

CHAPTER 1

1907 AND ALL THAT

There is one inescapable fact about the founding of Ixworth Bowls Club; nobody knows exactly when it was! One thing is certain, even if the club itself did not exist before formal records began; bowls was definitely being played in the village some years earlier. When writing a history it is important that written proof is used to verify the founding of the club, and our written proof is the minute book. The earliest minute is dated October 14th 1907. It records the season of that year, and so it is with some confidence that we celebrate our centenary in 2007.

The minutes however contain contradictory information. The entry for a meeting held on Tuesday 7th January 1919 gives thanks to Mr. G. Everitt for his excellent work for the past 14 years! which would mean that the club started in 1905; but an easily missed entry on the 5th October 1911, gives an even earlier start date. Another vote of thanks is given, Mr. Peck is thanked for his 7 years of service to the club, was the club founded in 1904! Despite this we believe the club was formed in 1907. An article in the January 1935 edition of the local paper confirms this belief in reporting the Club President addressing the AGM by saying "As a club we are nearly 30 years old". If the 1904 or 1905 dates were correct then the club would already be 30 years old, so it is more likely that it was 28 years in being, giving us 1907 as the first season, and the green used was the one we still occupy today!

What it does seem to confirm is that the game of bowls was being played in Ixworth before the club came into existence. Word of mouth suggests that as many as three greens had been in use. One of these was in Commister Lane, about 500 metres from the present green, another was located behind the house of the local doctor. The latter we know was used by the club. By invitation of Dr. Dobbin the Club President, the final of the Dobbin Cup was contested there in the 1920's.

The pioneers of bowling in Ixworth are named in the first few entries of the minute book. Although we have the odd photograph going back to the early 1900's, we do not know all the people on them, as regrettably we are unable to put names to faces. The minutes do give us names, and those attending the first recorded meeting were: Mr. Wright in the chair, Mr Everitt the secretary and Messrs. Grimmer, Bourne, Peck and Lauder in attendance.

And the business under discussion was as follows:

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Proposed by Mr. Bourne seconded by Mr. Peck that the Balance Sheet for the season 1907 as presented be accepted. Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Peck seconded by Mr. Bourne that the Ground Committee consist of Messrs. Lauder, Peck and Wright, with power to confer with Mr Bullman as far as putting the ground in order for the season 1908 and that the sum of Two Pounds be expended thereon. Carried

It was agreed on the proposition of Mr. Turner, seconded by Mr. Bourne that a Minute Book be purchased at a cost of Two shillings and sixpence.

The case of Mr. W. Appleyard having been fully considered, it was unanimously agreed that Rule 5 should in future be strictly enforced, with reference to payment of Subscriptions.

Proposed by Mr. Lauder seconded by Mr. Bourne that Mr. J. N. Rushton be requested to audit the accounts for the year 1907. Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Peck seconded by Mr. Bourne that the Annual Meeting and presentation of Prizes in connection with the recent tournament, together with a Smoking Concert be held at the Pickerel Hotel on Thursday the 14th November at 7pm. Admissions to members free, Non-members sixpence, the same be donated to the Management Fund.

A collection of sixpence each was made to defray the cost of an extension to 11pm. Mr Lauder kindly offered the use of room and piano.

Messrs. Bourne and Wright with the secretary were appointed to carry out the necessary arrangements. Carried.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Notes on that first recorded meeting.

We do not have the previous minutes that were presented.

Mr Bullman (who was also a member of the club) owned the land that was used by the club. For his £2 he was expected to carry out work on the green to make it playable, and it seems likely that this was the only payment made to him.

The purchase of a minute book suggests that the club had been in existence since the start of the season and it was felt that it should be run in a right and proper way, recording the minutes in a book rather than on scraps of paper.

Unfortunately we do not know what Rule 5 was!

A smoking concert is simply a concert at which smoking is allowed.

The fees for non-members were later rescinded.

The first officers of the club were:

President Dr. J. S. Gelston
Club Captain Mr. T. W. Wright
Vice Captain Mr. H. T. Grimmer
Treasurer Mr. H. T. Grimmer
Hon- Secretary Mr. J. Everitt
Committee
Dr. Dobbin Mr. Turner Mr. Ruston
Mr. Mulley Mr. Randell Mr. Lauder
Mr. Balaam Mr. Cotterel Mr. Bourne
Mr. Pettitt Mr. Fenwick

This potted history is based on the minutes of the club, (and we have them for every year of our existence) the photographs that exist in our albums or displayed on the walls of the clubhouse, and a scrapbook that holds newspaper cuttings.

CHAPTER 2

THE EARLY YEARS

The work of these pioneers was varied as can be seen from the activities organised and decisions made in this chapter.

In its first recorded year, it is apparent that the club was then, as it is now, at the centre of village life. Social events were organised and the first we know of was the 'Smoking Concert', held on November 14th 1907 at the Pickerel Hotel in the High Street. Initially it was decided that the event should be free to members but at a cost of 6d for non-members, this fee was rescinded at a later meeting. To ensure good numbers the secretary was asked to write to various gentlemen (no ladies obviously) in the neighbourhood inviting them to the concert. It was reported that 85 cards were prepared and sent out 44 by post and 41 by hand! It seems that their organising skills left much to be desired for just three days before the event it was reported that they were having difficulty in 'procuring an accompanist' – all was saved however, as they accepted the services of a Mr. Norman who agreed to play for the princely sum of ten shillings.

Some of the social activities were joint efforts. On May 3rd 1910 an offer to the bowlers of Ixworth to play the Ixworth Cricket Club at cricket was accepted, and a return fixture of bowls was arranged for later in the season, and in 1911, it was agreed that a croquet match could be held on the green. For other events a less than positive response was given. A suggestion that instead of the by now annual Smoking Concert, a Bohemian Concert should be arranged received no support. As the definition of a Bohemian is a person of loose or irregular habits, the decision is perhaps understandable.

On the playing side the earliest record of games against other clubs is the 1908 season, when matches were played against Bury Abbey Bowls Club, Botesdale, Elmswell, and Walsham. A request was also heard from the Avelon Hotel, Thetford Thursday team, which was with reluctance not entertained.

The cost and difficulty of travel meant that most of the matches played were against very local opposition, visiting teams might have stayed to enjoy the company, but not for tea. A team travelling all the way from Bury St. Edmunds was a different matter. Although the distance is only 7½ miles, their journey time would necessitate having refreshments after the game, and so, for the visit of the Bury Abbey team, a special meeting was held to discuss how much should be spent on entertaining. It was agreed that 10/- should be taken from club funds. It was also agreed that the annual subscription be raised to 3/6d. In an attempt to defray these increases two members offered to arrange a social evening for the purpose of meeting the expense – it was 'most respectfully' declined. Instead guarantors were sought and 13 members loaned the club 10/- each.

Invitations for matches were in general from the same clubs. It was probably difficult to fit many games in with the work patterns of the day, but sometimes additional fixtures were entertained. An invitation to the opening of the Barnham green was accepted in 1911, as was a match against St. Cuthberts, Thetford in 1912.

Within the club the Ixworth Tournament was the competitive highlight of the season. The rules for this competition were not recorded in the minutes until 1910, when the following was decided:

1st Round. A draw of the whole, the unsuccessful stand down. The successful again draw for the 2nd Round, and so on until the final. The first heat to be played off during June, second during July and the third and final finished by August 31st (21 up 2 Bowls)

As with all clubs, there was a compassionate side to its activities. Although he did not hold any office within the club, on the 21st January 1909 a special meeting was held 'for the purpose of forwarding to the widow of our late respected member Mr. E. Theobald a letter of condolence in her great bereavement.' A collection was also held with each member present giving 6d for the purpose of purchasing a wreath – a total of 7/6d was raised.

Much of the early minutes is taken up with business relating to the green. This was not owned by the club and was hired on an annual basis at a weekly rent from the owner Mr. Bullman, who for a fee carried out work in the close season. It appears that it might not always have been up to the standard that the club required, for on the 5th Oct 1909, after agreeing a weekly rent of 4/6d, with the option of renewing on an annual basis at the same terms, Mr. Bullman was asked to level the ground and re-turf the centre. Mr. Lauder the winner of the Ixworth Tournament gave his prize money to this worthy cause. However his estimate for the work did not meet with committee approval, for on October 22nd a meeting was held to discuss the matter. Two members (Mr. Bourne and Mr. Wright) were sent to his house to point out discrepancies in his estimate! On their return they presented a revised estimate which he had signed.

Greens then, were not as we would expect them to be today. It is likely that there were no ditches or banks, just a flattish piece of grass marked out for the game, and equipment for its upkeep was very basic. We assume that the club possessed a mower but probably little else. In 1910 the 'offer of Mr. Birmingham to lend a roller for about ten days for use on the green', was accepted. The secretary was of course instructed to write to him thanking him for his kind offer. In the same year a perennial problem was counted by passing a motion that no dogs be allowed on the green.

If this motion was adhered to then dogs were not likely to be the reason for concern in 1912, when it was deemed desirable to find a temporary green as the original had an absence of turf. An offer from Mr. Harry Cross of a piece of land on the meadows was unanimously accepted; although they agreed to return to the original green after a month. An offer of Basic Slag for use on the green was then accepted, it shows that work on the green differed from current practice. It was obviously a bad year for the green, as the question of where to play was raised again just a few weeks later, when it was agreed that the original green should be used. Just one week after the decision, members raised the matter again, but after receiving reports on both options; the land on the meadows and the original, it was decided, not only to retain the old green for another year, but to enlarge it. In light of this it was decided to close the green on 28th September to enable the alterations to be carried out.

Funds were now needed to meet the cost. The idea of a Guarantee Fund was put forward. The minutes show that 16 members acted as guarantors, loaning the club a total of £16 – 0s – 0d. The enlarged green came at a cost, for the rental duly increased, and so did the subscriptions up from 3/6d to the princely sum of 5/-.

In light of the enlargement to the green, it was decided to open the 1913 season with High Tea and a social, the nature of which we have no idea; but we do know that a new rule was introduced. It was agreed that rubber shoes were to be worn when playing, or as an alternative, that light shoes or boots without nails could be worn!

CHAPTER 3

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

At the AGM of 1914 mention is made of 'Out Members'. This relates to people who played at the club, but who resided outside the radius of Ixworth and District. It was agreed at the meeting that their subscriptions should be 2/6d instead of the usual 5/-. What exactly the radius was is not mentioned, but one year later, to clarify the situation it was agreed that it should be 4 miles.

At the same meeting the committee recommended that the club should become affiliated to the Ipswich and District Bowls Association. The game was beginning to get more organised, but the benefits of such organisation would not be seen for a few years, for the hostilities of the First World War would put much on hold.

For the 1915 season it was agreed that no fixtures would be arranged, although friendlies, possibly on an ad-hoc basis would be played when possible. The war was obviously having an effect. Although there is no mention in the minutes, it is possible that the number of players decreased and perhaps it was felt that to carry on as normal, when so many were in grave danger was inappropriate.

The following year was one of great concern. At the AGM held in March it was reported that as the numbers and therefore income had reduced payments may not be met, and a decision had to be made as to whether the club should continue or not, in the event it was agreed to continue.

The question arose again the following year, with the same result, but clearly life was difficult for the club. In 1918 the war was mentioned in a motion put forward to suspend the club for the following year. Although no matches were arranged, it seems likely that the green was kept open; it was at least hired for the season, so it is safe to assume that bowling of some kind continued.

Throughout the war years, there were no formal fixtures against other clubs, and it appears that only minimal work was carried out on the green; but the club continued, even if it was on a hand to mouth basis.

In 1919 with the war at an end, it was resolved to continue the club, and fixtures were again made.

The rule on footwear was made more forceful at the 1917 AGM with the statement that heavy and nailed boots were forbidden on the green. Sadly in the same year Mr. H. T. Grimmer the then chairman, referred to the loss to the club of its first President Dr. J. S. Gelston. A letter of condolence was sent to his widow and the club entered into a new chapter of its life by appointing Dr. Dobbin as his successor.

CHAPTER 4

NORMAL SERVICE IS RESUMED

The war over, things slowly got back to normal and in 1919 in what appears to be a very radical move for the day, a proposal that the club should admit ladies as members was carried. It might not be as enlightening as at first it may seem, for there is no more mention of ladies until 10 years later, when it is suggested that a Ladies Committee be formed - to arrange refreshments! It is doubtful if they ever actually played, although I would like to think that on the odd occasion they were allowed on the green for the occasional roll-up.

An interesting item to devotees of the game can be found in the minutes of a meeting held on April 1st 1921. It was agreed to play Elmswell as long as play would be in rinks. The most likely reason for this statement is the possibility that Elmswell played the roving cot version of the game. ('Cot' is the East Anglian term for 'jack') This game is played in a similar manner to crown green bowling, but with two major differences, the green has no crown, and the jack is not biased. Clearly Ixworth were happier playing in rinks!

In 1921 Ixworth affiliated to the Suffolk County Bowls Association, which had been formed in the previous year, and it was agreed that the club should enter the Suffolk County Bowls Association Cup. As it is safe to assume that all previous games were friendlies, this is the first mention of competition bowling in our records. Deciding to enter the cup meant that another decision needed to be taken. Travelling could now in theory be anywhere within the county, so it was agreed that the travelling expenses to away matches should be paid from club funds, but that subscriptions should be raised to 10/-.

Within the club as well bowling was becoming more competitive. Up to now the only competition played for was the Ixworth Tournament. There was no cup or shield for this event, just prizes of money or in some cases bowling equipment. Dr. Dobbin the President of the club decided in 1924 to present a cup to the club to be played for annually, in a two wood singles competition.

The Dobbin Cup, as it was named; remains a prestigious competition, but as the club has broadened its approach to the game, it is now played for under EBA rules. The first winner was Mr. W. H. Kemp.

Between these two events happening, the future of the green itself came into question, for in 1922 Mr. Bullman from whom the green was leased died. His widow took on control of the land and was approached by the club for hiring the green for the season, they even asked for a reduction in rent! Three years later and Mrs. Bullman moved, selling all her property, including the land on which the green was sited to a Mr. Lonnon. Fortunately he was quite willing to let the club have use of the ground for a fee of £5 per year. He was also willing to find a new fence providing the club found the labour! It must have been very heartening for the members at that time, to find that the new owner would be sympathetic to their cause. The actual discussions over the amount to pay, were however quite lengthy, it took three meetings to thrash out terms of £5 per season on a 10 year lease. Not all things went well with the new landlord. Just one month after agreeing terms, he (Mr. Lennon) was fetched from home to a meeting for a discussion about accepting a roller. It is possible that it is the one referred to in a previous minute from a Mr. Jiggins, whose name will feature in a later chapter. What manner the discussion took we can only guess at, but it is recorded that *'after fetching Mr. Lonnon it was left in his hands, he having left in a stew temper and without hearing what the committee had to say, thus ending the meeting.'*

The club was now clearly going places. Work was being carried out on the green, lawn sand was applied and a wire netting fence was erected, and facilities were being created, corrugated iron being ordered to go round the urinal. With all this outlay in 1927 alone, rules had to be augmented to preserve the playing surface; so a decision was reached regarding footwear – only rubber shoes to be worn on the green, and a new rule was unanimously agreed – no dogs or children would be allowed on the green itself.

Not only was the club moving forward, so too was the game in general, for in that same year a proposal to form a Bury League was put forward, the club agreeing to join. This would obviously create more matches to be played at longer distances to travel. Cars were a luxury and few and far between, clearly transport needed to be arranged. In searching out estimates from local coach companies, the committee suggested the following as a basis for negotiation:

<i>Stanton Rose and Crown*</i>	5/-
<i>Stanton Cock*</i>	6/-
<i>Beyton*</i>	12/-
<i>Bury Spread Eagle*</i>	14/-
<i>Westgate Brewery</i>	13/-
<i>Bury Abbey*</i>	13/-
<i>Risbygate</i>	13/-
<i>Rattlesdon*</i>	18/-
<i>Thetford</i>	20/-
<i>Woolpit*</i>	13/-

* These clubs are no longer in existence

By using three different companies they managed to get transport at a total cost of 8/- less than their proposals.

1927 also saw the club achieve its first major success on the green. After proposing that the Hospital Shield should be played for on one day, they won it!

Clearly they had arrived for they won the same trophy the following season as well.

In 1929 there is once again mention of the ladies of the club as it is suggested that a Ladies Committee should be formed to look after refreshments. Whether this was for a Whist Drive that was being arranged (was to have been a dance – but they could not get an orchestra) or general hospitality we do not know, but it was good to see they were being thought of when their services were required!

Facilities at the club were now steadily growing. For the first 21 years of the club's life, meetings had been held in one or other of the two main public houses in the village, but in 1929 a committee meeting was held in the pavilion for the first time, one of the items in the minutes was the proposal that the club should accept a lamp for the pavilion kindly given by Mr. Hicks. In the same year it was decided to send three representatives to the County Match, Suffolk v Norfolk, to be played at Lowestoft. The three were Mr. F. Grimmer, J. Everitt and G. Bayes. As far as we know these are the first players from Ixworth to represent their county.

The twenties drew to an end with the club in good spirits. Indeed the AGM of 1929 concluded with the words:

'The meeting accorded to the Chairman F. J. Hicks a hearty vote of thanks; this concluded a very amicable meeting.'

What would the thirties bring?

CHAPTER 5

A FIRM FOOTING

If the twenties ended in harmony, the thirties began with strife, not initially, for at the first meeting of the decade it was agreed to purchase bowls for the use of visitors. It was added that if members wished to use them, then they would have to pay a hire charge of 3d.

It was on Tuesday June 27th, just one day after a committee meeting that things kicked off when a special meeting had to be called. The only topic under discussion concerned one member who in the previous year played for his county:

A resolution was passed and unanimously carried *'that Mr. G. Bayes be suspended from playing in all matches this season for refusing to play in a match as promised, and insulting the Captain Mr. F. Hicks during the match with the Risbygate Club.'*

The matter did not end there for he was still allowed to play in club competitions and use the green, he did so, reaching the final of the singles. In the final he was due to play the club captain; but because of what had gone before, Mr. Hicks refused to play him, giving rise to discussion at the AGM:

'A letter from Mr. G. Bayes was read by the Chairman, accusing the Captain Mr. F. Hicks of animosity towards him on refusing to play him in the final of the singles competition. The minutes of the Committee Meeting held on the 27th June were read, also Rule 9 of the Ixworth Bowls Club, viz:

Any member misconducting himself or in any way becoming an annoyance to other members, any one of the Committee who might be on the ground shall have power to at once ask the member so offending to leave the green. Any further action in the matter to be decided on at a Committee Meeting'

After an explanation from Mr. Hicks it was decided to hold a secret ballot of members present to decide if Mr. Bayes should continue as a member of the Club, or whether he should be debarred from playing on the green. The voting was 17-1 that Mr. Bayes should not be allowed on the green, and the secretary was asked to write to him to that effect.

The matter was not fully concluded until the following year, when the unfortunate Mr. Bayes sent a letter to the club asking that he receive his medal for reaching the singles final, he was informed that the club were ignoring his letter. The moral of this episode is clear, don't mess with the Captain!

If the club was going through a financially restrictive time, it seemed to be quite common for a collection to be made at meetings. One took place at the 1931 AGM, the purchase of a new mower and heavy travelling expenses being sited for a cash shortfall. It was also agreed at this meeting that a selection committee should be formed for cup matches, a practice that continues to this day.

The beginning of 1931 saw the club with a new landlord. Mr Lonnon who had owned the land, on which the green was sited, sold it to the Trustees of the Jiggins Memorial Village Hall, on the 17th December 1930. The village hall itself was built the following year.

This put everything on a much firmer footing. As in effect the 'village' owned the land, the club would be free from the worry that the ground could be sold from under them. They would in due course have a representative on the Village Hall Committee, where decisions would be made to the benefit of all. In 1932 the club requested to rent a further piece of land to the west side of the green and enclose it by a gate. The season closed with the club once again winning the Hospital Shield.

After deciding that members should pay for refreshments for home games, it was agreed that a bowl, soap and towel should be provided for the convenience of members. At the same meeting lengthy discussions took place regarding the roots of some trees, which went under and raised the green. Whatever action was taken it seemed to work.

A firmer footing was also to be had by the players as well, as the club brought in another footwear rule, this time that slip on shoes must be worn. These were very popular up to the 1960's at least. They were often in the form of flat sole sandals that were worn over ordinary shoes.

It is interesting to note that the committee then as now, were keen to have the green and its surrounds looking good. In 1936 we have first evidence of this, when it is decided to erect some trellis, plant flowers and paint the pavilion. It was a good thing it was done for the following year there was a coronation. A ring tournament was organised for the event. Events in Europe however meant that the feel good factor would be short lived. The club started to suffer financially as members either left to join the armed forces or were working longer hours in the war effort. In 1939 it was agreed to allow young men under the age of 18 to join, the first sign of youth at the club; it was possibly done in an effort to increase numbers with so many away at war. This good feeling towards youth was not present just 2 years later though, when the schoolmaster was instructed to keep his boys away from the green!

The secretary's report at the AGM of 1943 tells of the difficulties of the time, and some activities which clubs still combat today:

'In presenting the balance sheet of 1942, I have much pleasure in stating that we finish the financial year with a balance of £2-11-5d.

Our membership for 1942 was 22 which I think is very good considering the transport difficulties and the call for Civil Defence. The 2 largest items are rent (6 guineas) and groundsman (£6-10-0d); I hope you will agree with me that the green has been very well kept during the playing season. On a visit to the green this morning I found that the groundsman has started to get the green in order and our members have repaired the trellis which was blown down by the gales in January.

The cupboard containing old bowls has been broken open and several bowls taken. The Captain has no report as no matches were played during the year.'

In 1944 Dr. Dobbin our President retired and moved from the district, the club sought a replacement and nominated Dr. Gilmore, he however declined and for one year only Mr. K. Baldwin took office. It was also decided to have a Hospital box on the green, winners would be asked to put $\frac{1}{3}$ of their prize into the box and to use it for visitors donations. All money raised would be given to the West Suffolk General Hospital; it seems as if this idea carried on for a number of years.

At last in 1945 the Second World War came to an end, but things would not get back to normal for some time as the saga of the fence shows: It was agreed to replace a fence at the north side of the green with wire netting. The first choice was that 50yds of 6ft $1\frac{1}{2}$ " mesh netting should be procured; failing that then sheep netting should be bought. Neither could be obtained, so an offer of barbed wire was accepted and erected.

This shortage of products may have hampered construction work, but it did not prevent the club making good progress on the playing side as the captains report of 1947 shows:

'The club has had a very successful year, playing 29 matches, winning 25 and losing 4. We won the Suffolk Junior Cup, the Hospital Bowls League Cup and Shield and the Agnew Cup. Mr Grimwood reached the final in the singles, and Mr. Everitt and Mr. Gaskin the final in the pairs of the Town Championships.'

Another minute shows that the club agreed to enlarge the green. The alterations themselves were probably carried out during 1948 as a discussion on how to pay for the work that was done took place in 1949.

CHAPTER 6

THE LADIES ARE COMING

A new competition was instigated in 1950. The Maple Leaf Trophy would be for pairs, which would be drawn, and it would be contested under Federation rules. But an even bigger decision was made in July of that year.

You will recall that as early as 1919 it was agreed that the club should admit ladies as members. It would seem that they had to wait 31 years before they would be allowed to play, for it wasn't until 1950 that it was decided to create a Ladies Section. The response was not overwhelming. In the first season only 2 ladies paid the subscription of 4/-, possibly due to the lateness in the season that the decision was made. The commitment to the idea was strong, for at the 1951 AGM the statement 'We welcome lady members' was recorded.

Ixworth had shown that they were a club who bowled well and took part in both leagues and cup competitions, but in the middle of the 1951 season a decision was reached which had long term consequences. A special meeting was called in response to action taken against the club after they cancelled a match against Hopton.

The meeting learned that the League Executive had awarded 6 points to Hopton; they decided to protest and sent the following letter to both the league and to Hopton:

'It is with regret that we received notice through our representative of your protest re. cancellation of home match, and eventual harsh treatment at the hands of the League Committee. After consideration, we have no alternative but to withdraw from the league.

We feel that a protest of this nature should not have reached the administrators of the League Committee, but could have been settled amicably by the clubs concerned.

We also note that the penalty imposed, penalizes all clubs in the league except yourselves, and are advising the League Committee of such.'

Why the game was cancelled we do not know, but they stuck to their guns and decided not to play in the league in the 1952 season. Despite the lack of league matches, it was agreed that the pavilion should be moved so that the green could be enlarged (again)

Over the next few years the minutes record that the decision not to enter the league but to play friendly matches continues. The club does play in cup competitions and has a good deal of success, and Ixworth players were being selected for the County Teams. There is no mention of the ladies section, but a photograph of 1959 shows that ladies were playing at the club.

CHAPTER 7

NOTABLE EVENTS

The general business and activities of the club continued. Donations were made to the County Benevolent Fund, dances and whist drives were organised, fund raising activities were undertaken and the general work on the green was carried out. Many decisions were made, and achievements gained; but in this chapter only those of great significance will be covered. The first such decision was made in 1958.

For some time the club had recognised that their facilities needed upgrading, and so at a committee meeting on Nov 3rd the subject of a new pavilion was raised. It was suggested that based on other buildings seen, the cost would be about £100, plans would need to be drawn up and permission sought from the local authority. It was felt that loans from members would cover the cost. Things moved quickly, for only 29 weeks later, on May 25th 1959 the first Committee Meeting to be held in the New Pavilion took place. At that meeting the treasurer reported that so far £91 had been loaned for the building. The total cost including furnishings would be approximately £180.

The new pavilion offered a bar and a spacious main hall. The County President Mr. F. Holmes of Brandon had agreed to officially open the new pavilion on July 30th bringing with him a team from his own club. Invitations were sent to the Club President and his wife, all the vice presidents of the club, County Officers, and local dignitaries; despite the fact that no decision had yet been made about installing electricity! This was duly agreed on July 22nd at a special meeting, at an additional cost of £28.

By the time of the AGM in October the Pavilion Fund Account had risen to £189-13-6d, made up of loans and gifts, and all accounts had been settled. This was a remarkable achievement by any standards.

With a new pavilion it was suggested that winter activities could be started, and so social evenings started at the club. Whether they continued for long is not known, but on a number of occasions since, the idea of a social evening in the form of quizzes, whist drives etc. have been raised. In 1959 Mrs J. A. Farrow became the first lady player to win a trophy when she won the Dobbin Cup, and ladies certainly made the headlines when it was agreed to buy a gift for Mrs. Everitt for her work behind the bar and in keeping the pavilion clean. The same year also saw Mr. Harold Randall appointed as Club President.

Cup and friendly games continued to be played, although it was agreed not to seek friendlies with Diss Causeway and Palgrave owing to the poor condition of their greens! A big decision for the day was taken in 1962, when it was agreed that Sunday play could take place up to 5.30pm, it being felt that this would not conflict with church services.

At the AGM of 1963 it was decided to buy a suitable trophy to be sent to Mr. Harold Randall's club in Canada for competition, in appreciation of the help Mr. Randall had given to Ixworth Bowls Club in his capacity as Club President. Thus was forged a link that exists to this very day.

For some time now apart from cup competitions, only friendly games were being played. Younger members had joined the club and the feeling was growing that more competitive matches were required. At the AGM of 1966 it was agreed that the club should enter the West Suffolk EBA League, for whatever reason it did not happen, but the seeds had been sown.

In the 1969 season a great honour was bestowed on an Ixworth bowler, Mr. Reg Grimwood being elected to the position of Suffolk County President. It was not only the men who were being noticed, the lady bowlers of Ixworth were beginning to make a name for themselves as they featured in winning singles and mixed pairs competitions at County level, one Mrs. Ellen Matthews would go on to be the County Ladies President in 1973, and give her name to a county inter area competition for ladies.

The need for more competitive bowling at the club, pushed for by a group of younger bowlers, saw the clubs 17 year absence from league competition come to an end, when it was decided to rejoin what was then called the Bury Hospital League.

There have been many notable individual bowlers at the club, but all would agree that one man stands above them all. In 1970 Mr. George Everitt won the EBF National 2 Bowl Singles. For a player from Suffolk this is a notable achievement. As the largest county in terms of bowlers playing Federation bowls, it requires winning at least 8 games to win the County title and then up to a further 4 to win the National title. Mr. Everitt was an outstanding bowler and a true sportsman who played many times for the Suffolk County team, and won competitions at club, league and county levels. His death on Nov 20th 1980 was a big blow to the village of Ixworth. The male members of the club now compete for a trophy given in his memory.

The seventies saw two County Presidents from the club, Mrs. Ellen Matthews in 1973 and Mr. L. R. Peachey in 1977. It is of interest to note that while we have photographs of her Presidents Day, there is no mention of Mrs. Matthews appointment to the position in our own minutes! Was it perhaps because her year of office coincided with the club winning the Suffolk Senior Cup for the first time in its history? Or did she leave the club during her reign of office.

It was also in 1973, eight years after the initial proposal to join the West Suffolk EBA League, that the club agreed to affiliate with the County EBA Association. They were duly accepted into the league and so began a new era for the club, in which both codes of flat green bowls would be played. In the same year a club tie was introduced with the maple leaf motif imprinted upon it (the club flag is the Canadian flag, another link with our past President).

As part of his County Presidency in 1977, Mr. L. R. Peachey (Dick) presented the club with a trophy, which after discussion would be contested as a triples competition.

Other trophies have since been donated to the club, some in memory of past members, and others by members wishing to give something back to the club that they love. A full list of competitions, together with the names of the winners is given in appendix 1.

In 1979 a new League was proposed, the Area D Triples League, but for this season at least Ixworth decided not to join it. It would take 4 years for the club to agree to enter the new league, it twice being taken to a vote.

At the 1983 AGM, Mr E. Oliver, chairman of the Building Sub-Committee reported to the members about plans for an extension to the pavilion. Toilets would be added plus a kitchen in order to meet requirements when renewing the bar licence. Members looked at the plans and a decision was taken to seek planning permission. Estimates were sought and applications for grants were made. A year later and the total cost was reported as being £9335.00, several grants and loans totalling £8417 meant that the club could proceed with the project and the additions were duly completed – but our minutes do not say when!

By this time the membership had grown in number reaching the mid 70's. The club was now in a very stable position having enough members to meet all playing and financial requirements. Many members enjoyed afternoon roll ups on two days a week, and as can be seen from the minutes of the club all was running smoothly.

1985 saw another member of the club elected to the position of County President, Mr E. J. Oliver, who had held many offices within the club. Just 4 years later and Mr. L. R. Peachey, a previous County President from Ixworth was afforded the honour of being the National EBF President.

A link had been formed with the local school, and was progressing well with a number of young people taking up the opportunity to try out the game of bowls. The chairman reported that he would look into the cost of smaller bowls for their use.

In 1989 the President of the club for the past 30 years, Mr. Harold Randall died. Harold had emigrated to Canada when he was 15 years old. He paid regular visits to Ixworth, staying with his sister. He was a keen bowler and a great benefactor to the club as was seen in his presentation of the Maple Leaf Trophy in 1950 and the gift of a large Canadian Flag, which is flown from the club flagpole at special events. He invested money for the club in Canada which has been of benefit to the club for many years. It was through him that connections were made with the Port Credit club in Ontario. In his honour, the official logo of Ixworth bowls club is the maple leaf, and is included on all our shirts, ties etc. the only exception being the blazer badge which depicts a tree which once stood at the junction of the High Street and Stow Road.

The club were delighted when Mr. John Thurlow became our new President, as we carried on the tradition of having well known local people at the head of our club. In his own quiet unassuming way he has carried on the traditions of the office, offering support when it is needed and being generous beyond the call of the office.

Throughout the 1980's and beyond, Ixworth bowlers gained success at both League and County levels. A full list of all the county winners from the club is given in Appendix 3.

At the end of the 1991 season a decision was taken to fit a fine spray irrigation system to the green at a cost of £2880, this was considered to be a very competitive price, and was supplied and fitted by an irrigation company based in the village. Other small improvements were carried out on the green, which were aimed at reducing future maintenance.

The clubs pavilion, being of timber construction was beginning to show its age, and in 1994 a paper entitled Project '95 was discussed. There were many issues that needed to be taken into account. It became apparent that we would only be able to obtain grants if we had security of tenure for at least 22 years. Plans had been drawn up and were discussed. The project rumbled on into 1996 with legal issues being looked at, issues which our forefathers didn't seem to have! By the beginning of 1997 plans had been submitted to the local authority and Lottery funding was being sought, but it was discovered that a longer lease was required. A whole year passed before estimates were sought. But still without a lease a grant could not be obtained and in 1999 the club looked at a more modest development that could be financed from club funds. The millennium came and the club had agreed to do a self build with one of the members Peter Jones taking on the role of project manager. In October the club at last received the good news that a 50 year lease had been agreed, there were some restrictions on how the new building should be used but nothing drastic. At a special meeting it was agreed that we should continue as a self-build, using professional expertise and that it would be of steel and brick construction. The total cost would be £50,000 with the club seeking grants of £30,000. We were fortunate in that a new member had arrived at the club with past experience of obtaining lottery grants, Ron Methven served the club well in this role. A successful application was made, and to meet requirements a new constitution was formed. Despite rising costs, with the input from the club rising to £29,750; building work started at the end of 2001.

On the playing side it was decided to enter a team in the Stowmarket League, so that more players could experience competitive bowling, but for their first season they would be playing their home games, as all the other teams, without a clubhouse.

On the 7th September 2002 eight years after the initial discussion paper was presented, the new clubhouse was officially opened, by our own Club President Mr. John Thurlow. The season concluded with the club hosting the Bury & District League Finals day, with Ixworth winning the coveted Victor Ludorum for the fifth year running.

CHAPTER 8

THE STORY CONTINUES

Since the opening of the new clubhouse, minor modifications have been carried out, mainly to make the kitchen more suited to its role and to make the bar more secure. With the new facilities, opportunities arose for the club to meet during the winter months. A member kindly donated a mat to the club so that short mat bowling could be started. We now run two in-house leagues, a singles competition and friendly roll ups from November to March.

In 2004, the green was used for a County EBA match for what we believe was the first time in the clubs history, and in 2006 for the first time in its history Ixworth provided an EBA County President when Elizabeth Sharpe was elected to the position of Suffolk County EWBA President.

As is the custom, the County Finals were held at the presidents club, in this case the Ixworth green; and the club provided the County winners in the pairs competition; Ann Lilley and Christine Waters taking the title.

In our Centenary Year we are honoured that the Suffolk County Bowls Associated has accepted our offer of a trophy for the new Veterans Pairs Competition. It is intended to call this trophy the Gelston Cup in memory of our very first President: Dr. J. S. Gelston.

And so to the future, if the past is anything to go by, then surely it is a bright one. We look forward to the challenges that may come our way, and will endeavour to make the game of bowls available to all. To this end we will hopefully continue our links with the local school, and where possible forge new links with other organisations. We will continue with our policy of arranging open days, giving an opportunity for the local community to 'try us out'. But whatever the future holds, we will always remain indebted to the pioneers of our club and all those bowlers who have gone before us.