being caused by the approaches and improving other parts of the ground.

THE GREEN WAS OPENED ON 24th JULY 1851

(All of the above for £100 seems incredulous, and it is very difficult to imagine nowadays, as even to purchase enough bulbs, young trees, and flowers to fill the area from the club to the railway bridge would be a horrendous expense which the club could not afford!)

From a later meeting it appears that a subscription was got up to make a Curling Pond in addition, and by September almost £60 had been collected for this purpose. During this year the first prize presented to the club was intimated from Mr William Brown of Parkend, who offered a pair of prize bowls to the club as an acknowledgement for the occasional use of the green. He became a full member the following year. The Curling Pond was proceeded with, but it was not until the Annual Meeting of 1852 that the funds of the Curling Pond and the Bowling Club were united.

In 1852, for the first time a Vice-President was appointed. The first gentleman to fill the post being Captain M. Crawford, Arran Place; Mr George Johnstone of Redburn being President.

Two pairs of playing bowls were presented for competition, one pair by Mr D. J. Mack, and the other by Mr C. D. Donald, writer, from Glasgow who had only that season. In September, a challenge "from

the bowlers of Wm. Barr, Esq., of Drum's Green, Paisley" was received and accepted, but there is no record of the result. This gentleman, Wm. Barr, took considerable interest in the Club having donated £5 in the previous year (1851) to assist with the formation of the Curling Pond. Various notable figures in the town and the vicinity were now coming forward to enquire what was happening and giving help where they could.

The great interest taken in the game by the Eglinton family was especially shown in 1853, when the secretary of the club (William Fullarton) received a letter from Mr Moffat, dated 9th August 1853, in the following terms:-

Dear Sir,

Lady Eglinton requested me on Saturday last, to intimate that she intended giving a medal to be competed for by the Ardrossan and Irvine Bowling Clubs under the following conditions:-

Dear Sir,

Lady Eglinton requested me on Saturday last to intimate that she intended giving a medal to be competed for by the Ardrossan and Irvine Bowling Clubs under the following conditions:-

"The two clubs to play a match in the usual way, on a day and on terms to be fixed by the committees."

"The winning club to obtain the medal, to play for it amongst its members, and the winning member to retain the medal. The concluding match to be played on Ardrossan Green on 29th September next."

"These, of course, are merely the general arrangements as suggested by her Ladyship, and I presume she would consider any alteration the two clubs might wish, except as to the final match."

Mr Gairdner (the Earl's factor) will ascertain what day would be most convenient for the Club match to allow Lord and Lady Eglinton to be present and will write me as to this in a day or two."

(signed) John Moffat.

Following up this letter, the Irvine secretary wrote suggesting 4 rinks on the 19th August and this was accepted. Four skips were selected at a special meeting on the 15th August and were requested to

retire and fix their respective rinks and having done so, the rinks were instructed to meet for practice at the day previous to the match. The practice does not appear to have the desired effect as Ardrossan lost by 10 shots.

It seems apparent that the two important members of the rinks are the Driver (Skip) and the Leader (Lead) these being the only named positions.

14

First

D. Houston (Driver)
John McFee (Leader)
D. I. Mack
Wm. Fullarton

Second

Robert Drape (Driver)
James Shearer (Leader)
Dr. Stevens
Baillie Willock

Third

Robert Hunter (Driver)
Mat Henderson (Leader)
Hugh Orr
D. Cunningham

Fourth

Francis Russell (Driver)
Capt. Crawford (Leader)
Geo. Johnstone
C. D. Gairdner

Mr George Johnstone, the President, presented the first medal to the Club, called “the Champion Medal” and the first winner was Mr Francis Russell, while Mr Drape won a pair of bowls presented by a Mr M. Brown of Rio-de-Janiero.

The Curling Pond must have proved a genuine success, as in October 1853, it was, on the motion of Provost Barr, unanimously adopted “that whatever members, along with strangers, commenced playing on the curling pond at any time before 7 o’clock a.m. should at 7 o’clock retire to allow new members to play.” This shows the hardiness and enthusiasm of these old members, having to play when there was ice during the night, and in the early mornings, with flaming torches attached to the trees to provide their “floodlighting.” Even although these men did not stay up late and retired shortly after it became dark, this type of enthusiasm has all but vanished in this day and age.

The business of the Club closes at the end of 1853 with the membership shown as 32, and notwithstanding the heavy outlays mentioned, the club was only £26 ‘in the red.’

CHAPTER 3

Tournaments and Competitions

The year 1854 saw one of the most important events in the history of Ayrshire bowling, the origination of the Eglinton Estates game, now generally known as:

THE GOLD AND SILVER BOWLS GAME

The great interest which the Eglinton family took in the game has already been shortly referred to, but there is not the slightest doubt that, but for the encouragement that was at this time given, bowling might never have occupied the proud position which it now does in the County, and its present standing in Scotland. As the original Regulations may be of interest to bowlers all over Ayrshire, as well as Ardrossan, they are here reproduced.

The first step was a letter, addressed to Mr C. D. Gairdner (the Earl's agent) to Mr Johnstone, President of Ardrossan Bowling Club, which is in the following terms:-

Ardrossan 9th June 1854

Sir,

“I have been requested by the Earl of Eglinton to communicate to your members, through you, that it is his intention to present a small prize to be annually contested for by the different clubs more immediately connected with the Eglinton estates”

“While his Lordship is anxious to encourage younger players to emulate the superior play of the more veteran bowlers, he has the far higher object in view of promoting a kindly and friendly feeling among all classes in the district, and I know no amusement that is so well calculated to remove the little asperities which are apt to divide, more or less, every society.”

“The prize will be competed for under regulations to be drawn out and approved of by Lord Eglinton, founded on the following principles:-

1st - The Clubs admitted as Competitors shall pair off two and two, the victors again pairing till the victorious club is ascertained.

2nd - The members of the winning club shall then contest for the prize, in pairs, as above, till the victor is ascertained. (*Note: Singles*)

3rd - The victor shall be entitled to the custody of the prize till the 1st of May of the following season, when it will again form the object of friendly competition, and so on from year to year.”

“As the Ardrossan Green is very central and accessible and is larger than any of the other bowling greens, Lord Eglinton recommends that the contest between several clubs should come off in rotation at Ardrossan.”

“ I shall be happy if you will meet me here on Monday 19th curt., at noon, when I shall be prepared to explain the rules of competition, and to hear any suggestions which you may then be prepared to make” – I am etc.

(Signed) ‘C. D. Gairdner’.

The rules of the competition were submitted by Mr Gairdner to a meeting held in the Pavilion, and there were present representatives from the various clubs interested – Mr Goudie, Irvine; Mr Johnstone, Ardrossan; Mr Conn, Kilwinning Eglinton; and Dr Alexander, Dundonald. As laid before the representatives, the rules were in the following terms:-

“Regulations for the Competition for the Silver Playing Bowl Presented by the Right Honourable, the Earl of Eglinton and Winton”

1st - The competition is to be restricted to the ordinary members of the Irvine, Eglinton Kilwinning, Ardrossan, and Dundonald Bowling Clubs, with power to his Lordship to add to the number any other Club, or Clubs, connected by locality with the Eglinton Estates.

2nd - The names of the competing Clubs shall be balloted. The two first named Clubs that are drawn will be the first to contend, thereafter the 3rd and 4th will compete. The two victor Clubs will then contest, and the one gaining the greatest number of shots shall be declared the winner for the year.

3rd - The Earl of Eglinton, or in his absence, his representatives, shall fix the rules of play, and the number of players from each Club – the minimum being 12, and the maximum 24 players.

4th - The game to be 21 shots.

Rules for regulating the play in the winning Club.

5th - All members of the ordinary list to be entered to compete single-handed in pairs for the prize after it has been won by the Club of which they are members.

17

6th - The names (after timeous intimation to each member) to be balloted in pairs, and in the event of an odd member the last drawn name

shall play the vanquished member of the first pair. If beaten by this vanquished member, he will lose his place in the second class of the competitors. If successful he will retain his place in the second class. This rule will regulate all cases when there is an odd member.

7th - The victors will ballot for pairs, and play according to the same rules, and so on till the last pair shall decide who is the victor member of the Club.

8th - Such victor shall be entitled to hold The Silver Playing Bowl till the 1st of June of the following season, when it will again be contested for at such time as shall be fixed on by the Earl of Eglinton or his representative.

9th - Each player in the single-handed contest shall choose a Director. The game shall be 21 shots, and each of the two members shall play with four bowls.”

These regulations were unanimously approved of by the representatives, but an important suggestion, to enable the match to be played in one day, was made by Mr Goudie. His plan was that each Club should send six rinks of 12 players, and the two victor Clubs should compete, leaving the winning Club to play for possession of the Bowl amongst the members on its own green. This was unanimously agreed.

Mr D. J. Mack, Ardrossan, was requested to act as Honourary Secretary, and the rules of Ardrossan Bowling Club were adopted, subject to any suggestions which might be agreed to on the day of play.

The matches were duly played at Ardrossan on 3rd July 1854 and the result was as follows:

Irvine 63 Dundonald 30, Ardrossan 52 Kilwinning 48,
Final Tie: Irvine 55 Ardrossan 44

The honour of first winning the Bowl thus went to Irvine, who succeeded in carrying it off the following year also.

The only other important item worth noting in this eventful year of 1854 was that the first local match was played with Kilwinning Eglinton at Ardrossan on 29th August. The result was in favour of Ardrossan by 17 shots. The Earl of Eglinton played with the Kilwinning Club in this match.

With the close of this year the membership was 33, the debt was cleared off, and a balance of over £16 in the Treasurer's hands.

The Club opened the season of 1855 most auspiciously, having a good sum to its credit, and an increasing membership. All the office bearers of the previous year were re-elected and at the Annual General Meeting on the 13th April, a suggestion was made that a house for bowls and meetings etc. should be built. The green was opened on 28th April, and, as usual, a dinner followed at the Eglinton Arms Hotel.

On the 29th May, the secretary reported that a sketch of the house, and an estimate of the cost, had been prepared, which showed that the house could be built for £40, the dimensions being 20 feet by 14 feet. (The new bowls house, being built for our 150th Anniversary, is 60 feet by 12 feet and is costing almost £20,000!) The Committee unanimously approved and recommended its acceptance to a general meeting held on the 8th June following, and instructions were then given to get the house erected "as economically as possible", but the erection did not proceed this year.

If 1854 was important in the history of bowling, then 1855 was equally, if not more, important than its predecessor, because it was during this year that - THE FIRST GLASGOW v AYRSHIRE MATCH was played and Ardrossan Bowling Club again stands out prominent in the formation of this great game. The game is frequently noted as having commenced in 1857, that being the year when the Earl of Eglinton presented the silver claret jug, but the first games, home and home, were played in 1855.

The Earl of Eglinton, as is universally known, was the prime mover in getting up this match, and the first communication regarding it is in a letter addressed by Mr C. D. Gairdner to Mr D. J. Mack, the former secretary of the Club, asking him to take charge of the arrangements. The letter is as follows:

Pavilion, Ardrossan
11th June 1855

“Bowling Bonspiel”
“Glasgow Clubs v All Ayrshire”

Dear Sir,

I have been in correspondence with Lord Eglinton as to a friendly game of bowls that may encourage the members of the many younger clubs lately formed, by bringing them into collision with more experienced bowlers.

I shall feel much obliged if you will act as Honorary Secretary. My impression is that we could muster 144 players, or 36 rinks from this county, and as there are seven or eight bowling clubs in Glasgow they will have no difficulty in facing us with an equal number of players. The game would come off in one day on the greens near the railway stations, viz., Ayr, Irvine, Kilmarnock, Ardrossan, Kilwinning Eglinton, Troon, and Dundonald. A return match would be played immediately thereafter in Glasgow, and the aggregate shots for the two days would fix the champion side.

It would facilitate an adjustment of all preliminary points were you to get each club in Glasgow and Ayrshire to name a representative member, and in that case, you could ask them to attend a meeting to arrange every point. Probably Saturday 23rd inst. would be a suitable date for them to meet at the hotel here (*Eglinton Arms*) on the arrival of the train at half past twelve, and they may probably incline to take a game after the business of the meeting is finished.

I fear that we cannot extend the field of our adversaries beyond Glasgow, or I would have named Paisley in addition.

Yours truly,
“C. D. Gairdner”

Mr Mack accepted the position and issued a circular requesting clubs in Glasgow and Ayrshire to name a representative for the meeting on 23rd June. That meeting was held in the Eglinton Arms Hotel, and all the Glasgow clubs were represented: representatives were also present from all Ayrshire clubs mentioned in Mr Gairdner’s letter, with the exception of Ayr. The rules of Willow Bank Club were adopted, and the game was fixed to last three hours. The Committee appointed to take care of the arrangement consisted of Messrs. Brown, Gairdner, Moffat, Mack and

Houston (all members of Ardrossan Bowling Club) for Ayrshire, and Messrs Kyle (Albany), Cairns (Willow Bank), McKay (Wellcroft), and Fleming (Whitevale) for Glasgow, and the match was fixed for 2nd August on the Ayrshire greens – Dundonald green being left out, probably because of the difficulty Glasgow players might have in getting to it as there was no handy station.

The game was played on that day, and resulted in a victory for Glasgow by 285 shots, the respective scores being Glasgow 1187 shots, Ayrshire 902 shots. The names of the clubs who opposed Ardrossan cannot be traced but the scores were – Glasgow 197, Ardrossan 181.

The return match was played at Glasgow on 9th August, and again victory rested with the city, the scores on this occasion being 1282 shots to 822 shots, a gross majority over the two matches of 745. The names of the Glasgow clubs only are given in the reports of the match, the County clubs coming under the heading of “Ayrshire.”

A grand Banquet took place in the City Hall in the afternoon after the match, the Lord Provost occupying the Chair, and being supported by Lord Eglinton and the Presidents of the various clubs, while Mr Gairdner acted as Master of ceremonies. The first toast was “Lord Eglinton and the Ayrshire Bowlers,” and his Lordship’s reply was brimful of bowling. A short extract of his speech may be quoted - “Independently of the amusement we derive from these games they bring us together after they are over, and all differences of opinion are obliterated. Though we all have a strong BIAS in one thing, we are like all men at present, we take a shot at little JACK (Lord John Russell). We must at the same time be the most sober members of the community, for though we are constantly handling and looking over the bowls we never drink out of them, and though a good many of the Ayrshire bowlers may be blamed for being ‘tight’ I don’t believe they are a bit stingy. I must apologise for this wit for I am afraid it is on a par with the Ayrshire bowling.”

Baillie Mitchell, in proposing the health of Mr C. D. Gairdner, said “We are greatly indebted to this gentleman, for to him belonged the credit, more than to any other, of promoting this contest. In the late game I had the pleasure of being opposed to Mr Gairdner, and I can assure that he is an ugly customer to combat with, at the same time most courteous and gentlemanly. In the game at Ardrossan we the good fortune to be successful, but today, on our own green, and with the powerful aid of the Lord Provost, we only came off second best.”

The title for the next event in the history of this club could be –

“The Anti-Birth Control Contest.”

or, “The Effect of the Crimean War on the Scottish Population.”

The Married Men v The Single Men was again suggested by Mr Gairdner who on the 30th June 1855 wrote again to Mr Mack proposing an annual game between the married and single men of the club “in order to encourage bowlers to enter the holy state of wedlock” and offered a gold

21

ring and a silver-gilt medal as prizes in the game. The offer is made in this way:- “to induce bachelors to try their energies I shall give a gold ring as a prize to be contested for. When won by a single man, it shall not be considered any breach of the laws of the game, if he places the ring on the finger of a fair girl for the season. If won by a married man he shall he shall be considered fully entitled (through his wife) to impress on the young ladies of the parish that the single men are either unworthy of their regard or that they require the encouragement of bright eyes to ensure further victory”.

In a postscript to his letter, he adds:- “The ring will, as above, become the property of the person who wins it. The medal will continue from year to year in the club as an inducement to our successors to emulate the present married men to do their best to prevent the ruin of this great country, which must be the immediate consequence of any great reduction of the population”.

Ayrshire had sent a great number of men off to war in the Crimea and very few had returned. This great loss was obviously in Mr Gairdner’s mind, as after the regulations were drawn up by Mr Mack, the following were added:-

- (1) “The ring was to become the property of anyone winning it on three separate years:
- (2) or on any two successive years
- (3) in the event of any bachelor gaining the ring and throwing off his hopeless state of celibacy ON OR BEFORE VALENTINES DAY thereafter, he shall be entitled to present the ring to his spouse. As this has for its object the patriotic purpose of meeting the great drain upon our population by the Russian war, this rule as regards date will be strictly adhered to”. The first winner of the medal and the ring was Wm. Fullerton, the secretary.

Prior to the Annual Meeting in 1856, a match of a novel nature is recorded in the Ardrossn & Saltcoats Herald. On 28th March, a party of curlers played a game on the asphalt pond of the club till after 8 am, when, having peeled at 14, and the ice all but melted, they made an adjournment to the bowling green, and had “a real scientific game of bowls” to quote from the newspaper. This is also recorded in the Minute Book.

All of the office bearers were again elected.

A recommendation to proceed with the erection of a Bowl House was again carried but the house was not erected till 1857.

The Greenkeeper, John Bell, now in his seventh year in the job, was re-appointed. John was the “boss” of the green, or at least he thought so. It appears that his wife was very much the single person that he would not cross, she being the boss in the home! However, in the minutes of this year a complaint regarding livestock belonging to John Bell was received from no less than Lord Eglinton. He stated that all types of farmyard animals were to be seen in his gardens and the Earl insisted that the Committee have this annoyance ceased at once! This seems to have been attended to, as in the next year of the Club, John Bell was required to keep his hens off the green. Later, John Bell was ordered to keep his ducks from off the green, and later still, John Bell was warned to keep his pigs from off the green. He, however, must have been an excellent greenkeeper as he kept the green until 1876 – twenty six years in the job, though for years the successive Committees had endeavoured to get him to leave because of “off the green” problems.

He eventually ended up in the ‘poorhouse’ in Saltcoats and for many years the Club paid a small sum annually to provide him with ‘extra comforts’. The pigs, by the way, were not so easy to get rid of, as from time to time they cropped up in the minutes for fully fifteen years after the initial resolution was passed.

There was no outstanding event in 1856 and the green was closed on 23rd October. The funds of the Club had been steadily rising and at the start of the 1857 season stood at a respectable sum of £53. The erection of a Bowl House was at last proceeded with. It was placed “on the north east of the road leading from the Pavilion – 18 feet long, 10 feet wide, 10 feet high inside, of a style now erected at Kilwinning green”. The cost was estimated at £50, but the annual accounts show that the actual cost was half as much again at £75.

It was in 1857 that the Earl of Eglinton presented the Bowlers of Glasgow and Ayrshire the very handsome trophy which is still competed for annually.

The Glasgow Herald reported this event, and included a very detailed description of the trophy, now known as “The Eglinton Jug”. ‘The silver plate is in the form of a handsome silver maugraum claret tankard, embossed all round in the richest manner. On one side we see a stag hunt, the figures of the stag and dogs beautifully laid in, full of expression and spirit, and exhibiting great skill and taste in the artist.

On the other side is the inscription – “Presented to the Bowlers of Glasgow and Ayrshire by Archibald, Earl of Eglinton and Winton 1857”. The handle is solid and massive, and the mouth, or spout, is very appropriately formed. On the top of the lid is a beautiful modelled figure by William Beattie, a name now well known to all who take an interest in fine arts. It is executed in his happiest manner. The whole stands on a massive pedestal, encircled by a frosted silver imitation of a rocky fringe. Altogether the work realises the sentiment of beauty, capacity, and solidity. Doubtless it will serve the arm of bowlers of Glasgow and Ayrshire for many generations’. This, of course, it has now done for over 150 years so far!

Wellcroft B.C. were the first winners of the Silver Tankard with 67 shots up, and His Lordship handed it over to them at the close of the game. Despite the club’s involvement in the initial stages of the Tournament, Ardrossan B. C. has never won the Tankard. Possibly the Ardrossan players enjoy the social side of the annual event rather more than making serious attempts to be successful on the green! However, it would be nice to see the Trophy back in the club where it all started.

Ardrossan were runners-up for the Silver Bowl, Irvine winning the final tie by 15 shots on the four rinks (89 – 74). The Gold Bowl game was instituted this year. The first match being played on the 7th September on the greens of Kilwinning and the Eglinton, 5 rinks being on the former, and 17 rinks on the two greens at the Castle. The clubs engaged in the first match were – for the Estates: Eglinton, Irvine, Ardrossan, Kilwinning and Largs, and for the County; Girvan Victoria, Kilmarnock, Ayr, Troon, Galston and Maybole. The game resulted in a victory for the County by the narrow margin of 4 shots, the totals being 622 against 618, Maybole first received the Gold Bowl having been 12 shots up with two rinks. As

we all know, the Gold and Silver Bowls have now been merged into a single competition.

The seasons of 1858 and 1859 passed without any striking features, but in 1860 Lord Eglinton presented the Club with the Eglinton Gold Medal, (still played for annually in the Club Pairs). All of the clubs on his estates were presented with similar medals by His Lordship. It was also in this year that a Mr Huggins, resident at the Pavilion, presented to the club an elegant Espurgne (*a samovar, or tea urn*). This item is still in the club's hands today, but has had a chequered career. It was won in 1860 by a Mr James Marr, the locomotive manager at Ardrossan Railway Station, who had only joined the Club on that year and the Urn became his possession. *The author is now indebted to old notes kept by some enterprising secretary* - the Marr family had moved to Ayr and had opened a tobacconists business. The descendants of Mr Marr took very great care with the Urn, as when found years later, there was not a scratch or dent on it, and it had never been put to any practical use. A Mr Cook, who had been President of the Club in 1906, was visiting Ayr in 1912, and had his attention drawn to the inscription on an Urn in a Pawnbrokers window. It was, indeed, the same Urn and Mr Cook spoke of it to the President, and the retiring President, and they, along with certain other ex-Presidents, decided to purchase the Urn and hand it back to the club as a memento during the 70th Anniversary of the Club. The names of all of the Presidents taking part, and their actions, are engraved on the espurgne. As a matter of interest, Mr Huggins, the donor of the urn, was a gentleman in the cotton trade who suffered financial ruin due to, and during, the American Civil War.

Also in 1860 the first matches with the Stevenston clubs took place. Ardrossan playing both the Ardeer and Kerelaw clubs and, in fact, winning both matches. However, Ardeer were the winners of the Eglinton Tankard, as Ayrshire defeated Glasgow for the first time. Ardrossan, with three rinks, were fourth.

On 22nd September, Ardrossan played Kilwinning Eglinton at home and were successful by 5 shots. Lord Eglinton skipped against Provost Barr and was down by 21 shots. This was the last recorded game in which His Lordship took part.

In 1861, an International game, possibly the first, was played with Belfast, three rinks crossing the water to play for "twa lade o' meal" or its value in cash. The match took place on 7th June, and was divided

into two parts of 21 shots each, Ardrossan were down 3 shots in the first half, but were 5 shots up in the second, leaving them 2 up overall. A return game was played at Ardrossan on the 13th July under the same conditions and the home rinks were 10 shots up in the first half, and 7 shots up in the second. The club was again runner up in the Silver Bowl, Kilwinning being the winners.

On the 4th October 1861. the Earl of Eglinton died, and the Club at once took steps to show their high appreciation of the many kindnesses the Earl had shown to them. They assisted with the testimonial which was so unanimously got up by all who had been in contact with this sporting knight of the realm. The club subscribed £40 to this fund.

The Earl's successor kindly consented to become the new Patron of the Club in 1862, and it was in this season that the Club succeeded in winning the Gold Bowl. As it appears to be the only time that the club has won it, the scores and players are listed.

Troon – Cowan	21	R. Drape	34
Girvan – McHoul	25	A.R. Fullarton	31
Kilbirnie - ?	<u>19</u>	R. Crawford	<u>51</u>
	<u>65</u>		<u>116</u>

An average of 17 shots up per rink!

CHAPTER 4

The Well Established Club

The Club, now being over twenty years old and all the problems of youth behind them, settled down into easy-going club life for quite a number of years. Though annually competing for the various prizes, honours did not come thick and fast. It was not until 1874 that the Silver Bowl came into the possession of the club for the first time, and again in 1882 the club won the Bowl. If not in competitions, the club was very successful otherwise, with a large membership over all of the latter part of the 19th century.

In 1887 it was recognised that the Bowl House and Greenkeeper's House were quite out of date, and the committee resolved to get up funds to provide a house for the greenkeeper, with Committee Room and Bowls House attached. (This was the one which was at the west end of the greens and was only recently demolished). With this aim in mind a Bazaar was held on 26th, 27th, and 28th July 1888 which realised the sum of £520. the building was then proceeded with, and at the same time the old curling pond was taken up and a new asphalt pond laid, which was used as a tennis court in the summer. Such buildings, repairs, and alterations, placed the club in debt for a good few years but it was gradually liquidated until in 1901, the club had a balance on the right side, and the highest membership of its history, to that date, of 103 members.

The Earl of Eglinton's successor did not take the same interest in the club, but was patron of the club until his death. The Honourable Seton Montgomerie, the following Earl's brother, during his residence in Ardrossan, was President of the Club in 1871 and 1872. The Earl of Eglinton continued to be Patron of the Club until the purchase of the ground by the Club, and through all these years allowed the club to sit rent free, and from time to time, provided a supply of trees and shrubs to improve the grounds.

In 1905 further alterations were considered necessary to the “Old Clubhouse” and “Greenkeepers house” and, remarkable as it may seem, The Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald thought it important enough to print the following full description of the work being carried out in the club –

“PROPERTY ALTERATIONS”

“A look at the property of Ardrossan Bowling Club will give evidence that President Davidson and his Committee have not been idle during the close season.

The Greenkeeper’s House which heretofore consisted of one room and kitchen has been converted into two rooms, kitchen, and scullery, the former entrance to which has been closed up and another entrance effected by a door on that side of the block facing Castle Hill, and there is also considerable addition to the outhouse accommodation for domestic purposes. The Bowl-house has also been much improved. Three wash hand basins of a modern type have been installed, the wall at the back being lined with tiles. The hand of the painter is also evident here and what before had a musty look has pleasingly been made bright and cheerful. The entrance door to this portion of the building has been removed from the main avenue, to within the enclosure at the side of the green. A back entrance to the keepers house and other conveniences of a sanitary nature have been effected in the new wing of the building. This wing will no doubt prove much benefit on windy nights, especially to that portion of the green next to the railway, as many a well delivered bowl was held while nearing the jack owing to the strong wind coming out of this corner. It will readily be admitted that the money expended on the improvements, has been money well spent”.

It is really remarkable that this was thought to be worth all that attention by a weekly newspaper.

CHAPTER 5

Organisation and Administration

Before the founding of the Scottish Bowling Association in 1892, bowling administration was as the earth was, “without form and void”.

As has been written in previous chapters, the rules of different clubs were used for games causing slight confusion and disagreements which could well have been done without. There was also a growing band of “professional players” who played using *nom-des-plumes* in tournaments which were organised with large prize money at stake. This type of tournament was not acceptable to the gentleman bowler, but individually they could do little about it.

W. W. Mitchell published his *MANUAL OF BOWLING* in 1873 emphasizing therein that playing under national rules was both advisable and necessary. It is true to say that a certain degree of standardisation in rules commenced from the publication, as it was widely read by members of bowling clubs throughout Scotland.

However, clubs tended to be rather protective of their own rules and functioned according to their own desires. In fact, twenty five years before W. W. Mitchell wrote his manual he had attempted to establish a ‘National Bowling Club’ and a meeting had been held in Glasgow in March 1849 but the project was considered impracticable. His advocacy for a Scottish Bowling Association in 1873 once again found little or no support. He was to die before James Brown of Sanquhar published a letter in ‘The Scotsman’ in 1889 urging the constitution of a “Scottish National Bowling Club” and on publishing his ‘Manual of Bowling’ in 1892 he reproduced W. W. Mitchell’s rules and advised an authority on a national basis to revise and re-issue the rules. Brown plus some prominent bowlers circulated all bowling clubs and associations in the country inviting “one delegate from each to a meeting in the Central Station Hotel in Glasgow on Monday 12th September next at 4 o’clock pm”. At that meeting, held not in the Central Station Hotel but in the Pillar Hall, Waterloo Rooms,

Glasgow, it was agreed that the first Annual General Meeting of “The Scottish Bowling Association” be held in the Waterloo Rooms, Glasgow, on Wednesday 23rd November 1892 at 3 pm.

At this meeting it was intimated that no less than 122 clubs had joined the Association. The first Secretary being James Brown (Sanquhar) who had done so much to bring this Association into being.

One of the first jobs was to implement the rules of the game for Scottish bowlers. These rules were based on W. W. Mitchell’s rules which, as has been said, were based on the rules of Willow Bank B.C. and Ardrossan B.C. The S.B.A. rules were subsequently in later years adopted by the International Bowling Board, therefore it can be said that our forebears in Ardrossan Bowling Club helped to give the Rules of Bowls to the world.

The League of Bowling Clubs was formed in 1895 to foster the game in Ayrshire and in 1900 changed its name to the Ayrshire Bowling Association with the aim of organising and administering the game in the county of Ayrshire.

To illustrate as to why these associations were necessary to bring conformity to the game the following correspondence in the local press in 1912 is reproduced – a minimum jack length of 25 yards had been ruled, but a maximum length of green had not been fixed – a gentleman writes:

‘Sir, - I would esteem it a great favour if you would allow me a little space in which to ventilate a bowling grievance. In these days when cups are as thick as herrings in the Clyde, and when greens are being multiplied by the score, I venture to suggest that our bowling authorities should take into consideration regulations for controlling the size of the greens. In Greenock there is a green which measures 90 yards long: in Dalry we have one which is over 50 yards long: in fact, each club can take in as much turf as it cares and the authorities allow them to proceed without hindrance to lay their greens. A minimum jack is fixed, but if a green was laid 29 yards long no other jack would be possible. Why fix a minimum jack and allow the maximum to any club’s pleasure? To find oneself on a green which is 10 yards longer than one is accustomed, does not tend to fine play and in view that most greens are 42-44 yards long why should the S.B.A. not fix a maximum of 40 yards as well as the 25 yard minimum? That would not be a hardship for clubs whose greens are already laid and would be a standard for future clubs’.

Yours etc. - Short Jack

“Short Jack” was soon replied to by “Amateur” who accused “Short Jack” of belonging to a club which couldn’t get its name amongst the ‘silver’, or get its name enrolled in the clubs who win the trophies. He states that “Short Jack” must have a grudge against a particular club because of their success in the bowling world. The beauty of bowling, he states, is the want of uniformity in the length of the jack and if the green is over 50 yards, it affords you a greater variety of jacks and therefore does away with any risk of professionalism.

“Short Jack” does not let this lie and replies with a long letter which states that by bringing greens into line professionalism is made further unlikely as everyone can practice at every length whereas only members of greens over 50 yards could play at that length and as such could only win matches on there “ain middens”. This last reference was said with feeling. The winning of cups was not the chief end of clubs and players, although some of their actions would cause one to move for the abolition of cups altogether. Everything is sacrificed to win, and opponents are almost sworn at if they happen to draw a “saver”, when a big count seemed assured. By standardising our greens we put every player on a level, and victories then, would to a greater degree depend on merit.

Subsequently, of course, the Scottish Bowling Association brought in the maximum and minimum lengths of green.

CHAPTER 6

Into the New Century

The club had settled down and during the first decade there was only one item of note. In 1905, James Tyre, the Ardrossan Bowling Club representative in the Scottish Singles Championship, was the first Ardrossan member to win the District Final. On 27th July 1905 he met W. McCartney from Newmilns, a well known excellent bowler, and won by 21 shots to 19. He received a gold badge and became one of the competitors in the final ties at Queens Park. It is reported that the club honoured the victor, on receipt of this news, by raising their flag!!.

Mr Tyre reached the Quarter-finals, but in a downpour of rain, he only managed to score at two ends and was beaten 21-5 by A. McKechnie of New Cumnock.

The membership of the club steadily increased each year from 1900 to 1914 being set back by the Great War (1914 – 1918) and the really remarkable change, in the minutes of these years, is the frequent mention of ladies. Until 1914 the only ladies mentioned regularly were the Countess of Eglinton and three others, Mrs Cunninghame, Mrs Moffat, and Mrs MacDonald, who for many years had been Patronesses of the club, but now ladies were about the club, urging people to attend functions, buy articles, etc., to help “the boys at the front.”

Various donations were made to “The War Fund”, “The Red Cross”, and “The War Blinded”, etc.

However, although ladies were now allowed, in fact welcomed, into the club, they were not allowed to play the game. There were some approaches but those were rejected out of hand by the committee of the day as a “notion that would quickly pass!”

The membership continued to rise and in 1920 stood at 120 with a waiting list.

Whether it was the number of members or the emancipation of women, (they now “had the vote” if over 30 years old), in 1922 a big step forward was taken when it was decided at the Annual General Meeting that “another green should be laid down, so that facilities might be available for all those in Ardrossan and district who were eager to take up bowling.”

A committee was formed to take care of this large undertaking and in their first report suggested that the club purchase the land from Lord

Eglinton, and in addition to another green, build a new clubhouse between the two greens. It was agreed to follow this course, and after negotiations, the land from the railway bridge to the far side of Kilmeny Terrace was purchased from Lord Eglinton for the sum of £130 in 1923. The work of laying the new green and building the new clubhouse was then immediately started, and completed for the start of the 1924 season at a total outlay of £1212 (£513 for the green, £624 for the building, and £75 for furniture and fittings.)

In 1924, ladies were admitted to the club to play bowls. As has been noted, they had been allowed into the club for some time, but now they were allowed to play the game! Typically, although there had been many dissenting voices over the last few years, the gentlemen bent over backwards in their welcome, and in their efforts, to please the ladies, even instructing the greenkeeper to put the mats down for the ladies and carry their bowls to and from the green! The proposal of 15/- (75p) for ladies fees was even cut in half and lady membership could be had for 7/6(37p). The decision to allow ladies was taken on 26th April 1924 and by the Opening of the Green on the first Saturday in May, there were 17 lady players. However, it was not until 1936 that a Ladies Section was formed.

The next happening in 1924 was to be decided for all the right reasons but was eventually to be a damaging idea for the welfare of the club. As the club was now in possession of a large number of assets, both property and land, it was thought proper that it should become a Limited Company. This was duly passed at a General Meeting called for that purpose in August 1924, and Ardrossan Bowling Club Limited came into being with share capital, mainly sold to members, of £1500 in £1 shares. It is suspected, but is not made clear, that this idea came into the minds as a method of clearing the debt incurred by the club by the erection of the new clubhouse and the laying of the new green. Directors were elected and they ran the affairs of the club. There was still a committee, but any decisions made by this committee had to be submitted to the Directors for ratification. This appeared to be satisfactory for a number of years but eventually the Minute Book shows that all was not well between the committee members and the directorate. This ill-feeling seems to have crept through the whole club, and the membership gradually dropped year after year. The basic problem being that the same men seemed to be

appointed annually to the directors board and rejected, with regularity, all new ideas put forward by the committee, and, as one can understand, the committee accepted this for so long, until none of them could accept it no longer.

However, in addition to this inside problem, the General Strike and Depression of the middle and late 1920's and the aftermath of money shortage in the early 1930's took their toll on the club. Not only were the finances not available for further development, but members obviously had to have second thoughts about being able to remain members of the club. The Directors were obviously aware of this and announced a reduction in the cost of membership fees, but the general expense associated with the game was to be regarded as too much by many young members.

Ardrossan Bowling Club that had been coasting along on the crest of a wave, suddenly had a depression of its own. In seasons 1931 and 1932 the Minute Book records, at meeting after meeting of the committee, resignations which had to be accepted with great regret. During these two years there were a total of 83 resignations and an intake of only 6 new members. The membership before this had stood at 167 male members and the numbers eventually bottomed out in 1935 when there was a membership of 58 gentlemen. There was an additional lady associate membership of 26.

Through the late 1930's this small band of members kept the club ticking over. Whist Drives, Jumble Sales, the Annual Fete, etc. raising just enough income to keep the club solvent. So on through World War 2 and the years immediately after. We owe a great debt to this small band of members who kept this club going during these years. They did not have the money to carry out any great changes or improvements to the club, but they did give of their time and their own cash to keep the premises, greens and clubhouse, in good order and a constant state of repair.

The centenary of the club was celebrated during these years in 1942, and could not be properly marked due to wartime conditions and restrictions. On the Opening Day, which was chosen to mark the occasion, the President, Mr John Ralston, in his speech expressed gratification at the presence of Provost Harvey and other members of the Town Council and said that "throughout its 100 years existence every Provost of Ardrossan had been a member of the club until today. He understood that Provost Harvey was not a bowler but hoped that they may yet claim him as a member."

The Provost, in reply, declared, "hitherto I have not been a bowler but, if Mr Ralston can substantiate his statement that all previous Provosts of Ardrossan have been members of the club, then I, too, will become a member." He continued, "Ardrossan Bowling Club has now for 100 years been a distinct asset to to the burgh of Ardrossan and when peace is restored, this Centenary should be celebrated in a fashion befitting such an event." Mr Ralston, later, having proved his statement, announced that Provost Harvey had just paid his fees and joined the club.

Even with the end of hostilities in 1945 money remained scarce for any great changes to be made to the club, and indeed over the next 10 years there was only one item of note recorded and that was the end of the club as a Limited Company. During all of these years of peace, war, and again peace, the club remained officially to be a limited company, although it had already returned to being run by an annually elected committee. It was therefore, in 1956, decided that the company be wound up. This was done in July 1956 and shareholders received a nominal 6d (two and a half pence) per share. A good number of shareholders returned their share certificates refusing to accept any payout.

During the first 50 years of the twentieth century, as has been described, the club had its ups and downs, and the bowling quality likewise – there were a few successes however, and these are listed here –
Rinks - 1926 - Messrs. Cochran, McDougall, McFarlane, skipped by Andrew C. Currie won The Richardson Trophy.

Rinks - 1927 - Messrs. Cochran, Miller, Galston and Andrew C. Currie won The Irvine & District Trophy.

Singles - 1930 - Andrew C. Currie achieved a notable triumph when he won the St. Vincent 100 Guineas Tournament.

Rinks - 1937 - Messrs. Miller, Currie, Milne and Ralston won the District Rinks Championship.

Pairs - 1938 - R. Ralston and H. Milne won the Ayrshire Championship

Singles - 1941- Mr Campbell Banks won the Ayrshire Singles Championship.

The most notable success in this era was the selection for international honours by Andrew C. Currie. Andrew was an outstanding bowler and played for the Scottish team in 1925, 1926, 1931, 1932, and 1933. He had the ultimate honour of being appointed captain of Scotland in his last two appearances in the national side.

CHAPTER 7

To the Present Day

The 1950's and 1960's were not to show any great changes in the club, and, on the greens the ladies were proving to be the winners of any trophies coming into the club, with the notable exception of one man W. D. Jones, of whom we shall hear later.

The ladies of the 50's and 60's – Mrs Jean Terry, Ayrshire Womens Bowling Association Singles Champion on more than one occasion, who also brought honour to the club when she became President of the A.W.B.A. Mrs Dorothy Tait, Mrs Jane McColl, Mrs Elizabeth Miller, Mrs Lottie Hutchison, Mrs Jean Douglas, and Mrs 'Nana' Jones all combined in Rinks and Pairs in various positions to bring both Scottish and Ayrshire Womens titles to the club on several occasions over these years.

The club membership stayed at a very low figure of between 40 and 60 members during all of these years, and the various committees and office bearers are to be congratulated on all of their efforts to keep the club not only going on, but solvent.

At the beginning of the 1970's, however, membership in the club started to increase, funds became available, and, with the help of some young blood being elected to the committee, new ideas started to flow. Most of these ideas were not immediately popular with the older, and staid, men who had been in charge for a number of years but, when they saw the results improving the club, were eventually to agree that 'change was necessary.' Until this period the club had remained closed each winter from early October until the first week in May of the following year, and one of the first changes was to organise events in the clubhouse over the winter months. These became very well attended, membership grew rapidly, and in 1970 it was proposed to extend the clubhouse as the old 1924 building for the membership of 120 gents and 60 ladies. An E. G. M was held for that purpose and the older members were wary of putting the club into debt, the younger members stating that to put this off would only mean that the cost would be greater the longer the building was delayed. It was agreed to proceed with the extension but on a smaller basis than was originally proposed in order to keep the borrowing down to a minimum.

The meeting closed with the Treasurer, Bobby Drysdale, asking for members to consider giving an interest free loan of any amount that they could consider. The extension was completed and opened in April 1971. The contribution received from the interest free loan, and the money collected at games, the annual fete, and other fund raising activities allowed the treasurer to clear the overdraft at the bank and even to start paying back some of the interest free loans by September of 1971. The President and the committee of the day kept the cost of this new lounge down to only £5000, the President Alex Bryan and the secretary, Alex Allan, even laying the parquet dance floor which we still enjoy.

In hindsight, the extension should have been larger as was proposed, as in 1973 a verandah was added to the west side of the new extension. This again was voted a vast improvement and a huge success, but only three years later further extensions were to be made.

A huge increase in membership in 1974 and 1975, gents now stood at 250, and ladies at 175, the interior verandah wall was removed to give a larger lounge area, and at the same time the lounge was also extended towards the railway line by another 10 feet. The main reason for the large increase in membership was the opening of Ardrossan Indoor Bowling Club which had introduced many local people to bowling through initially, curiosity about what was going on in the new building in Glasgow Street, and then becoming members and playing bowls for the first time. The indoor club was, at that time, to close during the summer months and the “new” bowlers in the town, wishing to continue their new found pleasure, joined the outdoor club.

The club, which had until now closed in the winter months, was being attended throughout the whole year – playing the game all summer, and having winter evenings and weekends filled week after week with dances, cabarets, games nights, quiz nights etc. all of which were well attended by members. At this time several members decided to form themselves into a small band and play for the various functions. They were Margaret Bryan, Jack Brennan, Tommy Gorman, Lorna Stewart, and Tommy Davis, and they played at every Saturday night dance for approximately ten years, and were much appreciated, not only by club members and visitors, but also by various organisations, Old Peoples Welfare, Church Groups, and Charities, for whom they gave of their time and musicianship to entertain in first class fashion.

A further extension to the other side of the club, opposite the old verandah which included a new kitchen, was built in the early 1980's to give us the clubhouse that we have today. The old kitchen was at that time changed to become the Committee Room.

The main change in bowling during these years was the advent of sponsored tournaments, and Ardrossan Bowling Club, as over all the years, was quick to adopt to this new style. In 1975 we were approached by the House of Fraser to hold a "Champion of Champions" Tournament with invitations sent to the singles champions of every club in Ayrshire. The House of Fraser management promised to provide the prize money, commemorative lapel badges, bowls stickers, etc. and to have a representative of the firm on hand on the day of the event. This was agreed to by the committee and in 1976 the first tournament was held and was a great success. The first winner being Jim Wilson from West Netherton B.C. in Kilmarnock. The House of Fraser sponsorship lasted for a good number of years and the club was fortunate to interest other firms to sponsor the tournament after the House of Fraser closed down their sports outlets. This tournament is still running today and is a prestigious one to play in and still has an average of 60 or so clubs, out of a possible 86 in Ayrshire, entering each year.

In 1980 the club won the Ayrshire Cup, the sixteen players in the 4 rinks being Pres. Jimmy Paton, Alex Bryan, Bill Milne, John Bain, Jimmy Blackmore, Bob Agnew, David Houston, Jack Lapsley, Alex Blair, Bob Nicholson, Bobby Denver, Robert Anderson, Jim Muir, Jimmy McKelvie, Jimmy Foran, and Dennis McCourt. A very proud President, Jimmy Paton went to the Ayrshire Championship Finals at Saltcoats B.C. to collect the Trophy.

Also, during the 1980's it was agreed that the Ladies, who had always occupied an Associate Member status, should become full members of the club and take their place at the Annual General Meeting of the club and also as members of the management committee of the club. This was again an instance of Ardrossan Bowling Club being first in the area, and probably further afield. The ladies had always been an asset to the club and could now play a full part in the day to day running of Ardrossan Bowling Club.

In 1982, one of the club members, Robert Anderson, was a participant in a quiz broadcast by Radio Clyde and had reached the semi-finals. He had to go to the Radio Clyde studios to take part and asked the Club secretary, David Houston, if he could be given a letter requesting sponsorship of a Tournament. His idea was, that should he meet someone who could possibly authorise this, he would duly hand over the letter and wait to see if it bore any fruit! After some thought, and considering ideas put forward by members, the secretary wrote suggesting a Tournament for clubs that were over 100 years old in the Radio Clyde reception area be sponsored by Radio Clyde giving £261 for prize money. (261 being their wavelength – Radio Clyde 261)

Robert Anderson, unfortunately, because of some error in the quiz, was informed that he was not now a semi-finalist and returned to the club with the letter. It was decided to stick a stamp on it and send it to Radio Clyde. Two days later, a letter was received from Mr James Gordon, Managing Director of Radio Clyde, agreeing to sponsor the Tournament with prize money of £261 each year, for the next TEN years until our 150th Anniversary. He also stated that he would be most interested in how many clubs in the area were over 100 years old! The secretary was also interested in this and how to find out the answer! Firstly, the secretary contacted the S.B.A. who were no help at all. He was told there was a man in Hamilton who would be able to help, but when contacted, was unable to assist in any way. Finally, someone suggested Ernest Johnston, SBA Councillor for Dumbartonshire, and after writing to him the secretary received a very detailed list of clubs in Scotland that were over a hundred years old. The number of clubs over 100 years old in the Radio Clyde reception area turned out to be one hundred and thirty one in 1982 with quite a number due to celebrate their centenaries in the next year or so. All of the clubs were written to with invitations, the secretary went to the Radio Clyde offices to broadcast the details of the event, and in the first year there was an entry of 96 clubs. A trophy was purchased and christened “The Auld Hundred” and over the years until our 150th Anniversary in 1992 there was an average entry of 75 to 80 clubs and was a most successful annual event.

On writing to thank Mr Gordon and his directors for their ten years sponsorship, for their continued kindness and help, and noting that 1992 was the end of their commitment, the club was delighted to receive a reply

stating that it could be taken that the sponsorship would continue after 1992. On behalf of the club members, and tournament competitors, grateful thanks were expressed to Radio Clyde, and its Manager and Directors, for their continued generosity.

At this time the club also had the Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald Open Triples, which was sponsored by donations of cash, and kind, from the traders of Ardrossan and Saltcoats. This late September tournament was probably the last in the season and always attracted a large entry from the neighbouring clubs and a few from Glasgow and beyond.

For some number of years the club ran a tournament (Mixed Triples) on behalf of The Arthritis and Rheumatism Council for Scotland and donated the total proceeds to this worthy cause. This tournament still continues but is now in aid of Cancer Research and attracts a full entry each year.

Throughout the first 150 years of the club's existence success on the greens outwith the club had been hard to come by, with the exception of W.D. Jones, of whom, it has already been written, we shall hear about later. In 1984 David Houston won the Ayrshire Secretaries Singles Championship, and for a while it looked as if a unique double was on the cards as Janice Dougal was contesting the Ayrshire Ladies Secretaries Final. However, Janice was to be defeated by the narrowest of margins (21-20) in that final. In 1988, Isobel Dockrell and Agnes Blackmore reached the final of the Scottish Womens Bowling Association Pairs Championship only to be beaten by 1 shot at an extra end, having been 'peels' after the last end was played. They repeated their challenge in 1989, again reached the final and unfortunately were once again defeated.

In 1987, Agnes Blackmore brought great honour to both herself and the club by being selected for the S.W.B.A. International team and she gained caps against Wales, Ireland, and England, skipping her rink to victory each time. She was capped for Scotland over the next 5 years, and was a 'regular' in the Womens County team and was installed as President of the Ayrshire Womens Bowling Association in 1989.

This year, 1989, was memorable for the number of representatives which the club had in all the County and Scottish Championships. Hugh Campbell, Tom McLelland, Jim Martin, and Andy Dougal (skip) contesting in the Finals of the Scottish Bowling Association Fours at Ayr Northfield and reaching the last sixteen. Elaine McLelland reached

the Final of the Scottish Junior Ladies Singles, having the previous year reached the last eight in Scotland. Kevin Kyle got to the Final of the Ayrshire Youths Championship and a Ladies Rink skipped by Grace Rogerson contested the Final of the Ayrshire Ladies Fours Championship. Unfortunately all of the above finalists were to be defeated at this last stage, but, in 1990, Jane Gillies, Nan Cramb, Isobel Dockrell, and Agnes Blackmore (skip) not only reached the Final of the West of Scotland Ladies Fours, but won well, and brought the Championship Cup back to Ardrossan. Jean MacColl was selected to play for the Ayrshire Womens Bowling Association county team both in 1989 and 1990.

Also in 1990 the year was to be an anti-climax after the success and near success of the previous year. Isobel Dockrell and Agnes Blackmore being the only ones to reach the final stages of the Scottish Ladies Pairs once again, but were beaten in the semi-finals. One notable breakthrough however, was achieved by Elaine McLelland who was selected to play for the Scottish Womens Bowling Association Junior International Team in the home international series at Ayr Northfield and played in all games. Then, in 1991, Jane Gillies, Jean MacColl, Isobel Dockrell, and Agnes Blackmore won the S.W.B.A Top Ten Fours Championship.

This, then, brings us up to 1992, the 150th Anniversary of Ardrossan Bowling Club. Before the year started it was pointed out that given the chance of having an anniversary year in a year of peace would be a change for the club as the 50th Anniversary was in the middle of the Boer Wars, the 75th was in 1917 during the fiercest fighting in World War 1, and the Centenary was in 1942 in the middle of World War 2. In each of these cases large celebrations were not appropriate and were only noted by one 'special game.' 1992 was to be in a time of peace, and the celebrations went on with 'special games' each week from April to September, and all members enjoyed the 150th Anniversary, or 'Sesquicentennial', to the full.

At last a Scottish title was brought to the club, and in the 150th Anniversary year, Jane Gillies, Nan Cramb, Isobel Dockrell, and Agnes Blackmore became Scottish Women's Bowling Association Fours Champions and would represent Scotland in the British Isles Championships in the following year.

At the end of 1992, David Houston, who had been on the Committee in almost every position, Vice-President, President, Secretary, Treasurer, and indeed, assistant Greenkeeper to Jimmy Blackmore, was

elected as a Director of the Ayrshire Bowling Association, and ending 25 years in the committee of Ardrossan Bowling Club. He was appointed an Honorary Vice-President of the club in the following year.

In 1993 the four ladies who had won a Scottish title went to Northfield in the British Isles Championship and defeated Ireland in the semi-final, qualifying to meet Wales who had beaten England in their semi-final. All who were there watched a marvellous final with excellent bowls being played by both countries, but it was Wales who came out on top by three shots. The ladies were presented with suitably engraved commemorative crystal bowls by the club on their return.

The late 1990's was marked by an intake of youthful members and a new competitive attitude towards the game. The 'friendly' games against other clubs had all but dried up and the order of the day was 'Round Robin' Tournaments with good prizes to be won. There was a new approach towards the Club Championships with the younger members putting in great efforts to succeed, and win, in order to be the representatives of the club in the Ayrshire and Scottish Championships in the following year, and also, expecting to win the titles.

And so, into the 21st Century, with a healthy membership and a general good feeling about in the club. The titles were still being won by the ladies with, in 2000, Grace Rogerson, Janice Dougal, and Jean MacColl becoming Ayrshire Women's Triples Champions, but now the men were asserting themselves and Ian Rogerson, Graham Iley, Alan Rogerson, and Willie Sinclair brought to Ardrossan, the Ayrshire Fours Championship.

In this same year Alan Rogerson was given a trial and selected to become a Junior Internationalist and played in all games in the series.

David Houston was appointed President of the Ayrshire Bowling Association and, in his year of office, Ayrshire won the Scottish Cities and Counties Championship. (The Andrew H. Hamilton Trophy.)

As said before, there was now a new competitive attitude in the playing of the game and this was shown with the trophies won. In 2003, Scott Stevenson and Darren O'Rourke won the Ayrshire Pairs, and Janice Dougal won the A.W.B.A Secretaries Championship. In the following year Scott and Darren made it two in a row defending, and winning, the Ayrshire Pairs once again.

The Champion of Champions, still being held by the club, in 2004 it was won by Charlie Iley from Ardrossan Bowling Club. This was the first success for the club in this Championship.

In 2005, a rink of Charlie Iley, Brian Manson, Alan Rogerson, and Ewan Sloan triumphed in the Ayrshire Fours Championship.

Janice Dougal was the toast of the club when, in 2005, she was the Champion Lady Bowler in Ayrshire as she won the A.W.B.A. Singles Championship.

The year 2006 passed by with no County or National titles but, in 2007, Graham Iley, Brian Manson, and Scott Stevenson won the Ayrshire Triples and Helen Campbell, Jean Clark and Margaret Cook did likewise in the West of Scotland Triples.

Since the start of the 21st Century the club has had a good number of the younger players selected to play for the County teams – Under 25's and the Ayrshire teams – Scott Stevenson, Alan Rogerson, Ewan Sloan, Jamie Campbell, Graham Iley, Scott Wilson. A number of others have been invited to play in the trials and will no doubt be selected in the near future.

This then, for the moment, concludes this short history of Ardrossan Bowling Club and with the inclusion of the next chapter, in no way does it reflect the trauma, stress, strain, tension, and all out endeavour of members, committees, secretaries, treasurers, presidents, and vice-presidents over all of the 171 years to ensure personal triumphs on, and off, the greens, the continued viability and success of the club, but hopefully presents a picture of a club which has gone from strength to strength, improved with age, and with a will to win and continue to play, and play, its way for many more years to come.

CHAPTER 8

An Outstanding Personality

No history of Ardrossan Bowling Club could be complete without mention of one of the finest bowlers in Scotland in his day.

WILLIAM DOWNES JONES

“Willie Jones” was born in 1910 in Maybole and started playing bowls, possibly strangely in these days, at Ayr Indoor Bowling Club at the age of 25.

He was a cobbler to trade and, on moving to Ardrossan in 1939, was employed for many years by the Ardrossan branch of the Scottish Co-operative Society in their shoemaking and repairing section. He was also well known by the professional sprinters of his day as he made completely hand stitched running shoes for the Powderhall sprinters, and sat by the track to make alterations and repairs.

It is, however, as a master bowler that he is best known. He joined Maybole Bowling Club in 1936 to start his outdoor career and immediately beat his father, no mean bowler himself, in the Singles Championship Final to win his first championship. On moving to Ayr Bowling club in 1937 he won their Singles Championship in that year. He came to Ardrossan in 1939, joined the club, and won the Singles Championship of the club in 1940.

From 1940 on, his Championship wins are legion. Twenty times winner of Ardrossan Singles Championship, and beaten finalist 14 times. His last win was in 1981, aged 71, followed by another final appearance in the next year. This record is only matched by his numerous title wins in Pairs, Triples, and Rinks, over his 45 years membership of the club. He won the Ayrshire Singles Championship in 1947, 1950, and 1959, and qualified by winning the District, and Inter District Finals, for the final stages of the Scottish Singles Championships in 1949, 1953, 1955, 1956, and 1957. It was in 1957 that he eventually went all the way and won the Scottish Singles Championship. This he followed up by winning a special “Champion of Champions” arranged by the S.B.A. to decide Scotland’s singles representative in the Empire Games of 1958.

At the Empire Games, despite having broken his right hand during the winter of '57/'58 and having lost his bowls, Willie came in a creditable fourth – just out of the medals by 1 point.

Obviously Ayrshire and Scotland could not ignore this man and he played for the County in 1939, 1948, '49, '50, '51, '52, '53, '54, '55, '56, '57, '58, '59, and '60, and for Scotland in 1950, '51, '52, '53, '54, '56, '58, and '59. He was also an Indoor Internationalist capped in 1953, '54, '55, '56, '57, '58, '59, '60, and with John Hodge of Coylton won the Scottish Indoor Pairs Championship in 1966.

Willie's favourite holiday was to go to the South of England and play in tournaments down there. Not only to play but win, as he did in the Southend Singles Tournament in 1946 and 1951 and the Southend Pairs in 1947 and 1949.

Willie was also an active committee member of Ardrossan Bowling Club for many years, and held the offices of Secretary, Vice-President and was President of the club in 1943. In 1977, in recognition of his services to the club, and the honours that he had brought to the club, his fellow members elected him Honorary President. In 1980, Ayr Indoor Bowling Club, where he had started his bowling career, elected him an Honorary member of their club.

When Willie Jones retired from shoe making and repairing, he became the first Rink Master of the new Ardrossan Indoor Bowling Club in 1974, finally finding a job within the game which he loved and was a complete master.

Unfortunately, Willie had a long period of illness from 1982 – 1984 and passed away on 23rd April 1984, aged 74, just as the greens were opening for another season. His answer when asked why he loved the game so much tells all – “As a bowler of many years standing I have found bowlers to be a happy, uncomplaining crowd who play the game for the love of it, enjoying each game. It provides healthy recreation and it is an ideal sport for young and old alike.”

A BOWLERS LAMENT

by

Thomas Wallace, President 1916

Anither bowlin' season's past,
 An' winter is approachin' fast,
 A tearfu' e'e I backward cast,
 An' hameward dauner,
 Wishin' the summer days wid last,
 A wee thing longer.

Week in, week out, nicht efter nicht,
 Aff tae the green in sic a plicht,
 Guid faith, tae play wi' a' ma micht,
 The auld man's game.
 Till darkness fell, obscured the licht,
 An' sent me hame.

I've heard some folks pronounce me daft,
 An' seen them hae an unco facht,
 To keep their sonsie faces stracht,
 Seein' me runnin'.
 Twistin' ma legs from left tae richt,
 Troupin' and singin'.

An' mid the clatter an' the din,
 Yellin' "Auld flannel feet ye're thin,
 Jist rest this oot, lang skinny yin!
 Whaur is he noo?
 She's coming! Listen! Wheest! Weel din!
 The jack's richt through!

But noo, guid kens whit I'm to dae,
 The green is closed an' nae mair play,
 At hame nae peace or sympathy,
 Buts lots o' growlin',
 Threatened my life if but I say,
 A word on bowlin'.

Ardrossan Bowling Club
PRESIDENTS

1842	Robert Hunter	1900	F. H. Gillies
1843-1844	Major Martin	1901	Wm. Martin
1845-1846	Robert Hunter	1902	Capt. R. Torrance
1847	Major Dalziel	1903	Thomas Wallace
1848	-1859 George Johnston	1904	John Barr
1860-1861	Capt. M. Crawford	1905	Wm. Davidson
1862	D. C. Love	1906	James Cook
1863	Capt. M. Crawford	1907	Dr. John Allan
1864.1865	William McJanet	1908	Wm. McQueen
1866	Thomas Kirkhope	1909	Provost J.B. Christie
1867	James Goodwin	1910	Lord Montgomerie
1868	Dr. Stevens	1911	W. Hastings
1869	John Enislie	1912	C. Murchie
1870	John Logan	1913	J. Stewart
1871-1872	Hon. Seton Montgomerie	1914	W. D. Hamilton
1873	Thomas Kirkhope	1915	J. Lambert
1874.1875	Baillie A.G. Macdonald	1916	T. P. Wallace
1876.1877	John Cunninghame	1917	J. McBean
1878.1881	John Moffat	1918	J. W. Blythe
1882	Wm Morrison	1919	W. Tannock
1883	Wm. Muir	1920	R. Cochran
1884	John Craig	1921	T. Guthrie
1885	J.H. Mearns	1922-1923	C. Price
1886.1888	A. G. Macdonald	1924	J. Allison
1889	George Barrie	1925	J. Barbour
1890	Alex Guthrie	1926	A. C. Currie
1891	Charles J. Shearer	1927	W. Milne
1892	James Goodwin	1928	W. Millar
1893	Wm. Guthrie	1929	A. S. Millar
1894	Thomas Guthrie	1930	I. T. Fawcett
1895	Dr. Macdonald	1931	J. Yuille
1896	John Allison	1932	D. L. McLennan
1897	J.B. Smith	1933	T. Ferguson
1898	Dr. R. Allan	1934	R. A. Jones
1899	Capt. J. Stewart	1935	R. F. Blythe

PRESIDENTS (cont'd)

1936	J. McNeilly		
1937	J. A. Hosie	1974	J. Arkison
1938	A. Crawford	1975	R. Drysdale
1939	J. Hamilton	1976	J. McK. Guiney
1940	J. Barclay	1977	J. Muir
1941	J. Allison	1978	A. H. Blair
1942	W. D. Jones	1979	J. Bain
1943	J. T. Ralston	1980	J. Paton
1944	R. Ralston	1981	J. Blackmore
1945	A. D. Lambert	1982	R. Agnew
1946	T. McLaughlin	1983	J. Poole
1947	W. B. Fainges	1984	A. R. Campbell
1948	J. S. Graham	1985	A. Dougal
1949	A. Stewart	1986	E. M. J. Procter
1950	W. T. Henry	1987	R. D. Boyd
1951	G. Munn	1988	W. Welsh
1952	J. Beggs J.P.	1989	J. Foran
1953	J. Wright	1990	J. Anderson
1954	J. Linney	1991	R. M. Nisbet
1955	J. Fleming	1992	G. Gray
1956	W. Maxwell	1993	W. Hunter
1957	W. B. Bryson	1994	J. Ferrol
1958	J. W. Yuille	1995	A. Milne
1959	J. Brown	1996	W. Crawford
1960	J. Munn	1997	J. Cairns
1961	S. Wood	1998	W. Crawford
1962	W. Hardie	1999	J. W. Gilmour
1963	H. R. Dunlop	2000	I. Findlay
1964	J. M. Brown	2001	P. Angus
1965	J. J. Lawson	2002	B. Quigley
1966	D.J. Brown	2003	W. P. Hay
1967	J. Beggs	2004	S. Stevenson
1968	D. S. Buchanan	2005	P. McGovern
1969	S. Adamson	2006	A. K. McCulloch
1970	T. C. Davis	2007	W. Crawford
1971	A. C. Bryan	2008	M. Summerville
1972	J. McLean	2009	I. Bruce
1973	D. M. Houston	2010	D. Rodgers

PRESIDENTS (Cont'd)

2011	D. Cliffe	2012	C. Iley
2013	G. Iley	2014	M. McFarlane

CLUB CHAMPIONS - last 50 years

1940	W. D. Jones	1977	J. Arkison
1941	C. Banks	1978	J. McKelvie
1942	W. D. Jones	1979	A. H. Blair
1943	C. Banks	1980	W. D. Jones
1944	C. Banks	1981	W. D. Jones
1945	A. Leckie	1982	T. McLelland
1946	D. Wilson	1983	P. Milne
1947	A. Leckie	1984	A. Cluckie
1948	W. D. Jones	1985	D. J. Kyle
1949	A. C. Currie	1986	M. Causer
1950	J. Hamilton	1987	D. J. Kyle
1951	J. Hamilton	1988	C. Iley
1952	W. D. Jones	1989	D. J. Kyle
1953	J. Fleming	1990	D. M. Houston
1954	W. D. Jones	1991	J. Greenlees
1955	W. D. Jones	1992	M. A. Napier
1956	W. D. Jones	1993	M. Dunlop
1957	W. D. Jones	1994	M. Dunlop
1958	A. Allan	1995	A. Rogerson
1959	W. D. Jones	1996	P. Rogerson
1960	W. D. Jones	1997	E. Sloan
1961	W. D. Jones	1998	A. Rogerson
1962	A. Allan	1999	A. Rogerson
1963	W. D. Jones	2000	D. Burns
1964	W. Tait	2001	M. Kelly
1965	W. D. Jones	2002	W. Simpson
1966	W. D. Jones	2003	C. Iley
1967	W. D. Jones	2004	J. Campbell
1968	W. D Jones	2005	E. Sloan
1969	A. Allan	2006	A. Rogerson
1970	S. Adamson	2007	E. Sloan
1971	W. D. Jones	2008	E. Sloan
1972	A. Allan	2009	S. Wilson

1973	J. McLean	2010	S. Burns
1974	A. Allan	2011	A. Rogerson
1975	W. D. Jones	2012	G. Draper
1976	A. Cluckie	2013	S. Wilson

PRESIDENTS of the LADIES SECTION

	1936	Mrs. R. Ralston	1976	Mrs. J. Arkison
	1937	Mrs. M. Colville	1977	Mrs. D. McNeil
1938		Mrs. R. Sturrock	1978	Mrs. A. Blackmore
1939		Mrs. A. Lambert	1979	Mrs. M. Denver
	1940	Mrs. H. Craig	1980	Mrs. M. F. Bryan
	1941	Mrs. T. McLaughlin	1981	Mrs. M. Paton
	1942	Miss E. Ralston	1982	Mrs. C. S. Bain
		Mrs R. Stark	1983	Mrs. R. B. Nicholson
	1943	Mrs. J. Murray	1984	Mrs. S. Duncan
	1944	Mrs. C. Shennan	1985	Mrs. N. Cramb
	1945	Mrs. W. T. Henry	1986	Mrs E. Jenkins
	1946	Mrs. W. Watson	1987	Mrs S. Garland
	1947	Mrs. V. C. Kean	1988	Mrs. M Rodgers
	1948	Mrs. A. N. Terry	1989	Mrs. J. MacColl
	1949	Mrs. J. F. Robertson	1990	Miss A. Anderson
	1950	Mrs. J. Foster	1991	Mrs. H. McGinn
	1951	Mrs. W. D. Jones	1992	Mrs. A. Blackmore
	1952	Mrs. N. A. Tait	1993	Mrs. I. Dockrell
	1953	Mrs. J. C. Hutchison	1994	Mrs. I. Boyd
	1954	Mrs. J. S. Douglas	1995	Mrs. J. Clark
	1955	Mrs. J. G. A. Miller	1996	Mrs. A. Blackmore
	1956	Mrs. J. Wilson	1997	Mrs. C. Carroll
	to		1998	Mrs. G. Rogerson
	1963	Mrs J. Wilson	1999	Mrs. A. Howat
	1964	Mrs. J. Graham	2000	Mrs. J. Findlay
	1965	Mrs. W. McCall	2001	Mrs. E. Dickson
	1966	Mrs. H. McCann	2002	Mrs. E Dickson
	1967	Mrs. H. Carey	2003	Mrs. J. Marshall
	1968	Mrs. T. Reid	2004	Mrs. J. McCulloch
	1969	Mrs. W. McGill	2005	Mrs. M. Magee
	1970	Mrs. A. K. Black	2006	Mrs. M. N. Burns
	1971	Mrs. R. McGeorge	2007	Mrs. S. Miller

PRESIDENTS of the LADIES SECTION (Cont'd)

1972	Mrs. A. C. Bryson	2008	Ms. A. K. Hall
1973	Mrs. M. Muir	2009	Mrs. J. McCulloch
1974	Mrs. T. Reid	2010	Mrs. I. McKinnon
1975	Mrs. H. R. Dunlop	2011	Ms. E. Gage
2012	Mrs I. Dick	2013	Mrs J. Dougal
2014	Mrs H. Crawford		

LADIES SINGLES CHAMPIONS

	1943	Mrs. V. C. Kean	1979	Mrs. C. S. Bain
	1944	Mrs. V. C. Kean	1980	Mrs. A. Blackmore
	1945	Miss E. T. Ralston	1981	Mrs. A. Blackmore
	1946	Mrs. H. Craig	1982	Mrs. C. S. Bain
	1947	Mrs. T. McLaughlin	1983	Mrs. C. S. Bain
	1948	Mrs. H. Craig	1984	Mrs. I. M. Dick
	1949	Mrs. V. C. Kean	1985	Mrs. I. Dockrell
	1950	Mrs. J. S. Douglas	1986	Mrs. J. Dougal
1951		Mrs, A. N. Terry	1987	Mrs. M. McLaughlin
	1952	Mrs. J. S. Douglas	1988	Mrs M. McLaughlin
	1953	Mrs. A. N. Terry	1989	Mrs. J. Dougal
	1954	Mrs. A. N. Terry	1990	Mrs. J. Dougal
	1955	Mrs. N. A. Tait	1991	Mrs. J. Dougal
1956		Mrs. N. A. Tait	1992	Mrs. J. Dougal
	1957	Mrs. E. T. Hamilton	1993	Mrs. J. Dougal
	1958	Mrs. N. A. Tait	1994	Miss E. McLelland
	1959	Mrs. J. Yuille	1995	Mrs. I. Dockrell
	1960	Mrs. A. N. Terry	1996	Mrs. J. Dougal
	1961	Mrs. A. N. Terry	1997	Mrs. I. Dick
	1962	Mrs. A. N. Terry	1998	Mrs. J. MacColl
	1963	Mrs. A. N. Terry	1999	Mrs. H. Welsh
	1964	Mrs. J. S. Douglas	2000	Mrs. J. Dougal
	1965	Mrs. J. Graham	2001	Mrs. J. Dougal
	1966	Mrs. A. N. Terry	2002	Mrs J. McCulloch
	1967	Mrs. J. S. Douglas	2003	Mrs. J. MacColl
	1968	Mrs. A. N. Terry	2004	Mrs. J. Dougal
	1969	Mrs. J. Graham	2005	Mrs. J. MacColl
	1970	Mrs. N. A. Tait	2006	Mrs. J. McCulloch

1971	Mrs. A. N. Terry	2007	Mrs. T. Rogerson
1972	Mrs. N. A. Tait	2008	Mrs. J. Dougal
1973	Mrs. J. S. Douglas	2009	Mrs. J. Dougal
1974	Mrs. J. S. Hutchison	2010	Mrs. J. Dougal
1975	Mrs. J. Baxter	2011	Miss N. Kyle
1976	Mrs. H. R. Dunlop	2012	Mrs J. Dougal
1977	Mrs. H. R. Dunlop	2013	Mrs J. Dougal
1978	Mrs. J. Baxter	2014	

**Play at Ardrossan Bowling Club started in 1842,
what else was happening at that time?**

In Ardrossan

Ash and cobbled streets - Tarmacadam not used in Scotland until late 1850's.

No street lights – gas mantle not invented until 1855, but the first carbon arc lamp glowed in 1848.

No member of the club worked for I.C.I. – Alfred Nobel did not invent dynamite until 1866.

The Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald once again did not have a photographer at the Opening of the Green – not surprising, but excusable, as photography was not invented until 1850 and the Herald did not publish its first paper until 1852.

In General

Queen Victoria crowned, 16 years of age -	1837
First transatlantic crossing by Steamship -	1838
Queen Victoria married Prince Albert -	1840
David Livingstone went to Africa -	1840
Glasgow & South Western Railway -	1840
First Postage Stamp, 'the Penny Black' -	1840
Robert Peel becomes Prime Minister -	1842
Benjamin Disraeli in first year as M.P. -	1842
Grace Darling, heroine of the storm, died -	1842
Mountain K1, named as 'Mount Everest' -	1842
Johann Strauss wrote 'The Blue Danube' -	1842

Other notable dates since the institution of the Club.

Screws for joinery work invented -	1854
Charles Darwin's 'Theory of Evolution' -	1858
The Black Hole of Calcutta -	1858
Pasteurisation of milk -	1862
The American Civil War -	1861 – 1865
'The Boneshaker' - the first bike -	1866
Antiseptic first used in surgery (Joseph Lister) -	1870
Scottish Football League founded	1888
Pneumatic Tyre invented (John Boyd Dunlop) -	1888

So it can be seen that our club's birth was in an era of discovery, invention, extreme wealth, abject poverty, wars, improved travel and communication, but also, it was a far, far, different world than that of today.

AN OLD BOWLS' TALE

Sitting in the Committee room one day,
 I heard a voice, close by me, say,
 "Pray tell, are you the Secretary, Sir?"
 As I was alone I jumped from my chair,
 Looked around, but saw not a soul,
 When, "Excuse me!" came the voice from a bowl.

I couldn't believe it, this was some mystery,
 "If you are" said the bowl, "Do you want my history?"
 Sitting myself down to get used to this wonder,
 "I'd be most interested" I said, nerves all asunder.

"I've sat in this club for near One Fifty years,
 Seen nights that would raise the heartiest cheers,
 Seen sights that would reduce you to tears,
 Seen sights that to tell would last for some years,

Having slightly recovered I said "Please tell your tale."
 Sat back and listened – the bowl did not fail.
 "Now where shall I start" it said, thinking hard,
 "When they built this old club in the Earl's back yard,
 Or later, when it moved to the Holm Plantation,
 No! I'll start when it moved here for its duration."

"The Club moved here in Eighteen Fifty Two,
 With one green, a bowls house, and a bridge too,
 Over the railway which had only just started,
 Each day only two trains arrived, and departed,
 With their day's work done, they opened the wall,
 Brought in rubble, ash, new green and all."

"Can you see this being done by the present owners of rail?
 Bring back Glasgow and South Western, it never did fail!
 The green was made ready, banks built, turf laid,
 And believe it or not, that same year they played.
 The bowling admittedly, was not first quality,
 But the members enjoyed it with effort and jollity."

“They also had Archery, Curling, and Quoiting,
 And with some of their arrows, had trouble in sighting,
 But back to the bowls, the Earl had a throw,
 Then got us together – to Glasgow to go!
 All Ayrshire went, to show off their game,
 But our opponents, in these days, put them to shame,
 But over the years, Ayrshire’s skips they did hug,
 As they more regularly collected the Eglinton Jug.”

“The men, at Ardrossan, enjoy the banter and drink,
 To win the Trophy, they never think.
 Over the years, since we gave it birth,
 Of Eglinton Jugs there’s been an absolute dearth.
 ‘In it to win it’, don’t make me laugh,
 Never mind the bowls, have another “half.”

“Whilst we played the game, the world moved ahead,
 Wars came and went, people got wed,
 The members increased the club was bouncing,
 Success on the green was matched by each trouncing.
 The club played its part, won several honours,
 The town of Ardrossan looked kindly upon us.
 Each Provost of old Ardrossan town,
 Not even one to let us down,
 As every one, of this club, was a member,
 Playing each year from May to September.”

“Then came a time when old John Bell,
 Och! I remember that yin well,
 Amongst us bowls were ducks and hens,
 The committee’s ink ran out of their pens
 Telling John to remove them or get new digs!
 Next thing sharing our green were pigs!
 John kept the green, cutting with scythe,
 Hoof and horn, ox blood, made the worms writhe,
 The old fashioned methods must have been brow,
 As every rink on the green had a great draw.”

“The new green was laid in Four and Twenty,
 Of money at that time the club had plenty.
 The next thing they did was worse than Hades,
 They opened the green for bowling by – LADIES!
 The greenkeeper was told ‘ ladies bowls you will carry
 To the rink on which they play’.
 Can you imagine him doing this for Dick or Harry,
 I never thought I’d see this day!”

“However before I get into water hotter,
 The ladies took to bowls like ducks to water!
 As well as making teas and dinners,
 They’ve proved themselves to be regular winners.
 This game will soon be further blighted,
 With gents and ladies playing, sexes united,
 The championship played only by men,
 Will never be the same again!”

“But back to the club, and the thirties depression,
 Membership suddenly went into recession,
 From hundreds playing every week,
 To members so few, six rinks we seek,
 Can’t get a team, parish game off,
 Members resign, of cash not enough,
 Of those that are left, just a few
 Give of their all to pull the club through.”

“Nineteen Forty Two the Centenary falls,
 The war is raging, the celebration palls.”

I interrupt, “This is all fine and dandy,
 For my history I’ll find your story handy,
 But you are a bowl, I know not your name,
 And whether or not you ever played in a game!”

“I’ve played in more games than you’ve had hot dinners.”
 Snorted the bowl, “with good losers and bad winners,
 Scottish ties, Ayrshire ties, Eglinton games,
 With the famous and not too well known names.”

“Who was the best bowler that ever played here?”

I asked the bowl and waited to hear.

“That is so easy and I make no bones,

The best by a long chalk was Willie D. Jones.

An absolute master of the yard-on shot,

One minute I’m a toucher, then I am not,

Willie Jones played his bowl, hit me with a tap,

His is the toucher, I’m out taking a nap.”

“In Nineteen Fifty Seven, on the greens at Queens Park,

For all of his opponents it became early dark,

He played with such skill, in rain, and in sun,

And after the Final was Scots number one!

Back to Ardrossan to show all near and far,

The cup was stuck out of an open-topped car.

This must have been the old clubs finest hour,

Hopefully others like Willie Jones will flower,

And bring to the club, honours and praise,

That I can remember for the rest of my days.”

At this the bowl remained silent and still,

Spoke no more, perhaps never will,

It sits in the clubhouse lost in its thoughts,

Of what has been, and all of its shots.

It never was short, long, tight, or wide,

The player that played it was the only guide,

Its bias was true, its shape was quite right,

Only the man on the mat made it tight!

It told me its story, now it’s at rest,

Remembering the men that used it the best,

Maybe once more in Twenty Forty Two,

Its voice will be heard, by maybe – YOU!

D. M. H.