WYMESWOLD BOWLS CLUB

GOLDEN JUBILEE

1937–1987

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from scans by Richard Ellison.

Sadly the author of this history has not been identified.

WYMESWOLD BOWLS CLUB

Although in 1987 we are celebrating 50 years of Bowling in Wymeswold, in fact an attempt was made earlier to set up a Club.

A False Start

In 1935 a meeting was held at the Three Crowns Inn, Wymeswold, to decide "whether a Bowls Club could be formed". There is a record of those who attended:-

John G. James: Robert W. Hames: William Taylor Snr: Charles Mills: George Basford: Thomas Brown: John Burrows: Rev. C. Bourchier: John Smith: A. Towle: and **Herbert Savage.**

The land suggested was part of the Cricket ground at a rental of £3.0s.0d. per year. Mr. Basford had inspected the ground with a view to a section of the turf being taken up and re-laid. It appears that at that time two Cricket Teams existed in the village – the "Wets" and the "Drys"; and the ground in question was that of the "Wets" team which lay behind the Three Crowns Inn (hence the name of the team!).

In 1936, the Village Policeman Mr. T. W. Highton was invited to become Secretary and Mr. A. Towle, Treasurer, and subscriptions were sought. However, in March of that year an impasse was reached when it was discovered that the Trustees of the Memorial Hall were themselves considering the formation of a Bowls Club. It was decided, therefore, to proceed no further and to return to subscribers their monies, less expenses, and a sum of £9.0s.0d. was so divided.

Early Days

On *May 25th 1936* a meeting was held in the Memorial Hall to "discuss prospects of forming a Bowling Club and laying out the Ground at the rear of the Hall". Again Mr. Highton was invited to become Secretary.

In *June 1936* tenders for laying down a Bowling Green and Tennis Court were sought, and the following are recorded.

En Tout Cas	.....	£499.0.0
Barrons Ltd	.....	£462.0.0.
Pickerings	.....	£377.0.0.
Bradshaw Bros.	.....	£284.00

and the last named was accepted. It is interesting to speculate what the Green would have been like now if our founding fathers had taken the plunge and accepted either the En Tout Cas or Barrons tender.

A nominal membership fee of 1 shilling (5p) for men and 6d (2 1/2p) for ladies was levied and some 20 men and 3 ladies (including Mrs. Blurton who, happily is still with us) enrolled. Mr. Campion was elected the first President, but, later in 1936 he resigned and Mr. Leonard E. Weldon was invited to become President. A series of fund-raising Whist Drives and Dances were arranged and the Committee appears to have been extremely active meeting at least at monthly intervals. A bank loan was arranged with the Westminster Bank at a specially negotiated interest rate of 4% and by February 1937 £150.0s.0d had been paid off Bradshaw account.

In *March 1937* a Pavilion situated in Cotes was purchased for £15.0.0d. from a cousin of Edward Emmerson and Peggy Mills. In April a hand mower was bought for £5.0.0d and because this was manually operated the Groundsman was offered an extra £1.0.0d.

On *May 20th 1937* the Green was officially opened by Mr. L. E. Weldon with a match played against a Team brought from Queens Park, Loughborough.

The first Captain to be appointed was Mr. F. Bailey but he resigned in August and Mr. John James was appointed. Thus began a Captaincy which stretched over 8 years right through the period of the second world war. He then continued his interest in the Club by acting as President for a further 6 years. Mr. James was, of course, the Father of Douglas and John – our present Groundsman. By January 1938 the frequently recurring theme of the state of the Green was causing some concern and a request was made to Bradshaws to effect repairs. By the end of 1938 the contractors' debt had been cleared but £104.18s.0d was still owing to the bank. Over the next 2 or 3 years this bank debt was progressively reduced and by November 1941 had been entirely cleared. At the same time, for some curious reason Men's subscriptions were reduced from 12/6d (62 1/2p) to 10/6d (52 1/2p).

In *1939* the Club entered the Loughborough Armstrong and Mallinson Tournaments and in 1943 added the Hartopp Cup to these entries.

An interesting little glimpse into what was obviously a problem remaining up to the present time was a meeting called at the Pavilion in November 1943 "to see what could be done to prevent birds nesting in the roof".

The death of Mr. T. W. Highton, the long-serving secretary, was recorded in 1944. He had acted as secretary, with one short break in 1940, since the early preparatory days until 1942, and during some of that time he was also Groundsman.

Immediately after the war inflation was obviously setting in as subscriptions were increased in each of 3 years:–

1945	Men 11/– (55p)	Ladies7/– (35p)
1946	Men 15/– (75p)	Ladies10/– (50p)
1947	Men £1.00 (£1)	Ladies10/– (50p)

1948 saw the first Club success in outside contests by the winning of the Hartopp Cup, and in this year also it is recorded that 10 members entered Leicestershire County competitions, but with what success is not known.

Another recurring theme is first mentioned by an entry in the Minute Book for 1949 "urging Members to get their Competitions played off". – nothing new here!

The Fifties

In *1951* subscriptions were increased requiring the Men to pay £1.5s.0d (£1.25p) and the Ladies 15/– (75p) per year. In November of this year it was decided the time had come officially to join Leicestershire E.B.A. with Club members being responsible for their own Capitation fees of 1/– (5p) each., and in this year also Mr. J. Banks was appointed Groundsman at an annual fee of £30. 1952 saw the purchase of a Webbs electric mower, and since this eased the work of the Groundsman he was asked to accept a reduced fee of £25, but, unfortunately, this resulted in his resignation. Advertisements for a part-time Groundsman brought no response, so a number of members agreed amongst themselves to share the work on a voluntary basis.

In *1954* new Rubber Mats were obtained from Players – are these the mats which are still in use? In this year there is the first serious mention of a shortage of members which was "preventing entry in Competitions".

January 1955 the Club held "an enjoyable Supper at the Packe Arms Inn, Hoton, the local press taking photographs of Cups and Members". This appears to be the first of the long series of Dinners and Suppers held through the years at one venue or another, and, on occasion, in the Memorial Hall.

Through the latter years of the fifties it is evident that there was concern about the levels of the Green and in October 1958 it was agreed to accept an estimate from En Tout Cas to level the Green at each end for the sum of £37.10s.0d.

Towards the end of the decade there appear to have been serious attempts to attract new members to the Club.

The Sixties

In 1961 subscriptions were again raised to 35/– (£1.75p) for men; £1.0s.0d for Ladies. In this year the death of Mr. John James is recorded, who, as mentioned above, was for so long a faithful servant of the Club.

In the early sixties a number of entries were made by members in County competitions in Singles, Doubles, Triples and Rinks, so it would seem that by this time the membership had been considerably strengthened.

At the A.G.M. held in January 1965 the death of a founder member – Mr. A. Towle – for so many years Treasurer of the Club, was recorded. At the same meeting it was decided to increase mens subscriptions £2.5s.0d (£2.25p) and to increase the cost of teas to 3/– (15p).

By the middle of the decade another slump in membership appears to have taken place since in November 1965 a special Meeting was called to consider the advisability of continuing the Club "with its present membership". It was happily decided to continue, but to send a resolution to the Corson League suggesting that matches be confined to 3 rinks. This could not have been successful, as one seems to remember a similar request being put (again unsuccessfully) in a later year. It was also considered imperative that some determined effort be made to increase membership (again a recurring theme).

In *1966* the death of Sydney Smith was recorded. During the fifties he had been President for a number of years and was Captain on 4 occasions, and again in the earlier seasons of the sixties. He was, of course, Nell Smith's husband.

The Seventies

In *1970* an approach was made to Wymeswold Football Club regarding the purchase of their pavilion, which was agreed at the figure of £10. It was dismantled and re-erected at the Green after planning permission had been approved. Again in 1970 the Green

was in need of levelling and En Tout Cas quoted £1,365.00. This was obviously beyond the means of the Club, but an alternative quotation for limited levelling at £54.0.0 was accepted and the work done.

By *1972* it was found that other Clubs against whom Wymeswold played were wearing Creams and it was resolved that "members should wear creams on Saturdays and special occasions" but a rider was added that "there should be no exclusion of any member in greys". In this year some success was achieved in outside events, Wymeswold winning the Corson Shield for the first time, and John and Ken Parr and Warner Wootton reaching the semi-finals in the County Triples Competition.

In *1974* subscriptions were raised to £3.00. Mr. D. Bates reached the semi-final stage in both County Singles and Loughborough Champion of Champions Competitions.

Another increase of subscription to £4.00 was agreed in 1975 and during 1975/76 Mr. Eric Dilks organised a series of Dances and Whist Drives and by September 1976 he was able to announce that over £300.00 was in hand, kept in a separate account but eventually merged into the Clubs financial system.

Progressively, therefore, over the following years this boost to the funds enabled more extensive work to be done on the Green, as for example, seed and fertiliser in 1976, £189's worth of Kettering loam in 1979, and the hire of power scarifying etc.

In *1976* Wymeswold were again successful in the Corson Competition.

By *1977* there was the inevitable reporting of Club Competitions not being completed, and Les Smith offered his services as Competitions Secretary to enable more careful and strict arrangement to be made.

Inflation was, of course, by this time in full flood so another increase, to £5.00, in subscriptions was imposed in 1979.

At the A.G.M. of this year Mr. Ron Crust, who had worked so hard on the refurbishment of the Green, was offered £150.00 as an appreciation of his services. This he declined by saying he would prefer such money to be spent on the Green. Subsequently he was presented with a Bowls Bag as an acknowledgement.

The Eighties

1980 saw a further increase in subscriptions to £8.00. At the A.G.M. held in January 1981 the question, once again, was seriously raised as to whether, through depleted membership, the Club could continue to function. After a lengthy discussion it was unanimously agreed that the Club should continue, but in order so to do, unofficially the Club should be regarded as a Mixed Club with ladies eligible to play in matches arranged by the men's section and vice versa if necessary.

In *1982* subscriptions were increased to £10.00, and by this year Membership had been strengthened considerably, the Captain for the Year expressing pleasure with "up and coming" new Members, and a number of new Club matches were to be introduced into the 1983 Season. 1982 was the first year of John Chambers' Secretaryship and his enthusiasm and ability was proving to be infectious. This season showed the Club to be in a strong financial position with some £412.00 being carried forward. In large part this was due to the success of a major Club raffle organised by Mick Clarke which netted over £177.00.

In *1984* the Club sustained a severe loss by the death of Warner Wootton, who bequeathed £100.00 to the Club, and whose ashes, by his request were scattered on the Green at the Playground end of Rink 4. His name first occurs in the Records in 1947, so conceivably he had been the longest playing member of the Club, and certainly the most colourful.

1985 saw a big jump in the subscription rate to £15.00 and, for the first time the Club arranged a Day Out with a Bowls Match against Sheringham Morley Club. We played 6 rinks and carried a number of guests and friends to fill the coach, stopping at Thorney, near Peterborough, on the return journey for an evening meal. This was so successful that similar arrangements were made for 1986.

Shortly after the 1985 visit to Sheringham a further sad loss was sustained by the death of Stan Eggleston, a well respected Skip. Later Mrs. Hilda Eggleston presented the Club with new Score Boards commemorating her husband who had been so long a Member of the Club. This brings the story virtually up to date with the exception of saying that in 1986 subscriptions were raised to £16.00 and for the season 1987 the proposal is that they again be raised to £18.00, but that this figure includes the Corson and Belvoir League Match fees. A fee 50 years ago of the equivalent of 5p seemed a very trivial amount to pay for a season's bowling.

The culminating feature of the 1986 Season was the fact Jimmy Keogh and Kevin Lyle were Runners Up in the County Pairs Competition and thereby qualified to play in the National Tournaments at Worthing. Unfortunately for Wymeswold both these players have now resigned from the Club.

All the facts presented here are gleaned from Minutes of the Club which have been carefully recorded over the years by many hands, and apologies must be expressed for any errors or omissions which may occur. Some names have been mentioned in detail but many more have gone unsung, and should any off-spring or relative of such read these words and miss any reference to a forebear we again apologise for this.

SOME PERSONALITIES

J. W. BARTRAM. A Baker in Wymeswold, Treasurer for 6 years and Secretary for 4 of them.
D. BATES. Treasurer for 7 years Captain in 1 year and President in another.
ERIC DILKS. Secretary for 3 years, President 1 year, and Captain for 1 season; was largely responsible for building up funds by the organisation of social events.
H. DYKES. Secretary and Treasurer for 3 years.
R. W. HAMES. A Cheese Maker. Secretary for 5 years and one of those who attended the very first meeting in 1935.
J. W. HIGHTON. Village Policeman. Founding Secretary for 6 years and sometime Groundsman. Grandfather to Margaret Dilks, but died before she was born.
J. JAMES. Father of Doug and John. Founding Captain for 6 years then President for the following 6 years.
GEORDIE NORVELL. A popular player living in Walton on the Wolds who died suddenly in 1981. The Club made a donation to the R.A.F. Benevolent fund in his memory. His son, Duncan, is a rising Star in the entertainment world.
J. E. PEEL. A founding Member, Secretary for 2 years in the forties. Madge Leivers' father.
SYD SMITH. Nell Smith's husband, a Captain for 7 years (not consecutively) and President for 5 consecutive years.
LES SMITH. Secretary for 8 years, President in 1968 and Captain in 2 or 3 Seasons.
A. TOWLE. Founding Treasurer holding that office for 8 years. Father in Law of R. W. Hames.
PETER WELTON. President for 7 consecutive years and Captain in 1 season.
WARNER WOOTTON. President from 1957 to 1966, and again in 1976 Captain in several Seasons.

FOOTNOTE

The reference to the 1936 Tender for laying down the Bowling Green *and* Tennis Court is apparently wrong in the Minute Book. It is the recollection of two people who were Members of the Tennis Club at that time that, in fact, one of their two courts was incorporated into the preparation of the new Bowling Green.

THE LADIES' SECTION

The Wymeswold Ladies Bowls Club formed their own section at the same time as the Men's Club, fifty years ago, in 1937.

One founder member, Mrs. Ivy Sissons, still plays, and through the 50 years has been one of the best players, winning many of the Competitions.

Other founder, and long-standing, members were:– **Miss Mabel Charles; Mrs. May Savage; Mrs. Beattie Hames; Mrs. Fookes; Mrs. Maggie James; Mrs. May Talbot; Mrs. Elizabeth Peel; Mrs. Lizzie Bailey; Mrs. Sybil Wootton; Mrs. Florrie Smith; Mrs. Winnie Blurton; Mrs. Jessie Taylor and Mrs. Elliker**. These were the women who pioneered the Womens' Section, for whom many succeeding lady Bowlers are deeply grateful. Miss Mabel Charles was Secretary for a great number of years, and was the only Skip, along with Miss Lily Freeman, Mrs. Bartram, and Miss Gertie Garner, to fight their way through to the Leicestershire County Finals, winning the honour of playing at Wimbledon in the National Finals.

Wymeswold Ladies Club is one of the smallest in Leicestershire. In spite of the small membership, it has always been a happy club. Over the last fifty years they have worked extremely hard helping to keep the Club going. Coffee Mornings, Whist Drives and Jumble Sales have been organised each year to help swell funds.

At one time the Club enjoyed the company of ladies from Wysall and Willoughby, which brought up the membership considerably. Sadly, these are no longer with us, but the Club keeps going with the help of a few of our retired gentlemen members playing in matches.

A WARTIME STORY

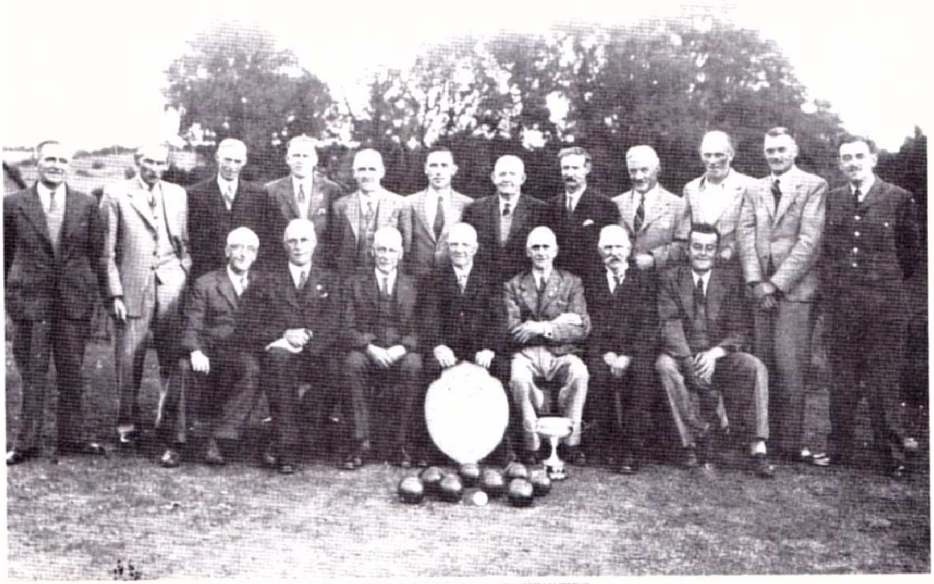
During World War 2 petrol was rationed, but the men were determined to continue with the matches against our neighbours, Willoughby on the Wolds.

Most of the men cycled, but three old members, unable to ride a bicycle, were taken by Sid. Smith in his pony and float, which had rubber tyres.

A few days after such a trip the Village Policeman walked up Sid's Farmyard. His Wife, Ellen, opened the door . . . "Umm!" said the Policeman. "Is it true that Sid took some Bowlers to Willoughby bowling?", "Yes", Ellen answered. (He wrote this down in his Notebook). He asked: "Did he have a puncture on the way back?" "Yes", answered Ellen again. "Then, I shall have to report him, as you are not allowed to use your farm petrol allowance for that purpose". "Oh!" answered Ellen. "Will you at the same time report a certain village policeman for using his ration of petrol to take his son's girlfriend to Six Hills to catch a bus to Leicester every other weekend . . . and, by the way, Mr. Policeman, I was not aware that a Pony float with rubber tyres used any petrol!"

It was always suspected, but never proven, that a member Bowler named Jim Taylor had been up to his tricks, and no doubt had casually mentioned the puncture to the Village Bobby.

Jim was well-known for his pranks like that, but was nonetheless a staunch member of the Wymeswold Club.



1944 MALLINSON SHIELD & HARTOPP CUP WINNERS

Left to Right:
Standing. H. Savage, W. Wootton (Snr.), W. Baker, J. Sait, J. W. Bartram, H. Bartram, Clarke, E. Barnett, Flt Lt. Blage,
W. Wootton (Jnr.), G. D. Freeman, Corp. Philips.
Seated. J. Peel, R. W. James, J. Smith, J. G. James, G. Basford, A. Towle, S. Smith.

THE WYMESWOLD BOWLING CLUB TEAM WHICH WON THE HARTOPP CUP 1971.

Left to Right:
Back Row. S. Eggleston, J. Parr, D. Bates, P. Welton.
Middle Row. K. Parr, J. Webster, A. Bourne, F. Goodwin, R. Cottam.
Front Row. W. Wootton, W. Taylor, G. Copley (Capt), R. Crust (President), L. Smith, I. Rees.
Kneeling. M. Upton, G. Brotherhood & N. Clark.

CLUB OFFICIALS

	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Captain
1937–8	L. E. Weldon	T. W. Highton	A. Towle	F. Bailey (Resigned)
1939	J. Smith	T. W. Highton	A. Towle	J. James
1940	G. Basford	G. H. Johnson (Protem)	A. Towle	J. James
1941–2	G. Basford	T. W. Highton	A. Towle	J. James
1943–4	G. Basford	R. W. Hames	A. Towle	J. James
1945	J. James	R. W. Hames	A. Towle	S. Smith
1947	J. James	R. W. Hames	A. Towle	J. W. Wootton
1948	J. James	J. E. Peel	J. W. Bartram	G. Freeman
1949	J. James	J. E. Peel	J. W. Bartram	J. W. Wootton
1950	J. James	J. W. Bartram	J. W. Bartram	?
1951	J. James	J. W. Bartram	J. W. Bartram	S. Smith
1952	S. Smith	J. W. Bartram	J. W. Bartram	S. Smith
1953	S Smith	J. W. Bartram	J. W. Bartram	J. W. Wootton
1954	S. Smith	H. Dykes	H. Dykes	J. W. Wootton (Sat) S. Smith (Wkday)
1955	S. Smith	H. Dykes	H. Dykes	W. Taylor
1956	S. Smith	H. Dykes	H. Dykes	G. Freeman
1957	W. Wootton	A. Clarke	J. Wootton	S. Smith
1958–9	W. Wootton	A. Clarke	J. Wootton	G. Freeman
1960	W. Wootton	A. Clarke	J. Wootton	S. Smith
1961–5	W. Wootton	J. Turner	J. Turner	S. Smith
1966	W. Woottton	J. Turner	J. Turner	L. Smith
1967	J. Taylor	G. Copley	G. Copley	J. Webster
1968	L. Smith	G. Copley	D. Bates	D. Bates
1969	D. Bates	L. Smith	D. Bates	L. Smith
1970	J. H. Parr	L. Smith	D. Bates	J. W. Taylor
1971	R. Crust	L. Smith	D. Bates	G. Copley
1972	W. Wootton	L. Smith	D. Bates	J. H. Parr
1973	L. Smith	L. Smith	D. Bates	R. Crust
1974	G. Copley	L. Smith	D. Bates	G. Brotherhood
1975	K. Parr	L. Smith	M. Upton	G. Copley
1976	W. Wootton	L. Smith	M. Upton	W. Wootton
1977	E. Dilks	E. Dilks	M. Upton	R. Bennett
1978	R. Crust	E. Dilks	D. W. Pickerill	P. Welton
1979	R. Crust	E. Dilks	D. W. Pickerill	E. Dilks
1980	P. Welton	D. W. Pickerill	D. W. Pickerill	L. Smith
1981	P. Welton	D. W. Pickerill	D. W. Pickerill	S. Eggleston (Sat) R. Hubbard (Wkday)
1982	P. Welton	J. Chambers	D. W. Pickerill	A. Lamb
1983	P. Welton	J. Chambers	D. W. Pickerill	A. Lamb
1984	P. Welton	J. Chambers	D. W. Pickerill	A. Lamb
1985	P. Welton	J. Chambers	R. Howitt	A. Lamb (Sat) K. Lyle (Wkday)
1986	P. Welton	J. Chambers	R. Howitt	M. Clarke (Sat) B. Wootton (Wkday)
1987	D. W. Pickerill	J. Chambers	B. Bratby	M. Clarke (Sat) L. Derrick (Wkday)