

SOUTHCHURCH BOWLS CLUB

1946 – 1992

TRANSCRIBED FROM A JOURNAL DAVID GREY WROTE, ? REPLACES WORDS THAT WERE DIFFICULT TO DECIPHER.

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I am not quite sure but I think the bowling green was seeded down in 1946, but I do know the first game was played on it in 1948 and is recorded in the minute book. The two men who thought of the idea of turning the existing tennis courts into a green were Ted Walpole, the village postman and Norman Hilsden a retired Sergeant Major, who lived in a bungalow on Thorpe Market Road. A meeting was called and it was proposed to ask Mr Peter Tyler if he would be prepared to bulldoze the site level for them; this he did voluntarily. This however did not prove to be so successful as anticipated. In levelling the site, the top soil was pushed off and the seed was sown on rather a poor-quality sub soil. To make matters worse, shortly after sowing the seed there was a terrific thunderstorm and a lot of the seed was washed off. This was very evident when the seed started to germinate. This surely must have disheartened the two persons as they abandoned the scheme.

It was in the Summer of 1948 when I went to inspect the site with two other men George Sandell and Billy Lubock and thought there was hope, and decided we would have a go. The grass in places was three high and other places there was none. We cut the tall grass with ? tools and borrowed an old lawn mower and eventually got it ship shape.

A club was formed Reg Drury a retired W O from the Airforce a well-known character took the Secretary's job, Fred Bane was elected groundsman. Reg was also treasurer for a while.

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Until we got going on then Bob Barnes took over that post. Subscriptions were five schillings old money, that time of day, and further income was gained selling football sweep stake cards. The site was very open to all who called to wander in so it was decided to fence it with privet. This was quite a task, although the site had been levelled, mounds of earth had to also be levelled before planting could commence. This proved to be a very fine investment and a hedge some six feet high and a yard thick can be seen today. The bottom corner near the footpath used to be an allotment and it was not unusual to see players go home with cabbage etc after a game. This went on for a few years until one day Lennie Durrant who worked for the Forestry commission bought a few saplings he called rejects and asked me if I would like to plant them in that corner, again the evidence is there to show what a good idea it was.

Our first pavilion was a wooden frame covered with corrugated iron sheets and can be seen now in a very poor condition at the end of our toilet block which I will come to presently. Having planted the privet hedges I thought to enhance the look of things some landscaping was needed and so pathways were formed and walls were erected with bits and pieces. Our main source of supply was an old urinal which was at the bottom of the recreation ground, which the parish wanted demolished. Reg Dunning also had some derelict pig pens he wanted out of the way and so we had them and so the walls were erected and gardens.....

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formed, those members who have been with us can see what a ? they have been.

The club I forgot to mention was all male and didn't really get going until the women were allowed to join. This transformed the club and it really took off from then. It wasn't unusual to have 40 members plus line up for Sunday drives. So much progress was made it was decided to enter one of the leagues and the Cromer and district was chosen. Toilet facilities were very primitive and accommodation for visiting players very limited. The ladies toilet was a night-watchman's hut type of thing, needless to say it had a door on and was situated by the privet hedge on the right hand side. This was only used in extreme emergencies. I can assure you the gents was a corrugated enclosure with an outlet into the adjacent field, crops around the outlet really flourished. However, it was decided that a new club house was to be given priority and so with interest free loans from the members and me due for a fortnights holiday, work commenced.

I helped with the foundations and laid the blocks. Bob Barnes and Ray Tuthill put the roof on and Jack Reynolds put in the cut stone front. Now of course our minds were on a new toilet block and tool shed. Having acquired a mower of our own and several bits and pieces needed for green maintenance. The club at this stage was doing well. The club house debt was soon paid off and we thought we could go ahead with the toilet block. This we discovered could qualify for a grant. I wrote to Lincoln Ralph who was the secretary of the playing field association.

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The outcome of this was we were able and ? ? that a grant would be forthcoming, and so we again started to build. My brother 'Flin'* as he was best known and I set the building out to the size we needed, and proceeded with help from other members to put the footings in and concrete the floor. My brother and I laid the blocks. Bob Barnes and Ray Tuthill once again came to the rescue with the roof, two flush toilets were installed

with wash basins for Ladies and Gents, now we really were in business. The grant by the way was for the full amount 100%. Although the club was doing well; the playing surface was very poor with areas without any grass at all and so we decided to bring in the experts for advice. Fison** did a free advisory service and so we contacted them, and we were told we needed a mixture of peat and sand, one ton of peat and 5 ton of sand and it thought it would take 10 years of this treatment to make it a good playing surface, and of course we did this. Must say at this stage that the treatment did appear to work and the base and then places filled in and even they looked better. It wasn't until we started to get very dry summers that our problems began. It was impossible to get the pitch looking green, it really did suffer with drought. So once again we turned to the experts and in our argument, we were told we had too much peat. So now we face the task of using a deep hollow tyne machine to get rid of it. So much for experts.

I mentioned earlier that Bob Barnes had a hand in roofing both our buildings. I would like to say a bit more about Bob. Not only our treasurer but always on hand for.....

* Flin could have been Flip as mentioned in the Grey family section,

** Fison was a large company in Ipswich that sold agricultural fertilizers and peat products.

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...Any repair work that needed doing. I also remember that he came and saw me about this problem and recommended that an concrete edge be set in all the way around the green and to lay pieces lifted. He volunteered to help me do the job. You can imagine what a monumental task this was, and at the end of that particular season Bob and I started. We cast the concrete edges 4 inches wide and 9 inches deep and 1 yard long. When we had produced some 160yds we started to work, little did we know that it would take most of the Winter, but Bob stuck it well considering he was a carpenter by trade. I borrowed a turfing iron and of course this was necessary to raise the turf five to 6 feet ?? the green the whole way round. It was Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings for most of that winter before the job was complete. The concrete edging is there to this day and we shall always be very grateful to Bob not only for his stint as treasurer but for all the work he did for the club.

I have been associated with the club since it was formed in 1948 and have only missed one year as far as I can remember that was 1971. Unfortunately, I had slipped a disc and had to be operated on for that, I was of course unable to work for that year. However, two lads, they were young lads then Alan Holmes and David Tuthill came along and helped Fred to do what was needed to keep going. I did return as soon as I was able and am still carrying on today.

Fred our groundsman died suddenly in 1978 and left me in charge as it were. I had learnt a lot from Fred and so was able to carry on. The seasons came and went some good and some not so good. This brings me now to the season 1991 again I was.....

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Hospitalised for an infected gall bladder. I was in the dock for a month and off work for a further month. Although members rallied around and helped out with the chores the green deteriorated. Not only did the green go down the membership dropped also and I thought to myself it's time for new blood. The secretary and I did say its time I would call it a day.

Things did really look black, however every cloud has a silver lining and that silver lining did appear in the form of a man called John Daniels. I think John must have got to hear what I felt like and to my annoyance decided to come and help us out. Not only did he for the club but brought ten other players with him, this really breathed new life not only into me but into the club also.

The first thing he did was ask the club for was a travelling sprinkler, you can imagine my delight when I saw that arrive, the days and weeks I have spent with my finger in the end of a garden hose. Nobody will ever know. The next thing he talked about was electricity to the club house. It was agreed that this should be done but the cost hadn't been taken into account. Prices of £500 to £1100 were talked about. So new cable, by a stroke of luck we decided to try and get some second hand and through contacting a man who we refer to as our 'supplier' we were given enough to not only connect to the meter outside the village hall some 125 yards but enough to connect the flood lights all the way around the green. Which had also been given to us by our supplier. This man's generosity knew no bounds without his help and Johns influence the work done this year would not have been possible. Of course I mustn't forget to mention our little band of volunteers, Jack Reed, Tom Buller, Sid Sexton Norman Hooker, Oscar Sutherland and Mick Finn; all I have to do is knock on their door and they are there, wether it is wheeling soil or concreting they.....

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willingly appear and I sincerely hope that will be the case as we embark on our winter programme. At the end of last season the green did look very bad, we were infested with leather jacks and suffered terribly with drought, John and I agreed as what should be done namely it was first and foremost to get rid of some of the peat this would be done by using the hollow tyne machine and to spray for the leather jackets and scarify and slit

as often as possible; Fortunately for club John has all the machines to do this work. To hire for the amount of times we use them from a plant hire firm would be too expensive for us. We must all be very grateful to John, he not only lends us the machines but comes and uses them himself. We set ourselves a target for the summer feeding, one bag of turf ? every three weeks . By mid- season it was evident it was paying off well and by the end of the season it was the best I had seen it look.

This was very pleasing to both of us and we regard this as our reward. Now I am rapidly approaching 77 but I think with John's enthusiasm and his knowledge of green maintenance I shall be good enough to last another year.

DAVID GREY

FOOTNOTE FROM GILL CARTWRIGHT,

Transcribing Davids notes was a real pleasure. I wish I had the chance to meet him. When writing the history of the Southrepps Bowls Club, David Grey was mentioned so many times in the research I did. I was so impressed with all the hard work he undertook, usually quietly and without fuss.

I was lucky enough to meet his nephew Derrick to get a more personal insight and my admiration grew. David never bowled a bowl and yet making the green good to bowl on for the other members was so important to him. His tending the gardens and looking after the club gave everyone such pleasure. There is a small square stone with his name carved into it on the wall as you walk down to the club house. I hope he is never forgotten.