

'THE HISTORY'

MORNINGTON CIVIC BOWLS & SOCIAL CLUB INC.

It began in 1981 when the Constitution of Mornington Bowling Club limited membership to 200 Members (men) and 180 Associates (women), with a waiting list of at least 20 pending for Associates. When it was found that only men could join and their wives were required to go onto a waiting list, it became obvious that the City of Mornington needed another bowling club.

This possibility was often discussed over a few beers after bowls and eventually a Steering Committee was formed made up of Col Gordon, Don Gordon, Sid Raggatt, John and Marye Anderson and John Collison (a non bowler). John Anderson, previously Councilor, knew there was a plan in the Engineers Department of the Tyabb Road Farm which had "Future Bowling Club" marked on it. Informal talks with Council Officers were encouraging, so it was decided to call a public meeting to see if there were enough people interested to make a new club possible.

The meeting was advertised in the original "Mornington Leader" newspaper, to be held on 1st September 1982, in the Uniting Church Hall, Barkly Street, Mornington.

It was a cold, wet and windy night, the Commonwealth Games were being held in Brisbane so a lot of people were away. Only sixty people attended, forty of whom indicated they would like to join the proposed Club. This was not nearly enough to make the Club financially viable, however it was moved by Col Gordon that a new Club be formed to be known as "Mornington Civic Bowls & Social Club". A recruitment drive for members was held over the next two weeks and at the next meeting called, the members grew to over 60 and it was determined to press ahead with the new Club.

Foundation Members

Jim & Linda Alexander	John Collison	Rita Johnson	Ivor & Mary Kirkland
Mitzi Akers	Betty Cross	Peter Kamps	Eric & Vicki Ross
Stanley & Iris Allsop	Jim Curtain	Jack & Betty Johnson	Frank Scanlon
John & Marye Anderson	Norman Deady	Ivor & Mary Kirkland	Herb & Muriel Skidmore
Sheila Appleby	Dorothy Dillon	Bert & Alice Lambert	James & Wilma Smith
John & Bunty Bowring	Scott Duffy	Stewart & Norma Lee	Raymond Smith
John Breen	Len Gole	Gloria Lund	Jim & Marj Stott
Keith & Anne Britton	Don & Nesta Gordon	Kevin Lyons	Laurie & Pat Taylor
Charles Buccilli	David Greatorex	Bert & Margaret Marshall	John & Dorothy Walker
Les Buchanan	Jean Greening	Colin & Judy Morley	Jim & Jean Waters
Ted & Valmai Buckingham	Peter Hellier	Frank & Nancy O'Ryan	Dorothy Watt
Ron & Joy Cakebread	Bernie Higgins	Owen & Yvonne Quayle	Marj Whelan
Ray Carlile	Bob Hobday	Brad & Denise Reardon	George & Betti Whybrow
Lorraine Channing	George Jackson	Delys Reekie	Ray Winter

Getting Bowlers Started

Mornington Bowling Club kindly offered the use of their small green for coaching and the following Sunday at 10.00am forty new bowlers arrived to be taught how to bowl. The Civic Club had no real coaches, but Stewart and Norma Lee, Betty Gouderjann, John Roberts and John and Marye Anderson were bowlers, so formed them up in queues to learn how to roll a bowl, a bit different from present day coaching. This was great fun and enjoyed by all, the first social bowls gathering of the new Club, and it set the tone for the future.

The Site

The Steering Committee's aim now was to have one green ready to play by September 1983. Negotiations began with Council for a site for the new greens and clubhouse, more members were enlisted and coached, and everyone approached for possible ten year loans. A co-operative was established with the help of Rolly Morris, Accountant and Nick Roberts, Solicitor. Hoban & Hynes, a local drafting and design firm were engaged to prepare the design of the new clubhouse.

It was decided to proceed with the build and a Building Committee was formed, made up of Stewart Lee, Don Gordon, John Anderson, Frank Scanlon and John Salmon, a developer, who never became a club member. On a Sunday morning the Committee met on site and voted for the clubhouse we have now. Stewart Lee was a plumber, with a building licence, and told John Anderson "You find the money and I'll build it."

Finance

The financing of the job was obtained by forming a Community Advancement Co-operative, whereby if you didn't own land to mortgage, the State Government would guarantee a bank loan if you could demonstrate on paper that you would be financially viable and could meet the payments. The bank loan was \$144,000 repayable over twelve years. \$8,400 was raised from ten year loans.

The members took 1,000 shares in the Co-op at \$1.00 per share paid to 10%. This cost all new members \$100 Co-op shares, plus a joining fee and annual subscriptions.

This first year also raised \$5,000 through a Fund Raising Committee formed under Delys Reeki's guidance.

Norma Lee's Bingo was a good money spinner as Bingo was a big thing in 1982.

Support

Over the early days, Civic was assisted by other Clubs. Coaching was held on the greens at Mornington and City of Frankston and the Civic members joined in their social bowls, in fact twenty new Civic bowlers turned up one Sunday for their first game. Main Ridge also helped with social bowls and Hastings helped in pennant practice by starting the Two-Bays Shield between the two clubs prior to the start of Civic's first pennant season.

14th January 1983 – Site Work Started

Stewart Lee moved on to the site, and with his mate Peter, located the sewer main for connection and works commenced to move 8,000 cubic metres of soil to level the site for the future four greens and clubhouse. At this stage plans of the proposed project were not completed, but came soon afterwards.

February 1983

The design of the Clubhouse was approved enabling construction to begin and Bert Marshall laid the first brick to construct the machinery shed.

20 May 1983

The first Annual Report was submitted.

Over the first twelve months Stewart Lee worked on the site, building the greens, the clubhouse and greenkeepers shed, all for nothing; it did not cost the Club a cent for his labour. During this time, three greens were constructed with an excellent strike of bent grass on two, thanks to the many devoted hours that Stewart Lee put into the project, with assistance from Frank Scanlon, Frank O'Ryan and many others who worked to achieve this goal.

25th September 1983 – Opening Day

Two greens were fully completed and suitable for match play.

More than 300 guests and Members were present at the official proceedings held in the Sports Pavilion opposite, now called the David Collings Centre. Mr. David Parker, President of the RVBA officially opened the greens of the Mornington Civic Bowls & Social Club. Other VIP guests included, David Hassett MLA for Dromana, Mrs Hassett and Mrs Parker, and representatives from the Shire Council, VLBA, RVBA, and PDLBA.

Stewart Lee rolled the first bowl on the new green to officially open the green.

With membership now in excess of one hundred and fifty members, the Club immediately began a full programme on the two open greens, entering three men's and two women's teams in the pennant competitions. In addition, Ladies triples were held on Wednesday, Men's triples on Thursday, and Mixed on Friday and Sunday.

Indoor bowls competition monthly games became popular with the first practices taking place at "The Dava" day and night competitions.

With pennant teams and Club competitions now up and running, an Honour Board crafted by Peter Kamps was donated by Doreen and Bill Smith. The Club logo was designed by Jack D'Argaville.

Christmas 1983

The Clubhouse was constructed to lockup stage, no ceilings or heating and no kitchen. After twelve months of operation the Club was struggling financially and finding it difficult to meet repayments on the bank loan. It was decided to hold a "Try-Bowls Day" and invite people along, give them a free barbeque lunch, a game in the afternoon and run a raffle to pay for it. Keith Britton, Laurie Taylor and John Anderson got to work.

September 1984 – Third Green

The third green was finally completed, and as earth works had been carried out on the fourth green, this was used as a car park for some time.

The area was previously known by the locals as "Windy Hill" with no protection from the wind. This resulted in a tree planting programme with costs and labour provided by some of the members. At this stage there were no shelter sheds constructed and the members were at the mercy of the elements.

October 1984 – Inaugural "Try Bowls Day"

On a Sunday morning the first "Try Bowls Day" was a huge success. Seventy new Members were signed up on the day and solved the problem of paying the bills. The RVBA were so impressed with the story that we now have something similar all over Victoria on a Sunday in October. Over the years the interest payable on the bank loan got up to 24%. John Anderson as Chairman of the Co-op and Frank Lyons as Treasurer went to see John McLean the Manager of the National Bank. He advised the Club to increase the monthly payments. This paid off the loan in eleven years instead of twelve, wound up the Co-op and returned the share money to the Members. During this time the green keepers shed was used to serve tea and coffee until such time as the kitchen was completed in the Clubhouse in 1986.

1984 – First Ladies Classic Day represented by 42 teams.

1985 – First Ladies Invitation Day. Achievements by both women and men bowlers in top competition gained the reputation of being giant killers.
First publication of the news letter called "Just a Sec" – became the "Civic Chat" in 1989.

1986 - First Premierships at Civic with two of the four teams in the pennant competition successful repeated again by two teams in 1987.

1987 – First Life Membership awarded to Stewart Lee for his contribution to the Club and the sport of bowls.

1989 – First Premiership of the mens 'D' section pennant.
A fully paid position of Bar Manager was created, previously run by a Bar Committee and volunteers.

1990 – A presence of bandicoots was confirmed, but from information provided it was decided these should not create a problem to the greens.

1991 Shelter sheds were constructed, thanks to the hard work of the men. Blinds were installed to the windows of the clubhouse.

1992 – Synthetic Green Opened

A synthetic green was opened on the Fourth green, representing \$100,000 investment in the future of the Club. Bowlers revelled on the new surface of the green which bowled between thirteen-fourteen seconds on the opening day. Unfortunately this was not the case in future years. The green did not fulfil its expectations and eventually lay idle for many years.

1993 – Capacity Membership

This year the Club reach its membership capacity of 350 members.

1994-2000

With the Club growing in strength over the years, many achievements in bowls and gala events have been held, including State Finals, a credit to all Members. Development of the gardens and surrounds continued to improve thanks to the dedicated efforts of the volunteer gardeners. The main hall became a major function facility with demand for hire for weddings, parties and business seminars.

The first Mornington Civic Annual Ball was held in March 1998 and became an annual event.

2002 – Twentieth Anniversary

A Twentieth Anniversary celebration party was held to express thanks to the Founding Members and volunteers for the work undertaken to bring the Club to this stage.

The Clubhouse and greens now required refurbishment and a new breed of Members were prepared to work to ensure that the Club was maintained to the highest standard.

The new Committee of Management developed a five year program to have improvements carried out to enable the facility to remain one of the best clubs on the Mornington Peninsula. Major improvements to the Club since have only come about by very active volunteers.

Greenkeeper Geoff Tozer was contracted to look after the greens .

2003 – Tiff Dwarf

Tiff Dwarf, a drought resistant turf, was introduced on “C” green and drew a lot of interest from other Clubs.

2004 – Replacement of Synthetic Green

With the success of the Tiff Dwarf surface the synthetic “D” green was replaced.

As outlined in the five year plan, the introduction of smoke free zones saw the beginning of replacement of the ceiling tiles with white panels throughout the clubhouse. Through the willingness of a few Members this was completed in 2005.

The Council introduced an Occupancy Policy relating to rent and charges for the new Lease and a Committee was formed to pursue the matter as it was felt it could lead to considerable additional expense for the Club.

2005 – Clubhouse Refurbishment

To improve the appearance of the Clubhouse the existing tables and chairs were changed .

Furniture used in the Commonwealth Games Village was purchased by raising funds through a scheme called 100-UP.

Resurfacing the floor was negotiated with the Council at no cost to the Club.

Water Grant

Maintaining the greens was a new expense to be considered as the Club was going to be charged water rates. Application was made for a \$40,000 Water Grant from the Commonwealth Government to develop water harvesting and storage.

“A” green had been laying idle and it was now considered viable to plant with Tiff Dwarf.

April 2005

The Club was approached by the Council and Mornington RSL Club for the RSL to become a co-tenant with the Bowls Club. A sub-committee was formed to carry out a Feasibility Study and report back to members, and on submission to a Special General Meeting it was resolved not to proceed.

2006-2007

Through the hard working efforts of members, \$39,000 received for the Water Grant project was commenced and completed early in 2007 within budget and on time. MP Bruce Billson formally presented the Club with a certificate from the Federal Government.

Due to the success of “C” & “D” green it was agreed to replace “B” green with Tiff Dwarf, play commencing midway into 2007.

Friday Night Barefoot Bowls was first introduced over summer and proved to be a great success.

The Club introduced and developed their first website.

2009

To improve shelter from the sun for bowlers, rollout shade cloths were purchased and installed on one side of "A", "B", "C" greens.

2010 – Environment Improvement Plan - Recycled Water Irrigation

A "partnership for a sustainable future" was established with Mornington Shire Council the Club and South East Water. Under EPA guidelines, the Club was given access to pipe Class "C" recycled water to use for fixed spray irrigation of the greens. To meet the conditions of the plan, the Club was required to install poly lined 45,000 ltr storage, ensure appropriate OH & S safety practices for both workers and bowlers and report annually to SE Water through the Greenkeeper on performance and compliance.

2011

The employed Bar Manager retired and volunteer Club Members took over running the bar. This included the Club's bowls days and social events, as well as providing service for private functions.

2013

Shade cloth shelters installed on open sides of all four greens leaving only one end on "D" green not under cover because of the close location of the greenkeepers shed/s.