

ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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NEWSLETTER

No. 111 SEPTEMBER, 2014

THE ORBOST BOWLING CLUB

by Margaret Smith

FOUNDATION OF THE CLUB

The Bowling Club was founded in 1929, by a group of farmers and businessmen. They set about providing a sporting icon for the town. Six rinks were constructed on the current site using horse drawn scoops and drags. The "Back to Orbost" 1937 book, describes the greens as "a bit rough for the first two seasons but now compare favourably with most country greens". Funds for the construction were raised by the issue of debentures at £5 each, and subscriptions were £1/1s/0d (\$2.10).

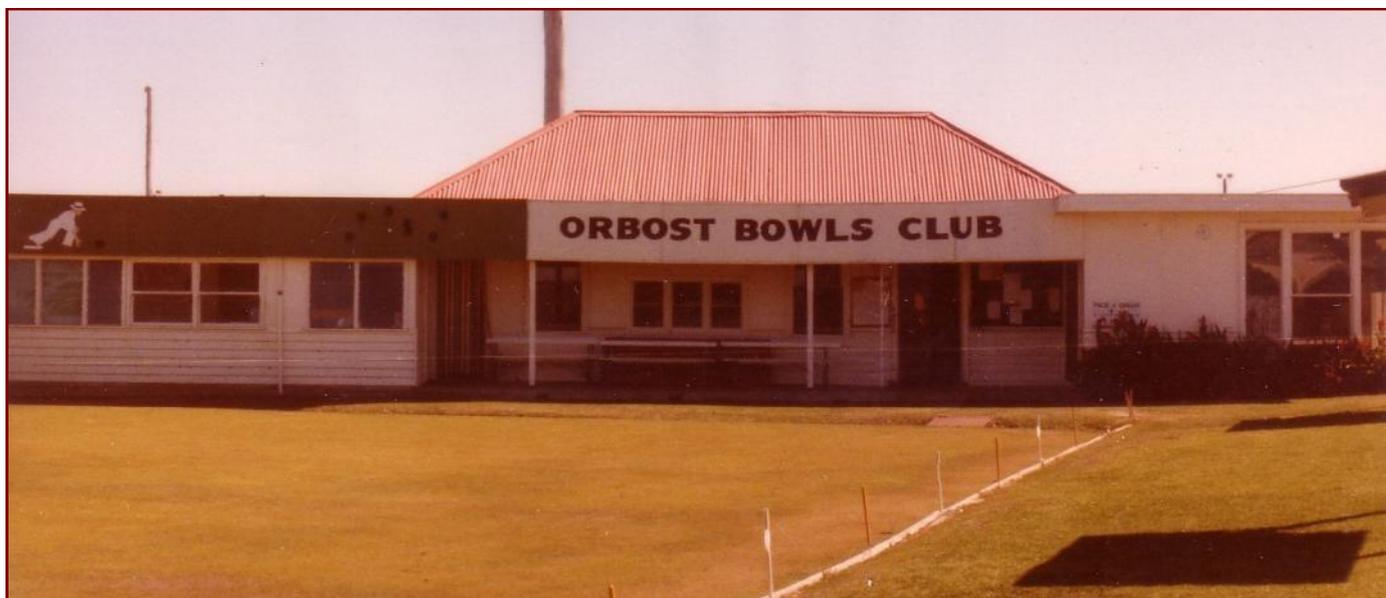
EARLY GREENKEEPERS

Mr. A. W. (Billy) Scharlemann was the legendary, green keeper. He was employed on a part time basis

for many years, followed briefly by Mr Joe Lyons, before the job was contracted out to the Golf Club, under the supervision of Mr. Wal Shanhan, then Mr. Wally Paten did the job for awhile.

CLUB MANAGEMENT

Mr. Sam Lynn, held the president's position for four years, and Mr. Thorold Bartold, manager of the local Bank of N.S.W., was the inaugural secretary. Some of the 49 members were: Mark Rothberg (club champion), W (Bill) Kerr, D Robinson, Lance Herbert, Fred McCoy, Jacob Perry, Ted Eaton snr, ... Rambler, Jack McKeown, W (Bill) Cumming, Harry Cameron, David and Richard (Dick) Pardew, William (Bill) and Michael Cowell, Jack Bird, Paul Spadaro, Carl Drevermann and Bob Gall.



RECORDS GONE MISSING

There is very little information for the next 30 years, as the records have been lost.

CO-OPERATION WITH CROQUET CLUB

In April 1935, the president was Mr. George Haymes who officiated at the closing of the season with the Annual Dinner. At the opening of the next season in October, the new president, Mr Jack Bird, together with the president of the Croquet club, Mrs Jane Allen, shared the formalities when opening their greens for the coming season.

NIGHT BOWLS

At some stage prior to 1937 overhead lighting was installed. Night bowls was played twice weekly and included players from Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance.

LADIES GRANTED ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

A somewhat controversial decision (for the time) was made at the Annual General Meeting of the Orbost Men's Bowling Club in 1951. This was to admit lady associate members, a major change, but it was undertaken by setting down some very strict conditions for associate membership. "There were to be no more than 24 lady members who must be of good character; preference was to be given to the wives of male members; and ladies had to be off the premises by 4 p.m.; all applications for membership had to be submitted to the Men's Committee of Management for final decision on selection."

All the conditions must have been satisfied as Mrs Hec Pow (Mac) became the inaugural president of the Orbost Lady Bowling Associates. The secretary was Miss Ethel Lynn, with the club champion being Mrs Jim (Joyce) Nixon.

A number of the male members were convinced that this decision would be the ruination of the club, and some even terminated their membership.



Orbost Bowling Club Associates 23-2-1955

Back: L-R: Norah McColl, Ede Coulton, Agnes Williams, Ethel Palmer, Marge McKeown, Mollie Tracy, Pen Richardson.

Centre: Mrs Jim Lynn, Mrs H. Rodwell, Nance Nicolson, Irene Byers, Mrs Fred Herbert, Amy Gall, Grace Nixon, Mrs Kilderry.

Front: Ethel Lynn, Clarice Dorling, Mac Pow, Mrs Keith Lynn, Dolly De Piazza.

CROQUET CLUB HELPS OUT

With numbers dwindling, the Croquet Club handed over three of their four lawns to the bowling club in 1961.

Mrs Ethel Palmer, was not only the Orbost bowls and golf club champion for the 1958/59 season, but also the East Gippsland bowls champion, after winning six of her seven matches at Bairnsdale.

UNIFORM CHANGES OVER THE YEARS

The uniform was often a source of public ridicule, with compulsory long sleeved white dresses 13" from the ground, double fronted petticoats, white stockings (leg horns), white then later blue jackets and handbags. Hats were not to be removed inside until the president removed theirs. Only minor changes were made until the 90's when white separates were permitted. All players now wear a uniform featuring the town's green and gold colours.

LADIES' PENNANT COMPETITION

Ladies Pennant was contested between Sale, Stratford, Heyfield, Yarram, Maffra, Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance. With Orbost having only two home games per season, they withdrew from the competition between 1955-58, and again in 1965. It took 30 years of campaigning before the competition was restricted to Clubs east of Bairnsdale.

In 1966, with a temperature of 110°, Joyce Nixon skippered her team of Marge Chapman, Pen Richardson and Lil Ford to a win the Champion of Champions rinks at Sale.



**Orbost Bowling Club Champions and Runners Up.
L-R: Paul Spadaro (R.U.), Leo Coulton (C.), Bill Lukies (Handicap), Jack Herbert (R.U.)**

CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY

The 1967 men's finalists, in the championships and handicap singles were: Paul Spadaro, Leo Coulton, W (Bill) Lukies and J Herbert.

Dolly De Piazza and Nance Nicholson, created club history when, in 1973, they were runners up in the State Pairs in Melbourne. A complimentary dinner was held in their honor at the club house to celebrate their achievement.

CELEBRATIONS

At the Silver Jubilee celebrations in 1977, the then 35 lady members honored Ila Broome with a super veterans badge and Pen Richardson and Ruth Cope with veteran's badges. The formalities were followed by a great social evening.

A combined, 80th birthday party was held in March 1983, for three members: Murray Kerr, Fred Lay and Paul Spadaro. They were joined by 90 year old Wal Shanhan (who bowled until the age of 97) and 85 year old Frank Richardson, when they were all presented with Super Veterans badges.



SUPER VETERANS - 1983

L-R: Wal Shanhan, Murray Kerr, Paul Spadaro, Fred Lay, Frank Richardson.

NEW CLUBHOUSE

A quote from Orbost Shire's Cr. Brenda Murray, reported in the 'Snowy River Mail' on 29th April 1984, that "The members simply agreed they needed a new club house, so they pitched in and built one", aptly describes what happened. Mr Monty Kleverlaan, was the chief organizer of the multi skilled members, and two years later he had the honor of officially opening the building on March 25th, 1984. Funds for the project totalling \$35,000, came solely from members, loans and gifts. A 'chair-a-thon', where members (and visitors) were coaxed into donating a chair, provided the seating. Mr Eric Wehner, who was secretary from 1977-90, was in charge of the proceedings.



Monty Kleverlaan unveiling the plaque at the official opening of the new Clubhouse on 25th March 1984.

CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS

The club proudly hosted the East Gippsland Champion of Champions, in 1988/89. The Singles event was won by "local lass" Karen Chenney. Karen started bowling approximately 30 years ago, coached by Don Havers, and continues to win many esteemed events.

WAL WEST GREEN

Wal West was at the helm of many capable members, when they did a major renovation on the green closest to the club house in 1988.



Vic Mehlert, Wal West, Keith Gidley, E.G.B.A.

PENNANT

After an absence of many years, a Pennant flag returned to Orbost, in 1990. The team consisted of Beryl Fearnley, Marjorie Smith, Koba Kleverlaan, Ivy Trewin, Karen Chenney, Betty Mehlert, Rose Giles, Carol Moore and Elaine Smith.



Presentation Day, April 1990.

HAIL DAMAGE TO GREENS

Just days before the Annual Tournament in January 1991, the greens received considerable damage from a massive hailstorm. Despite extraordinary efforts by members, the tournament was cancelled, and the greens remained closed for four weeks.

SUPER VETERANS

By 1993, the club had a total of eight Super Veterans: Fred Lay, Bill Weston, Eric Wehner, Doug Mitchell, Adrian Bommer, Jack Shelton, Ivy Trewin and Dolly De Piazza, who continued to compete until she was 93.



SUPER VETERANS - 1993
Back L-R: Don Giles (Pres), Eric Wehner, Doug Mitchell, Adrian Bommer, Jack Shelton, Keith Gidley, EGBA.
Front: Fred Lay, Ivy Trewin, Bill Weston.

Three Orbost players: Jack Unmack, Geoff Robinson & Peter Coulton were back to back winners in 1996/97, of the prestigious "Toohey's Triples" tournament at Lakes Entrance. Peter went on to play in the metropolitan "Super League" in Burwood for several seasons.

The inaugural Orbost/Marlo challenge was held in 1996. This was the brainchild of Jack Unmack and was a huge success, with Marlo winning by a clear margin.

70TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The 70th birthday of the club in March 1999, was an all day and night event, with many former members, and visitors, enjoying the bowls, formalities, food and frivolity.



Seated L-R: Bill Weston, Dolly De Piazza (Life members), Harry O'Neill (President), Ethel Curtis (Ladies' President), Fred Lay (Life member), Lois O'Neill.

JUNIOR BOWLS

Junior bowls has also been part of the club, with Michael Patterson doing the club proud in 1988, when he won the first round of the under 25 championships in Moe. In 2000, the Year 9/10 girls from the Secondary College chose bowls as their sport option. Orbost hosted the Victorian under 18 State junior pairs in 2004, and the winners, Zac Turner and Gabriel Quin, were then accompanied to the next round in Clayton with their coach John Martin.

Mr. Fred Lay, an active bowler at 97, stole the show at triple birthday celebrations in March 2000. President, Trevor Perry, said "Fred would like to be one of the oldest people in the country still regularly participating in the sport. He has a keen sense of humour, plays a pretty mean bowl, is always immaculately dressed, is a great credit to the club and proves a tremendous example to everybody in our community." Joining Fred in the celebrations were fellow veterans Bill Weston 91, and Adrian Bommer (approx) 88.

Former president Jim Johnson of Marlo, was instrumental in the club receiving funding for disabled access and bowling facilities in 2000.



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS - March 2000
L-R: Fred Lay, Bill Weston, Adrian Bommer.



The late Mrs. Pat Faulkner is acknowledged for compiling much of this history.



Photographs in this Newsletter are from the files of the Orbost and District Historical Society and Orbost Bowls Club archives.

1966/67
Ladies' President: Mollie Tracy
Men's President: Albert Williams

Right: Walter Shanhan 1893-1992
Known as Wal or Shan he was curator, then house manager and club steward for the Orbost Golf Club before retiring in July 1967. He then became green-keeper at the Orbost Bowls Club a position he held for many years.

