

Rothbury Bowling Club

The First 80 Years

A Brief History - 1922 – 2003

This history is dedicated to those stalwarts who laboured so hard and long to resurrect the club: In particular Life Members Ronnie Ramsay and Dick Dignam.



Whilst every effort has been made to minimise errors the author cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies or omissions.

It should be recognized that information has been gleaned from a variety of sources, many verbal, and it is possible that details may, on occasion, be less than accurate. If anyone can throw further light on this history or the comments therein an e-mail will help.

Much information was taken from the minute books, some of which, written before the age of the PC were difficult to decipher. If names have been omitted, or spelt incorrectly: my sincere apologies. Corrections can be always be made.

Please e-mail the co-ordinator at rothburycoord@gmail.com



It seems reasonable to begin any history at the beginning, so an extract from the Gazette in 1922 should serve as an introduction.

(Extract from newspaper cutting dated 1922 and provided by Dick Dignan)

COMBINED ATTRACTIONS AT ROTHBURY Bowls, Tennis and Quoits

A Public meeting was held in the Jubilee Hall, Rothbury, to consider the question of forming a recreation club for bowls, tennis and quoits. Mr. R Donkin presided over a representative gathering.

Outlining the proposed scheme, the Chairman said the well being of any town with pretensions to be classed as a health resort depended more upon its social attractions through recreation than upon natural beauties. Hitherto the most had not been done in the direction of providing facilities for popular social recreation at Rothbury, and this was an effort to remedy the deficiency and bring Rothbury into line with the other health resorts through an organized scheme embracing different interests of recreation.

A provisional committee was appointed at the last meeting to ascertain terms for a field and to interview the agent of the Duke of Northumberland. The terms arranged were a lease for 21 years at a rental of £10 per annum for the first five years and £16 per annum for the last 16 years.

Conveniently situated.

The area of ground was large enough to accommodate bowling green, tennis courts and quoits grounds. It was in a convenient situation in relation to the town and lent itself to the particular requirements of the scheme. Two acres in extent, the site adjoined the highway and overlooked the Coquet. Paths, flowerbeds and shrubberies would probably also be provided, according to plans kindly executed by Mr. E J Clarkson. Possession of the ground could be obtained at once. All clubs would become absorbed in the new club, each section to manage its own department.

The first cost, probably £500, would be provided by donations and subscriptions, of which there were preliminary promises of £300.

Voluntary assistance has been promised in connection with laying out and leveling by Mr. Clarkson (surveyor), local labour, with supervision, to be employed. Mr. Nesbit had also promised to supervise.

Support of scheme

Mr. J Soulsby, jun. , on behalf of the Tennis Club, agreed to support the scheme.

Mr F Ridley, on behalf of the ex-Service men, spoke in support, and support also came from Captain Watson. (3rd Lord Armstrong)

Mr. Nesbitt, hon secretary and treasurer pro tem, referred to the satisfactory financial position

The subscriptions agreed to were:-

Working men and ex -Service men 5s per annum; ladies 10s 6d; Juniors (up to 16 years), 5s; other members 21s per annum.

Mr Walker moved, and Mr. Logan seconded, that a club be formed to be called "The Rothbury Recreation Club."

It was agreed that each section should have equal representation in committee

Election of Officers

Officers and committee were appointed as follows:

President and Vice President and Mr N Snaith, Mr Vardon, Mr J P Clark, Mr J Soulsby.

Bowls Section

Mr E Scott, Mr A Routledge, Mr A Davy and Mr J Soulsby.

Tennis Section

Mr .J Miller, Mr R Soulsby, Mr J W Mowitt, Mr W Bell.

Ex Servicemen Section: Hon secretary Mr J Nesbitt; hon Treasurer, Mr A Davy Mr R Donkin, on the motion of Mr Archbold, seconded by Mr Marshall, was unanimously elected the first president.

The following were appointed trustees of the lease, etc: Capt T.O. Donkin, Lieut F. Ridley, Mr Logan jun, Mr A W Davy.

Vice Presidents

The following were elected vice presidents:- Lord Armstrong, Mr Marshall, Mr Buckland, Dr Barrow, Mr Bevan, Mr J H Clark, Mr. Downie, Mr. L. C Davy, Mr G Davy, Mr F B Fenwick, Capt Fenwick, Mr W E Gallaway, Dr Hedley, Mr R Hazel, Capt T O Donkin, Lieut F Ridley, Mr G R Patterson, Capt Twibell, Mr Logan, Mr Costelloe, Mr E J Clarkson Mr R Hutchinson, Mr T T Hall, Capt James, Mr Leach, Mr Lambert, Mr Newbiggen, Capt Phillips, Canon Edward Rees, Mr Walter Robinson, Dr Smail, Mr Angus Watson, Capt R Watson, Capt Waldy, Mr Bryan Reed, Mr. H Crawhall

An abnormal number of Vice Presidents were appointed at this meeting, a fact that was commented on at a later date, but as this honorary title also brought with it an obligation to raise funds it was no sinecure.

The Minutes Book

It is interesting to note dates in the minutes of the Bowling Club. Surviving reports start in 1943 with comments concerning 1938 and 1939 that seem to indicate a brief pause at the start of the hostilities. Not surprisingly the Tennis Club also have a slight break with the last entry being March 1939 until, without further comment, they recommence on 18th June 1945 with no mention of the intervening war years.

The Bowling Club minutes start on page 80 of a numbered book; so what happened before 1943? As they start with "This is the 11th year in the existence of the Bowling Club" it raises a question regarding the actual date of origin. This is questioned again in 1949, when they refer to the 16th year of existence.

It would appear that the formation of the Bowling as opposed to the Recreation Club was about 1933 and this is lent some support by the date on the Logan Cup that commences in 1936.

Be that as it may, in 1922 a proposal was certainly put forward to establish Bowling, Tennis and Quoits Sections under the umbrella of a Recreation Club. The minutes of the Recreation Club might shed some light on the problem, but the earliest known date only from 1946.

The Tennis Club minutes commence in 1922 but are limited to general housekeeping and the election of officers. An entry in for 17th February 1933 states:

"It was agreed to form a Tennis Club and to pay such sums as the Trustees of the Rothbury Recreation Club require for the payment of Rates, Rent, Taxes and Insurance.....agreed that the Tennis Club and the Bowling should arrange for the employment of a groundsman".

So perhaps the Bowling & Tennis Clubs started as sections of the Recreation Club without specific charters and became separate organizations in 1933.

Entries in the minutes of the Recreation Club indicate a fair amount of interest in both tennis and bowls with concerns over netting and the condition of the green, and in the early days the green keeper (David Ainsley) maintained both tennis courts and bowling green. It is all a little confusing but whatever the situation a photograph hangs in the club house showing members outside the original hut about 1925.



This picture was donated to the Bowling Club by Bennett Crewther in memory of his father who was a founder member and another great bowler.

- a. Joe Maughan
- b. George Smith
- c. Joe McKay.
- d. Matt Wood
- e. W Logan.
- f. Raff Scott
- g. C McKay

After so many years, memories may have faded somewhat so if anyone can identify other members an e-mail to Rothbury Coordinator would be appreciated.

The Early Years

In 1900 the Northumberland Hussars built a camp on Wolves Haugh opposite Ladies Bridge.



Although most of the camp was under canvas the timber building in the centre was removed in 1922 and erected at the Recreation Club.

The building was sited facing the road with its back to the river.

There was a large veranda to the east providing an excellent view of the grass tennis courts

A brick built recreation hut was built at the beginning of World War II and took over some of the space originally used by quoits.

At the same time the tennis courts were used to site nissan huts that remained in place though out the war, the timber hut being taken over by the authorities.

At the end of the war there were a few problems when the British Legion laid claim to the original club house and questioned the clubs claim to ownership in 1943. And this after a period of some 20 years!

To quote from the minutes of 1943:

“To go back a little: The 1938 season finished with a balance on the debit side”. Before the 1939 season closed war clouds were gathering and it was not possible to conclude all competitions. Trouble was brewing with the British Legion Committee, with regard to their alleged claim to the ownership of the Recreation Hut. It was found that the secretary of the Legion had been and was receiving compensation from the military authorities but would not recognise the Bowling Club as having any right whatsoever to any part of it.”

Following legal action the Legion surrendered their claim and all moneys were refunded, to lie in a suspense account at the bank

The Legion eventually tracked down an "Instrument of Dissolution" of the Comrades of the Great War dated April 30th 1924 in which ownership by the Recreation Club was clearly stated and withdrew their claim in 1950. A dispute spanning some 27years! A letter to this effect dated 29th July 1950 from Secretary, George Carr, was printed in the Northumberland Gazette.

"The assets are to be handed over to the Recreation Club Rothbury and the Ex-Service Men are to be "admitted to the Membership of the Recreation Club at a reduced subscription and have a voice in its management."

Problems with buildings seemed to dominate the Recreation Club over the years, down to the present day.

In 1946 Mr Marshal liaised with the military authorities resulting in the possession (for the sum of £20) of the brick built hut erected during the war and which promised to be "an invaluable asset in the club's future activities".

Although the ex WD building had been in place for some years it was necessary to apply for planning permission at various times. In 1947 the Rothbury Rural District Council refused consent but after further deliberations by the County Surveyor, permission was granted on a year to year basis. A letter from the County of Northumberland advised that even though the club was in contravention of the Ribbon Development Act of 1935 no action would be taken until the expiration of the war period as defined in the 1943 Act.

Over the years the two huts were used by many groups: the Rothbury Photographic Society taking out an initial seven year lease in 1948 (and remaining till 1963), whilst the British Legion hosted flower shows. The Rothbury Highland Pipe Band were tenants for some time (5/- per night was the going rate) and the Army Cadet Force leased the brick building till 1980 when they moved to their new premises near the cemetery.

The Recreation Club held many events not the least being World War II fund raising events: "Wings for Victory" and "Salute the Soldier Week" in 1943. This former event raised £30 for the government and a further £80 was banked in the name of the Bowling Club.

As a result of the interest shown at this time club membership rose to 63 The photo shown here



was taken about 1943 and shows Lady Zaida Armstrong in the front.

Lady Armstrong attended many bowling club functions to present prizes and receive donations to the Nursing Association of which she was President.

On a sad note it was recorded that Jimmy Starling was a prisoner of war in Japan, although he was not the only member to

suffer this terrible fate.

The Fifties

Whilst 1940 itself was a low period with membership standing at 28 (of whom 9 were visitors), the heyday of the Bowling Club seems to have been the late 40's and early 50's with more than 80 paying members. The bowling club was acknowledged far and wide for its sociability, earning the title "The Club with the hearty welcome".

When the Australian touring team visited in 1950 it was quoted that "Rothbury stood out as a much appreciated event". Within the UK the club was approached from as far away as Mossspark of Glasgow. It is worth reporting that Rothbury won by 8 shots.

On Saturday 24th June 1950 Rothbury hosted a visit by the President of the Northumberland County Bowling Association, R.H.C. Coates Esq., M.B.E and his team.

The President Mr J. Brown, with the Club Captain Mr W.Y. Logan, officially welcomed the visiting President. It was a close game with Rothbury scoring 104 in total but losing to the visitors who scored 123.



Of the five rinks Rothbury won two with scores of 21:15 and 17:16. A creditable performance!

The successful 1950 season prompted calls for a new pavilion and an improved green. It seems that nothing is new.

But these indeed were heady days when the weather was dry, the sun shone and Rothbury Bowling Club was always triumphant! Well almost always!

Extracts from the year of 1954

"May 18th: Mr Logan vs NESCO at Wallsend - Mr Logan's rink won easily."

"June 2nd: Giffrock Glasgow Touring Team - Rothbury won by 31 shots"

"June 19th: Rothbury vs.. Gateshead - Rothbury won by 22 shots"

"July 17th: Sunderland Forge at home - Rothbury won by 13 shots."

"July 21st: At home to Amble - Rothbury won by 2 shots."

"July 24th: Rothbury entertained Souter Park - another win for Rothbury by 17 shots."

"July 29th: Rothbury vs Newcastle Transport - Rothbury won by 48 shots."

"July 31st: Rothbury entertained Northumberland presidents Team - Rothbury held this strong team to a draw. 126 shots each."

"Aug 11: Rothbury played Hexham - the result was a win for Rothbury by 12 shots."

"Aug. 12: Rothbury vs Bainbridges - Rothbury won by 38 shots."

"Aug. 28th: Rothbury entertained Durham County - Rothbury won by 5 shots."

"Sept 10th: Rothbury entertained Ashington - Rothbury won by 19 shots."

As far as internal matches were concerned the outstanding achievement of the season was the winning of the Logan cup by a new member - "Mr Norman Nichol who only joined the club this season". Runner up - the redoubtable Jimmie Starling.

Also in 1954 Mr Logan was elected County President with the result that Rothbury hosted a great many County players during the year.



A small change to the organisation of the club occurred with the combination of Presidential and Captaincy offices to which Mr Logan was elected.

Further changes to nomenclature occurred in 1956 when the term "Captain" was dropped and "Vice President" took its place.

1955 was a year of great loss to the club. In addition to the passing of Mr Hounam who was one of the best bowlers and who represented Rothbury on many County matches, Mr Logan also died. It was quoted in the minutes that "His (Mr Logan's) cherished ambition was to make Rothbury Bowling Club a Club to be proud of.....since he took over the reins of office he put Rothbury Bowling Club on the map, so to speak." A very laudable achievement!

The secretary's report for that year quoted the following verse:

**"For when the Great Scorer comes
To write against your name
He writes not that you won or lost.
But how you played the game".**

Just for the record this quotation comes from an American sports writer, Grantland Rice (1880 - 1954), *Alumnus Football* 1941.

It was not always peaceful within the club. The calm of a summer's day with the gentle click of wood against wood sometimes gave way to minor disagreements, and as with any club there were minor matters that rankled.

For example in 1956 Mr. Boyd who was secretary struck Mr. Hamilton who was one of his rink colleagues and tended his resignation shortly after. It would appear that his resignation was only from the position as secretary and not from the club as his name crops up the following year.

In 1957 Mr. Anderson objected in writing to the committee about an unsatisfactory marking of a no score end by Mr. Boyd causing Mr. Smith to be declared the winner. As Mr. Boyd was in the same competition the committee upheld the marker, but forced a change of rules, resolving that "a club member in an advanced stage of the competition shall not be eligible as a marker in the same competition".

Around that time Mr. Richardson refused to play Mr. Anderson in one of the cup competitions if he (Mr. Anderson) used his present unstamped bowls. It was interesting to note that the Committee overruled the objection on the grounds that these unstamped bowls were the ones which were normally used by Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Anderson: Played 2 won 1 lost 1
 Mr. Boyd: Played 2 won 0 lost 2

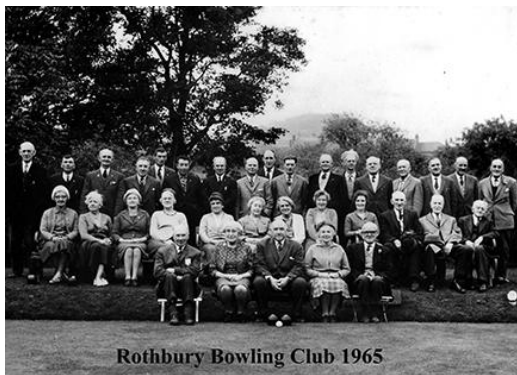
But generally as you would expect it was all very gentlemanly. In 1956 Mr. A Gregory was somewhat indisposed, although the minutes do not tell us why. At any event it was decided that he be permitted to play in the final of the pairs competition by instalments. Unfortunately we do not know how these instalments were handled, nor the final outcome but it was in the best sporting traditions.

For the next few years the club was fairly successful winning more than losing.

1963	played	16	won	10	lost	5	drew	1
1964	played	14	won	8	lost	5	cancelled	1
1965	played	15	won	11	lost	4		
1966	played	11	won	8	lost	3		

The Demise

The late 60's saw a number of changes: The men's hut was dismantled and a new one erected on the same spot whilst the Ladies hut was redecorated (half the cost of £14 being paid by the Bowling Club). It was also agreed that ladies be allowed to enter all competitions and have two members on the committee.



In 1968 Sunday bowls were permitted for those members who saw fit to “desecrate” the Sabbath. This followed bitter wrangling with the Tennis Club who had requested permission to play Sunday Tennis as far back as 1950 when it had been vigorously opposed by Mr. Brown, Mr. Logan, and Mr. Marshall amongst others. Two years later in 1952 the Tennis Club won the vote and was allowed to play Sunday tennis after 2 p.m.

A number of attempts were made over the years to have a Ladies Day as an appreciation of their hard work during the season. But each year the President was forced to apologize for the club's failure to implement it.

In 1977 the President reported that this had been “the most disappointing season in the history of the club”. The state of the green was such that only one home game had been played and following poor support, all club games had been cancelled.

The only bright spot was the success of Tommy Proudlock who won a holiday in Margate by qualifying for the Northern Area over 60's Singles and George Heron who won the Northumberland Champion of Champion's Cup.

Lack of support from members continued for the next few years and the financial situation became so delicate that the Committee decided to discontinue the practice of sending donations to the NBA Benevolent Fund.

Finances may have been part of the rationale behind the decision in 1980 that “ladies would no longer function as a separate unit but be admitted as members to the Rothbury Bowling Club with the same status as men”.

Hooray!!!

It is interesting to note membership fees: there being different charges for different categories.

For example in 1955 membership was:

Fully paid Gentlemen	38	@	25/-
Fully paid Ladies	18	@	25/-
Ex servicemen	7	@	15/-
Non playing Gentlemen	1	@	10/-
Non Playing Ladies	9	@	10/-
½ Season Lady	1	@	12/6

Compare this to 1923 where there was a differentiation between ladies, gentlemen and working men:

Working men and ex-servicemen	5/-
Ladies	10/6
Juniors (to 16)	5/-
Other members	21/-

Did this mean that when a working man retired his fee was automatically quadrupled?

It was not unknown for AGMs to be held immediately after dinner in the Queens Head although 1960 may have been a special occasion to mark the presentation of a clock to Mr J Douglas for his splendid work on the green.

An AGM following an ample dinner is an ideal recipe for a quick meeting. Was it a point of insensitivity at this AGM when the request was made for prize donors “to give early in the season as there would not be too many at the end of the season.”

All games were again cancelled in 1978 and the ladies club was disbanded in 1982, followed in 1984 by the rest of the club.

With 20 members paying £10 and 2 paying £3 the £206 subscription fees were hardly sufficient to sustain the club. Materials for the green alone totalled £155.84 but the club did end the year with a modest surplus of £5.99 due mainly to raffles, competition fees and bank interest. With the dissolution of the club all funds (£331.25) were handed over to the Recreation Club.

Too few members; too many costs!

The Phoenix Arises

The green was in a terrible state and no games could be played. However Matt Wood continued to maintain it over the next few years in spite of its use as a football pitch and at one time the site of a bonfire. Although the Bowling Club was effectively dissolved the Recreation Club continued to press for advice and grants to refurbish the green. It was regrettable that the Sports Council were unable to help as grassed areas were ineligible. At one point it was even suggested that the Club House be sold in order to release capital for the green.

By 1979 time had taken its toll and the two buildings were in a sorry state of repair. The Recreation Club were divided as to which option to pursue and "whether the 1st world war wooden building, which is warm and dry and full of character and memories, or the 2nd world war brick building, which is newer but uglier, was the more worthy of our efforts."

Following reports from Bill Bland and Gordon Marsden it was agreed that the wooden building be demolished and all efforts be diverted to maintaining the brick one. (Sic transit Gloria Mundi.)

With promised grants of some £5,000 from ADC, Rothbury Parish Council and the Sports Council, together with a further £1,200 from local fund raising it was agreed to start refurbishment. Len Gregory was chosen, with the final cost of building work amounting to £8,400: a substantial sum in 1982.

It should be recognised that the Tennis Club also suffered from a lack of members at this time, in spite of the newly refurbished (1982) club house and were in financial difficulties. There was a knock on effect with the Recreation Club running into the red due to lack of subscriptions from the Bowling Club. With a grant from the Sports Council to resurface the tennis courts it was felt

that more members might be attracted to offset the interim lack of bowlers and this was vigorously pursued.



This sad state of affairs could not last. There were many keen bowlers and at a meeting on 21st September 1988 under the chairmanship of Ronnie Ramsay the Bowling Club was resurrected.

Ronnie was later reported in the Gazette as saying modestly:

"I just felt like a game of bowls".

Prominent amongst these stalwarts were Ronnie's brother Alwyn, Tom Foggon, Tom Gregory, Tommy Proudlock, Ken Bucknall, Eric Davidson, Larry Richards, Noman Petty and Bernett Crewther.

Tom Foggon led the way to resurrecting the green, whilst other members cleaned up the surrounding area and repaired fences in time to open the 1989 bowling season. Funds were raised from a variety of sources: raffles, tombolas, barbecues, coffees mornings, dances, bingo, horse racing: to name but a few.

Donations were gratefully accepted and a sponsored walk raised over £600. As the age of participants was, to say the least, "getting on a bit" there were those who felt that some walkers would never get past the cemetery. The walk took place on the 20th November 1988 in the snow, starting and finishing at the Turks Head where a welcome bowl of hot soup did not come amiss. More donations flowed in, including £200 from an anonymous well wisher. £500 from Alnwick and a further £510 from Rothbury Parish Council boosted the funds and the club flourished.



The first years subscription was waived: members being asked for donations of at least £20. In return for this members were entitled to use the green at any time and tuition was provided free.

There was much work to do but many volunteers. In 1992 the revitalised bowling club purchased a new pavilion that was erected with an excellent view facing the green.

Dick Dignan, took the lead in the erection and refurbishing of this new pavilion over the next few years with help of club members.

Dick was retired from the building trade and was able to devote a substantial amount of time to this work which seemed never ending. From replacing the roof, to painting the outside, to refurbishing the kitchen, to erecting a weathercock, Dick was in the forefront.

This is not to say that other members did not contribute. They most certainly did: not least being Ken Bucknell who boasts that although he did not understand what he was doing he accomplished more since he never queried orders. (Thank goodness he was on our side.)

The green was improved with a great deal of hard work. The club house was painted and decorated and the kitchen upgraded. A sprinkler system was added and the club prospered over the next few years, with the green gradually improving till it was considered one of the best in the county.

New members joined each season and all was rosy.

Except possibly when the old hut blew over in high winds and ended up half way down the bank.

Even this catastrophe was overcome with the aid of local firemen who attached a rope and positioned themselves ready to haul up the hut.



The hut rose: the rope broke and there were bodies all over the place: bowlers, firemen, helpers sprawled ignominiously on the ground.

A second attempt was made and incredibly the hut rose from its side and with a final heave dropped into place not half an inch from the original position. Not a single pane of glass was broken. They don't make huts like that nowadays!

Dick Dignan was made a life member for his contribution to the club whilst his wife Alice

opened the new club house in May 1992.

Although the club had to replace the grass cutter and install new toilets in 1996 grants of £762 from Rothbury Parish Council and £3,051 from Alnwick eased the burden.

At the 1996 AGM it was suggested that members might like to continue playing throughout the winter season. A number expressed interest and for the next few seasons Rothbury bowled at Cramlington during the long winter months. It was unkindly suggested that this extra practice out of season made little difference to the standard of summer play.

Over the next few years these winter sessions became a local derby: The Ramsay All Stars vs The Crewther Cronies. A pewter mug supplied by Joe Carter is presented at the end of each season at a small but well attended celebration in the Railway Hotel.

With the inclusion of Ivan Beer this select group increased in number and in 2002 a team was entered for the Cramlington winter season. Rothbury held its own against other teams that include county players. The Thursday derby continued with the main protagonists and an occasional ringer brought in to cater for holidays and backaches.

In addition to friendly matches, the club now play in the North Northumberland League, the Clegg Cup, the Challenge Cup, Edwardson Cup, and the Jubilee Cup; more than 60 games arranged in the bowling calendar, not counting internal matches. Players are improving all the time with Alan Robson reaching the semi-finals of "Champion of Champions" before losing to an English International in 1998.

But nothing is forever.

In 1998 the Tennis Club who continued to use the old brick club house wished to improve their facilities. They approached the Bowling Club with the objective of building a new pavilion to serve not only bowling and tennis but any other sporting activity that might join under the umbrella of the recreation club.

There was a great deal of consternation from bowling club members who had toiled in the purchase, erection and continuous enhancement of what they felt was their own club house. Over the years their sweat, work and hard cash had created a unique building that was the envy of many another Bowling Club and they had little to gain by joining forces with the Tennis Club. An initial suggestion that the green might lose a yard (or even a metre) to make way for the pavilion was not received with any great joy.

The old brick recreation clubhouse, now used exclusively by the tennis club was old and damp. Windows were broken; it was surrounded by weeds; maintenance was rare. Sharing a clubhouse seemed to be a retrograde step and many bowling club members felt that any advantage from new shared facilities would be offset by lack of control or privacy. After all bowlers did not require showers and all other facilities were already in place.

Ian Anderson of the Tennis Club took a major role in this project and towards the end of 1999 a design for a new Club house was finalised, plans were passed and money raised. The Bowling club agreed to a partnership following promises of priority during the summer season. However it was too late to start work which was rescheduled for the following year. Prices were maintained by local builder David Gregory who had given considerable support to the club over the years.

It is worth recording here that in 1999 David offered £500 to sponsor the Open Triples for the next three years: a very welcome gesture that was deeply appreciated by the Bowling Club.

However in January 2003, prior to the new season, the bowls committee refused to accept the remainder (£150) which had been offered just prior to the AGM: a decision that created divisions within the club especially as its refusal was accompanied by what can be described as a rather "unfortunate" letter from the incoming secretary. This appeared to be due to the influence of a senior member of the Recreation Club who sent the outgoing secretary an e-mail saying "..... I will do all I can to influence the RBC committee to find another sponsor or to do without."

Committees are strange animals frequently following those who shout loudest so it was not surprising to hear the comment "well seen this is sheep country".

It was not the first time that the committee had adopted an oddly negative attitude. In 2001 they voted **not** to apply for a grant to lower the surrounds which, towering over the green, by some six feet not only posed maintenance problems for the green keeper but was positively dangerous to anyone walking along it: and this was in spite of an assurance that the club would not be liable for any costs whatsoever.

A strange decision when you consider the suing culture that exists today. Something for nothing dismissed so lightly!

But I digress! As the 2000 season progressed, a housekeeping committee was established to draw up the basic rules of occupation. It had been agreed that the Bowling Club would have complete control and use of the room overlooking the green throughout its short season. Outside that time other groups may use it after liaison with the bowls committee. However a lone, angry voice contended this agreement and demanded that the bowling club be forced to book its own club house each year. At this tempers rose and the bowling club threatened to pull out even at this late stage. All the good work in building trust and co-operation between the two clubs was dissipated in one fell swoop and two years of hard work disappeared over night.

Housekeeping meetings continued over the next few months with topics such as the colour of china and who would open the new pavilion being high on the agenda, but the important item of occupation was glossed over. The bowls group reported that there was no consistency, always meeting different tennis representatives and there was little progress regarding occupation during the bowling season.

An extraordinary meeting was held after the prize giving on Presidents Day at which the club unanimously declared that unless they were given exclusive rights to occupation throughout the bowling season they would reject all plans for a new pavilion.

Two weeks later following a friendly with Morpeth Vets (Rothbury won by 6 shots). I Anderson took the opportunity to defuse the situation by advising that the original agreement would be maintained.

The Bowling Club would have priority during the bowling Season.

The 2000 season ended on a high note with many social events: dinners, coffee mornings, and triples. The Pie and Pea Supper in particular was a great success especially as this was the last major function to be held in the old club house.

The new pavilion was completed on time over the winter of 2000 in spite of delays due to bad weather.



A few minor problems were quickly resolved and even modifications to the disabled toilet, insisted upon by a member, and which had to be changed back to conform to the original plan, was not enough to delay the opening.

There had been some concern over the remainder of the pathway on the south side of the green as only the area immediately in front of the pavilion had been on the plans. The bowls committee reached agreement with David Gregory to complete the remainder of this side at a cost of £600 to be paid for by the bowls club.

No money would actually change hands but the £500 for the old hut that had been bought by David plus £100 unpaid sponsorship money would be used.

It was regrettable that the hut that had served so well over the years proved to be rotten underneath and had to be scrapped but David Gregory again maintained his side of the bargain and completed the pathway prior to the opening of the season.

The Bowling Club opened their season a week earlier than the official opening by MP Alan Beith. The new premises proved to be an immediate success and was referred to as "the pride of the valley".

It was not surprising to read later that an award for the Best Builder had been awarded to David Gregory.

And so the 2001 season started with a flourish.

At the instigation of the new secretary, who had reluctantly taken over following the resignation of Alan Robson and the later move of Eileen Weallans to the South, a concerted effort was made to attract new members by a leaflet drop throughout the area. It was unknown how much this contributed to an increase in membership as it was only one of many initiatives undertaken throughout the year that included personal recruiting, newspaper promotion and the attraction of the new pavilion. All the committee were involved in this exercise although special thanks must be given to local postman, Bobby Cairns, who had borne the brunt of this exercise. Whatever the reason, the number of members grew from 54 to 68: the highest since the fifties.

In view of the promises of the previous year the secretary was rather surprised to receive a request to use the bowls room from the secretary of the recreation club. It was to be used by a potential table tennis club. As this was to take place on the usual Thursday club night it was felt inappropriate and the request was later withdrawn with an apology and a comment that "sometimes enthusiasm got the better of judgement". But all was well!

2002 started well with Peter Stafford taking over from Alwyn Ramsay with Ivan Beer as his Vice President. But during the year the usual grouses over selection were voiced, and it must be admitted that the case of Tommy Gunn did cause a little resentment.

It was rumoured that having lost their last EBA game some were now free to play. Whatever the reason! Tommy, who had scheduled his weekend around this event, was dropped at the last moment and was most unimpressed.

The only real problems over these latter years were those associated with the green. Bobby Cairns who had taken over from Thomas Dixon was unable to continue due to hip problems and a replacement was sought. Alwyn Ramsay contacted Cyril Foster who agreed to take over this important position

All during 2001 the green was maintained immaculately. Cyril was down first thing in the morning to set out markers and was always on hand at the end of the day to tidy up. He established a rink rota to equalise wearing; a "new" idea that seemed to bother the more competitive players who preferred to use rinks where they could take advantage of known runs. Green markers were changed frequently to satisfy this competitiveness and just as frequently the green keeper resigned, throwing the keys of the equipment hut to whoever was around at the time. On each occasion Alwyn stepped in to resolve the situation and the season ended with the general consensus that the green had benefited from the rotation and that Cyril had been an excellent green keeper.

The green was better than it had ever been and Cyril agreed to continue the following year.

Maintenance continued throughout the winter with Cyril building a pathway at the west to accommodate wheelchairs and raising the east side to conform to bowling regulations. Steps to

the green were built in the centre and proved satisfactory apart from the comment that they were in breach of bowling regulations from a member who had watched them being built. The secretary pointed out that these comments would have been more helpful had they been voiced prior to the start of the work. The problem was solved by the provision of a removable wooden barrier in front of the concrete steps.

It had been agreed that specific rinks could be selected by players in NBA championships in order to give them the best advantage. Unfortunately no-one read the small print and one member construed this as permitting rink selection in either direction. One fateful morning the rink markers were moved from North/South to East/West. All hell broke loose and once again Cyril resigned.

This time the president was not inclined to bow to what he saw as blackmail and refused to contact the erstwhile green keeper. At this David Bolton took over and the season ended with the green once again in excellent condition.

Towards the end of 2002 the recreation club, with newly appointed officials, dropped a bombshell. They asked that the line dancers, an affiliated club, be permitted to book the bowls room. If you remember the idea of booking their own room was anathema to the bowls club and almost stopped the building project dead in its tracks in 1999. This request was not well received, especially when the treasurer reported that the rental for the bowls club had just doubled in the second year. (Up from £350 to £630.) The recreation club treasurer explained that this was entirely due to rising insurance costs and bowlers were forced to accept this explanation. Don't forget that the Bowls Club had already provided the location for the greatly improved recreation club and felt that they should have been taken into consideration when setting the rent.

But the Bowls Club maintained subscriptions at a modest level and embarked on social fundraising to offset these unforeseen costs. It was interesting to note that the tennis club's solution had been to increase fees substantially, a course that appeared to deter members in the following year: or at least that was thought.

As rules could only be changed at the AGM this proposal was initially defeated. But the bowlers were not too happy, especially as the new secretary of the Rothbury Recreation Club pointed out in no uncertain terms that previous agreements might not be honoured: the recreation club was now in the hands of a new committee and Ian Anderson's promise was no longer valid. At the next meeting of the recreation club the subject was raised again. This time a badly thought out proposal to allow external groups to book the pavilion was defeated.

At the 2002 AGM the proposal was put forward that the bowls clubroom be offered to the Line Dancers with the provision that they (the line dancers) use their initiative and only use the room in the summer after 7pm when it was apparent that there would be no bowling. This would be in the spirit of cooperation and friendship and would ensure that the bowls club retain control of their room. In any case it was an event that was liable to occur on only three evenings during the summer.

The motion was defeated by a massive 28 against with only 5 for: giving the lie to cooperation and friendship between member clubs.

The 2003 season got underway with President Ivan Beer at the helm, and very successful it was too. A long dry hot summer created ideal playing conditions on an excellent green maintained by David Bolton.

This was the year that the committee banned Jack Gregory for a month.

Jack was never a great time-keeper but when you are 84 there should surely be some latitude.

On this occasion Jack missed a match altogether, claiming later that he had to take his wife to hospital. At any rate the committee who took their responsibilities very seriously decided that he should be banned for a month. It was a little embarrassing later in the year when Ken Bucknall also missed a match but was not banned.

Ken, being a true sportsman, rose to the occasion and promptly banned himself.

Members of the club took it upon themselves to organise work parties and fund raising functions during the year. These latter organised by Pat Potts and Betty Websell proved very popular and brought in a great deal of money to the club. The Open Triples in particular was very successful, as indeed was the coffee morning and barbeque.

A winter social program was suggested and details given to all members before the close of the season. However some members pointed out that raising funds in this way meant that those who attended functions were subsidising those who did not attend. It just goes to show that it is impossible to please everyone. In any case there are those who give freely of their time whilst others may not have the time to give. As long as members pay their subscriptions it should not matter what additional functions they attend. Everyone has a free choice.

An aside: It was pleasant to hear that Ray Topping (a member of two clubs) had reached the finals in the Alnwick Club Championship with an extremely narrow defeat on the final end when callipers were used to decide the winner.

The thorny problem of booking still hung over the club at the end of 2003 and although members had not been inconvenienced during the summer some felt that it is still just a matter of time. But with so many external and internal matches played and often decided by other results it would be impractical to book in advance: so there is liable to be a conflict at some time.

It was felt by the majority of members that Ian Anderson had made a substantial contribution to the Bowling Club and they awarded him a Certificate of Recognition, although it was interesting to notice that he was not made a life member at that time. This was rectified a year later just after the Tennis Club had honoured him in this way.

Members were also fearful that the club would lose its independence, especially now that the recreation club expanded its membership to include Rothbury Football Club and a newly formed 5-a-side. The old 5-a-side club had been disbanded two years ago due to lack of parental interest but thanks to grants from the Market Town Initiative and Football Association the dilapidated courts were rebuilt and the club is now flourishing. It is in use almost every evening and there has been no disruption to bowlers who had expected a great deal of noise. In fact it was remarked that the noisy ones were enthusiastic bowlers on club nights.

One sad note during the season: the death of Peggy Corbett. Peggy was a great bowler and loved her bowls. Howard, her husband, always commented that he could never tell whether Peggy had won or lost. As long as she enjoyed the game she returned home with a big smile. She is missed already, by many players from many other clubs in addition to our own.

The season ended with a dinner at Embleton Hall that proved to be a great success. 56 attended, more than previous years and it was enjoyed by all.

Rothbury, 2nd in Clegg Division 5 were promoted to the 4th Division whilst they came joint third in the North Northumberland League. David Bolton reached the Quarter Finals of the EBA. Pat Potts and Betty Websell announced another winter social programme. The Treasurer, John May reported a healthy balance of £4,550 in the bank. The bank sides are scheduled to be reduced over the winter, assuming grants are available. The green itself continues to be envied by other clubs. There is a new all weather green in nearby Swarland that potentially extends the outdoor bowling season (if you can stand the cold and rain).

Norman Martin as usual organised all the successful major events in between yearly threats of resignation. Kevin Whitehead organised the 17 friendlies and reported that more than 75% of the club played in these popular games. Tommy Proudlock organised the internal matches in between fund raising. Ivan Beer the outgoing president is looking forward to rest and recuperation during the winter. The committee is reported to be considering stamping their mark of ownership on the clubhouse by decking it with photographs and memorabilia from the past. And not before time!

And tempers have calmed down. All is peace and tranquillity again: at least till the start of the next season.

Of the original members (second time around):

Ronnie Ramsay (Honorary Life Member) continues to play socially and is as good as ever.

Bernett Crewther continues to play well in league and social events.

Mae Whitehead plays less these days but still bowls canny.

Kevin Whitehead is still going strong but then he is much younger.

Ken Bucknall tends to play more golf and has a trophy cupboard to prove it.

Tommy Proudlock organises internal matches and raises funds as always.

Bob Herdman plays less due to other commitments up the valley.

Dick Dignan (Honorary Life Member) now lives in another part of the country but continues to visit regularly.

Tommy Wilson (a great tennis player and bowler in his heyday) is now a social member supporting home matches. Tommy still likes to tell members that as a boy he remembers the green being laid in 1923.

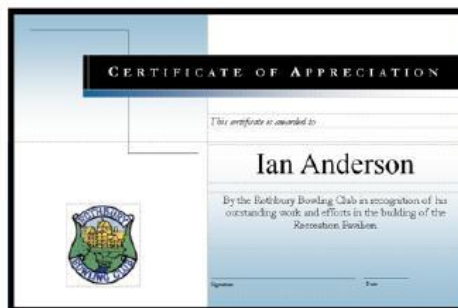
Alwyn Ramsay has hung up his bowls so to speak but continues to support the club enthusiastically and is always willing to impart advice.

Sid Howdon, a former president, a great secretary and excellent bowler sadly died this year.

And there it is: 80 years of Rothbury Bowling Club. 1923 to 2003 give or take a few years. Not the oldest by any means, but certainly one of the liveliest and friendliest. What was that phrase again?

Rothbury Bowling Club

The Club with the Hearty Welcome



PRESIDENTS

1943	W Marshall	1974	W.H. Tyerman
1944	W Marshall	1975	WTyerman
1945	J Brown	1976	W Rutledge
1946	J Brown	1977	W Rutledge
1947	J Brown	1978	W Rutledge
1948	J Brown	1979	W Rutledge
1949	J Brown	1980	S Howdon
1950	J Brown	1981	S Howdon
1951	J Brown	1982	S Howdon
1952	J Brown	1983	S Howdon
1953	J Brown	1984	
1954	W.Y. Logan	1985	
1955	E.A.Robson	1986	
1956	E.A.Robson	1987	
1957	W.H. Tyerman	1988	
1958	W.H. Tyerman	1989	R Ramsay
1959	W.H. Tyerman	1990	R Ramsay
1960	W.H. Tyerman	1991	R Ramsay
1961	W.H. Tyerman	1992	R Ramsay
1962	W.H. Tyerman	1993	R Ramsay
1963	W.H. Tyerman	1994	L Glover
1964	W.H. Tyerman	1995	R Herdman
1965	W.H. Tyerman	1996	M Brown
1966	W.H. Tyerman	1997	E Weallans
1967	W.H. Tyerman	1998	D.G. Bolton
1968	W.H. Tyerman	1999	R Websell
1969	W.H. Tyerman	2000	K Whitehead
1970	W.H. Tyerman	2001	A Ramsay
1971	W.H. Tyerman	2002	P Stafford
1972	W.H. Tyerman	2003	I Beer
1972	W.H. Tyerman		

LOGAN CUP
2 Wood Championship

1936	R Jamieson	1970	R Laidler
1937	J Mitchell	1971	T Proudlock
1938	S Marshall	1972	G Heron
1939		1973	S Howdon
1940	J.R. Anderson	1974	T Proudlock
1941	J.R. Anderson	1975	L Richardson
1942	J Laidler	1976	T Proudlock
1943	H Hounan	1977	
1944	R Wright	1978	
1945	P Errington	1979	J Tait
1946	J Starling Jr	1980	A Graham
1947	W Kennedy	1981	S Howdon
1948	W Richardson	1982	
1949	R Wylie	1983	
1950	W Douglas	1984	
1951	L Richardson	1985	
1952	J Richardson	1986	
1953	J Laidler	1987	
1954	N Nichol	1988	
1955	W.H. Tyerman	1990	
1956	J Richardson	1991	S Howdon
1957	Mrs GG Smith	1992	T Proudlock
1958	W Richardson	1993	T Proudlock
1959	J.R. Anderson	1994	B Crewther
1960	W Richardson	1995	D Whittaker
1961	W Tait	1996	A Robson
1962	W Douglas	1997	A Robson
1963	J.R. Anderson	1998	T Proudlock
1964	J Tait	1999	A Robson
1965	J Starling	2000	A Robson
1966	T Tocker	2001	A Robson
1967	R Laidler	2002	R Websell
1968	R Laidler	2003	P Stafford
1969	W Oliphant		

MARSHALL CUP Handicap

1945	W. Y Logan	1975	T Mood
1946	Mrs P Errington	1976	N Telfer
1947	H Hounam	1977	
1948	J Starling Jr.	1978	
1949	R Wylie	1979	M Wood
1950	H Hounam	1980	M Wood
1951	L Richardson	1981	
1952	J.R. Anderson	1982	
1953	E.A. Robson	1983	J Tait
1954	W Douglas	1984	
1955	J.R. Anderson	1985	
1956	J Richardson	1986	
1957	W.J. Chisholm	1987	
1958	A Aitken	1988	
1959	R Laidler	1989	
1960	W Richardson	1990	
1961	E Lamb	1991	N Martin
1962	E Lamb	1992	R Harrogate
1963	T Proudlock	1993	R Cairns
1964	J.R. Anderson	1994	R Cairns
1965	W Oliphant	1995	A Robson
1966	T Proudlock	1996	K Bucknall
1967	W Oliphant	1997	K Bucknall
1968	T Proudlock	1998	A.J. Robson
1969	T Henderson	1999	D.G. Bolton
1970	M Wood	2000	D.G. Bolton
1971	S Howdon	2001	B Turnbull
1972	W Oliphant	2002	T Dixon
1973	J Heron	2003	P Stafford
1974	J Laidler		

In Memory of Septimus Marshall. A founder and for many years President of the Bowling Club. Presented by his son Arthur L. Marshall 1945

**Vale of Coquet Lodge
Harry Scott Memorial Trophy**

1990	R Ramsay	1997	R Topping
1991	L Richardson	1998	P Corbett
1992	R Harrogate	1999	D.G. Bolton
1993	R Harrogate	2000	D.G. Bolton
1994	R Cairns	2001	T Dixon
1995	A Robson	2002	P Stafford
1996	R Brown	2003	B Websell

**JESSIE HERON CUP
Sunday Pairs**

D.G. Bolton R Ramsay	1994	1999	D Topping R Topping
P Corbett T Proudlock	1995	2000	B Turnbull B Crewther
R Websell A Robson	1996	2001	
M Brown R Brown	1997	2002	J May A Robson
P Corbett T Proudlock	1998	2003	D Bolton D Anderson

**PRESIDENT'S DAY
Pairs
Presented by E Weallans**

1997	P Bucknall E Weallan	2001	T Proudlock L Smith
1998	P Stafford A Robson	2002	J Robson A Robson
1999	P Newton K Bucknall	2003	T Proudlock D Anderson
2000	M Hodgson P Potts		

Rutledge Commemoration Trophy

1998	K Whitehead - P Bucknall R Herdman - R Websell
1999	E Websell - N Martin P Corbett - T.M. Proudlock
2000	E Websell - N Martin E Weallans - R Topping
2001	
2002	Joyce Wright - Caroline Dixon Barbara Turnbull - Alan Robson
2003	A Robson - J Potts H Osmond - J Wright

Queens Head Trophy Triples

1996	R Ramsay J Tully W Walker	2000	T.M. Proudlock D Topping R Calam
1997	C Davis R Brown R Cairns	2001	A Robson B Calum J Gregory
1998	E Walker P Stafford A.J. Robson	2002	Peggy Corbett Mary Nairm Barney Calum
1999	P Herdman K Whitehead T.M. Proudlock	2003	J Cairns B Turnbull J May

Ladies Champion

1992	E Weallans	1998	E Weallans
1993	B Harrogate	1999	E Weallans
1994	P Bucknall	2000	E Weallans
1995	P Bucknall	2001	C Dixon
1996	E Weallans	2002	B Turnbull
1997	E Weallans	2003	B Websell

**Proudlock Memorial Salver
Club Pairs**

1992	J Milburn R Harrogate	1998	P Corbett A.J. Robson
1993	N Petty E Weallans	1999	P Corbett P Stafford
1994	E Weallans R Ramsay	2000	K Whitehead A.J. Robson
1995	B Crewther R Cairns	2001	
1996	M Davison T Proudlock	2002	
1997	J Carter T Proudlock	2003	A Calum R Topping

**WANLESS TROPHY
3 Wood Championship**

1964	T Mood	1990	S Howdon
1965	J Starling	1981-1990	
1966	J Elliott	1991	S Howdon
1967	Mrs M Gregory	1992	T.M. Proudlock
1968	Mrs W Oliphant	1993	D Whitaker
1969	R Laidler	1994	R Cairns
1970	T.M. Proudlock	1995	A.J. Robson
1971	T Proudlock	1996	R Cairns
1972		1997	A.J. Robson
1973	L Richardson	1998	A.J. Robson
1974	T.M. Proudlock	1999	E. Weallans
1975	L Richardson	2000	E. Websell
1976	L Richardson	2001	R Topping
1977		2002	D Bolton
1978		2003	R Topping
1979	T.M. Proudlock		

HUGH HOUNAM MEMORIAL CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP CUP

1956	J Starling	1980	N Telfer
1957	J Richardson	1981	
1958	W Richardson	1982	T Proudlock
1959	T Mood	1983	L Richardson
1960	J.R. Anderson	1984	
1961	J.R. Anderson	1985	
1962	W Douglas	1986	
1963	W Oliphant	1987	
1964	W Tait	1988	
1965	J Starling	1989	
1966	G Heron	1990	
1967	J Elliott	1991	T Wilson
1968	J Todier	1992	T Proudlock
1969	J.R. Anderson	1993	D Whittaker
1970	T Mood	1994	S Howdon
1971	T Proudlock	1995	R Websell
1972	J.R. Anderson	1996	A Robson
1973	R Jameson	1997	T Proudlock
1974	G Heron	1998	A Robson
1975	J Laidler	1999	R Topping
1976	S Howdon	2000	D Bolton
1977		2001	R Topping
1978		2002	B Calum
1979	N Telfer	2003	A Robson

We hope you enjoyed this history of the first 80 years and if you would like to join this thriving club please drop in sometime.

The club is situated at the entrance to Rothbury from Alnwick or Morpeth.

The season is April to September. And in the winter some members also play carpet bowls. So there is plenty of activity.

New members are always welcome and you can drop in and try before you buy, so to speak. Prospective members are offered one month's free trial before joining and will be most welcome to come along and try out this enjoyable sport.

Do not worry if you do not have any equipment. All that is needed is a pair of flat shoes and the club will provide everything else.

There is a full calendar of events including friendly matches, league matches, inter club competitions and club nights each week.

Club meetings take place each Tuesday and Thursday afternoon from 2 pm to 4 pm, and on Saturday evenings from 6pm to 8pm (6.30 - 8.30 in June and July) and there is a qualified coach available for beginners

The club has an active social section with numerous events organised throughout the year by our active social secretary and her committee.

Please check our web page for the latest information

<http://rothburybowlingclub.btck.co.uk>

