

Manly Bowling Club.

By S. Knox

Article written for the Jubilee of the Manly Bowling and Recreation Club, 1898-1948.

The game of bowls was first played in Manly in the year 1890, on a two-rink green, which had been constructed by the late "Billy" Kilminster, the proprietor of the Clarendon Hotel, since demolished. The new edifice erected on the spot is now known as the Pacific Hotel. As several of the regular players did not like the idea of the game being associated with an hotel, the Municipal Council was approached, and a small piece of land at the corner of Sydney Road and Belgrave Street was granted. Four rinks were laid down, the cost being borne by the players. For the purpose of revenue a green fee of one shilling per game was levied. This is the same green which has been used by the Croquet Club for many years. After two years of occupancy one of the players, Mr F.C. Passau, who was then Mayor of Manly, suggested a removal to another site in Ivanhoe Park, where more land was available. A public meeting was held, and the first Bowling Club formed in 1898 [sic – 1894], Mr Passau being elected the first President.

In the new position a bed of four rinks was constructed – these comprise the present rinks, numbers one, two, three and four. The clubhouse, a small wooden one-room affair, was erected where the centre flag pole now stands, but as the membership increased considerably, the Council was approached for more land. Sufficient ground was granted to permit of the construction of two more rinks. These were laid down at a higher elevation than the first four.



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In 1908, Mr James Bonner, who was President of the Club, and at the same time Mayor of Manly, induced the Council to grant a further extension of land, on which four more rinks were constructed (seven, eight, nine and ten.) On the completion of these four rinks, it was decided whilst land was available, to add two more rinks to the four just completed, thus enabling play to be changed round.

In 1932 it was decided to merge the two lower beds into one, resulting in the present lay-out of all the greens.

The original subscription for full membership was one and a half guineas. This remained in force until 1912, when it was raised to five guineas, but it was reduced to three guineas the following year.

The Club liquor licence dates back to 1904.

The name of one member stands out prominently in the early history of the Club, that of the late Mr J.P. Wright, who was President for eight consecutive years, and but for whose continued financial help the Club may have ceased to exist.

The Club has not been successful in winning the "A" Pennant but on two occasions reached the semi-final, and on two other occasions won its section. The "B" team, however, was much more successful, having won the final twice, and was beaten in the final once. The "C" team won the final once.

Mr T.H. Fuller won the State Singles final in 1904, and Aleck Eather won the Singles final in 1938.¹

The State Pairs title was won by Messrs Kirkpatrick and Currie in 1931.

The State Fours Championship was won in 1906 by Messrs Horrocks, Dimelow, Black and Maybury.

Manly has the honour of having won the John Young Shield on three occasions. That record has not been beaten, but has been equaled by one other club.

While Mr J.S. Bonner was President of the Club (1907-1910) he frequently announced his intention to donate a flagpole immediately the Manly Club won the "A" Pennant, and in 1915, in anticipation of that high honour, he caused to be constructed and erected at his own expense that magnificent flagstaff at the eastern end of the pavilion. Prior to that Mr Bonner constructed in his own foundry a complete set of rails and a leveler for top dressing, and also two eight-hundredweight rollers, all of which he presented to the club free of charge.



Manly Bowling Club, 1915, State Library of Victoria image MM001007

¹ On 13 May 1938.

Additional

In April 1940, Lindsay G Scott, architect, invited tenders on behalf of Manly Council for the erection of a bowling club pavilion at Manly.²

The 1900 clubhouse was demolished in 1956. The official opening of the new clubhouse was held in 1958.³

² SMH 2 April 1940, p3.

³ 61st Annual Report of Manly Bowling and Recreation Club, in VF.