

The Clubs new green opened by the Lady Mayoress on 2nd May 1976



From members memories (with thanks to Shirley Palmer)

1984-2000

Around 1984 was the time that all local outdoor clubs were asked to get together to help finance Egham indoor building. Egham had the ground but we all put in our contributions to raise money for building. Indoor bowls was emerging game that could be played all year and never weather dependent.

Up until this time most matches were still segregated with men and women playing separate games, although some mixed games were played, however this was exception rather than the rule.

The Club was run by two committees – A Ladies and Men's committee with strict demarcation until gradually things grew easier though not completely changed until change of Constitution in **2013**

The Council were still in complete charge during this period -cleaning, greenkeeping, security etc etc. The Club Sec and Fixture secretary had to book each match and pavilion hiring separately and members had no right of entry to pavilion except at match times. Members paid for a season ticket from the Council which enabled them to bowl at other times. The Council employed a Greenkeeper on duty all the times to keep an eye on things. The toilets and lockers were upstairs where Staines Museum have their archives and office currently.

The members fee was paid to the Council and was about £60pa with pensioners half price. Those were the days!

We had no actual bar but as teas were served halfway through games (made only by ladies) once they were cleared away the kitchen turned into the bar – all the bottles etc were locked away afterwards behind a screen. Joan Blockley and her husband Denis ran the bar. Before this time the club had used the upstairs room for after match sessions, but it was rather small.

The green was closed, and park locked half an hour before dusk so late matches were stopped in mid-flow unless we had a helpful greenkeeper on duty!

The club had an annual Bowls Tour holiday organised by the then President/Captain – Laurie Hale and his wife Grace. They went to various seaside destinations and games were organised by the County association – which had to get county's consent – Bournemouth, Exmouth etc were all good holidays – mainly taking place in September.

Here is a picture of our ladies in 1999 (80th anniversary).



2000 -2009

The Council were now starting to look at other ways of running bowls clubs but trying to shift the costs a little. To begin with they offered us a “partnership” which meant we had more use of the pavilion, but the Council still did greenkeeping and locking up etc. This arrangement went on for a while and it got gradually overtaken by self-management. For example, we took over the cleaning (which improved conditions no end) even if some members were resistant to the idea of cleaning the toilets.

After some time under these rather ad hoc arrangements the Council appointed Liz Borthwick (Deputy Council Leader) to oversee more radical changes as she had done this in other Boroughs.

Disability law changes meant that Council buildings had to offer proper disabled toilet facilities, so the plan was to take the public loos which were at the end of building and access them from inside pavilion while leaving one loo accessible from outside. The builders also added changing areas for both men and women, the redundant ladies' toilet was made into a bar area and the kitchen would be refitted. The whole front of the pavilion would be extended giving us extra space. The bar was handed over with the counter and the Brady security shutter fitted but the club were left to do other finishing touches. Our Bar manager was Norman Brown who fitted all the shelving which is still in place. John Hay as Bar Manager since as long as anyone can remember up to the present has added other things to bring it further up to date.

During this period the Council were in negotiations with all three main clubs in Spelthorne to take responsibility for the complete running of their Clubs – it was really a question of “do you want to close, or will you take complete financial control of the running of your clubs.” They gave us the promise of reducing financial help for the next four years while we sorted ourselves out and also gave us free access to their solicitors (Rowberry Morris) to oversee the legal aspects and draw up a lease.

We finished long drawn out negotiations with a 30-year lease which was signed with effect from April 2009 with four years of reducing financial help, and a contract with Level green for the greenkeeping on all three club greens for the next three years. Also, in the agreement was for public play to be available on rink 6 with the hiring etc done by the leisure centre, and four free coaching sessions to be offered to anyone who showed an interest. The club have managed to go forward successfully on this basis even if we have had a few hiccups on the way.

Part of the contract with the Council was for certain works to be done – taller security fencing all round, moving a pond and garden area in front of pavilion(which was difficult to look after and a haunt of large rats!)

We had a celebration match when it was all done with the then Mayor, Robin Sider opening the proceedings – he gave us the Mayors cup to mark the day which we now use for 75-point competition. Other cups we have to commemorate past members are the Bill Goodsell trophy, Tom McCarthy cup and Maisie Hale Trophy as I'm sure new members might wonder who they were.

Bowling at this time was getting much more towards the mixed games – even if some members still weren't sure

The club got the indoor short mat with a Lottery grant early on in 2004/5 when the applications were difficult but not impossible – The short mat has provided us with a lot of entertainment over the years.

Clive Lintott began organising Potters holidays in 2005 and took a club group to Devon for a summer tour in 2007. The annual Potters trips have continued to date and prove very popular.

One of the spin offs from the away trips was to use any spare money to improve the clubhouse. This included carpet tiles laid in clubhouse and furniture for outside – umbrellas etc.

2009 – 2018

The Constitution was changed in 2013 to make the club officially mixed and to be in line with Bowls England and Middlesex. There have been other minor changes and additions in following years as necessary to keep the Constitution up to date.

After a lot of consideration, it was decided in about 2010 (no one can remember exactly when) that the club would change its uniform to a white shirt with a collar of blue & yellow. This replaced the traditional navy blazer which had been the uniform since memories began.

A ground source irrigation system was installed in 2013 after an awful summer drought had meant watering green by hand. The Club gives grateful thanks to the unknown donor for a generous donation to pay for this.

There is a Garden Club led by Margaret George which makes our borders a real talking point and she will have extra help with the Notcutts link this year. Notcutts link will benefit all members as well.

In the winter of 2013/14 the Thames flooded, and water backed up the Sweeps Ditch and flooded the green



The flood damage of 2013 was repaired using a grant secured by Eric Moore from Sport England and the works were carried out by hardworking Club members.

The Club runs a tight budget with membership fees being held at £95pa since 2014. The fees do not cover the whole cost of running the club and maintaining the green. The addition costs are supplemented by match fees, raffles, money from clothes sales, books and jigsaws, social events and of course THE BAR.

The Social Sub-committee keep us amused and busy all year but especially during winter – and raises a lot money too. The club continues to be active in the winter with two short mat sessions held on a Monday evening and Friday afternoon each week during the closed season and monthly social events.

Each year club numbers can go up or down. When Shirley Palmer joined, we had a waiting list. Shirley joined in the 1980s and was Club Secretary from 2000 to 2017. The membership has fluctuated but has recently (in the last couple of years from 2015) started to come back up. In 2018 there were almost 100 members following on from a membership campaign and two successful open days. We have had Open days for some years now to welcome new members and we have been lucky enough to gain some quite promising bowlers over the last few years. In house training by Club Captain Eric Moore and Gary Taylor keeps the standards high and the County training days (though a bit frightening) have helped to improve our games (we hope)

In 2017 the Council kindly provided and fitted three direction and name signs to Staines Bowls Club to make it easier for people and visiting teams to find us.

To widen the appeal of the game to a younger audience we had the top year of Riverbridge school for a four-week taster course in 2017.

In April 2018 Spelthorne Council announced plans to build a replacement leisure centre on the site of Staines Bowls Club and the adjacent tennis courts. If this were to go ahead the Council would invoke a break clause in the lease in April 2019 – which is the club's centenary year.

Between April and October 2018, the club and its members were waiting for the Sword of Damocles. The members and their committee decided to resist the proposal even though the odds of success were slim. It was decided to elect the help of our local M.P (Mr Kwasi Kwarteng), and to find local councillors that would support us. Kwasi Kwarteng immediately met with us and offered advice on how to approach the Council. He also wrote to the Leader indicating his support for the club. The response from Spelthorne was not encouraging. Their view was that bowling was in decline and our green was “up for grabs”. We arranged to have a meeting with the officers of the council, where they made it clear their intention was to proceed with a development on Staines Park and that in June they proposed to have a Public Consultation on the benefits of the development. At this stage we thought our best

option was to discuss with Spelthorne a practical alternative location for the club, but they were less than keen to consider that because it would cost them a lot of money. Their proposal was for Staines Bowling Club to cease and its members join up with other clubs in the area. We pointed out that under Spelthorne's own planning rules they were obliged to relocate us if they built on the park. This stumped them and started to become a game changer in the discussions especially when local clubs made it clear that they could not cater for us anyway. When the Public Consultation happened in June, the local residents took an interest. It soon became clear to them and us that no other alternative location had been seriously considered by Spelthorne, and that most of the park would disappear under the development. We suddenly had a very strong ally in the form of the "Save Staines Park" group. If they saved the park, then it would probably save the club, so we worked in parallel with them. Petitions were started, there was a massive party/demonstration in the park with press coverage and social media used to gain support for opposing the development.

On 14th September a public meeting was held in the clubhouse. It was attended by Kwasi Kwarteng and several Spelthorne Councillors along with about 120 public and club members. It was apparent that the Leader of the council was losing support for his premise that Staines Park was "the best place" to develop. Shortly after this meeting the ruling conservative council members met and decided that Spelthorne would look at alternative sites for their New Leisure Centre proposal. This was confirmed in a press release. We wrote to Spelthorne and asked them to confirm that our lease would not be broken in April 2019. Their in-house lawyer wrote confirming that the terms of the lease would not change. On the 18th October we attended the Full Council meeting at Knowle Green Council Offices and asked the Leader to confirm what their press release and their in-house lawyer had said. His reply was recorded.

Council – 18 October 2018

Item 8 – Questions from Members of the Public

3. Question from Mr Mike Jones

"In the light of the Council's statement in August that it will no longer develop on Staines Park or the Bowls Club grounds, will the Council now categorically confirm that they will NOT be issuing a lease termination notice in April 2019 and that Staines Bowling Club can stay on the site for the remainder of their lease."

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Harvey:

"Thank you for your question Mr Jones. The Council has already been clear that it will not seek to develop a new Leisure Centre on Staines Park. It follows that there are no plans to terminate your lease in April 2019.

The Council expects both parties to honour the commitments made in the Lease and does not intend to re-negotiate the terms. This was confirmed to the Club in a letter dated 1 October this year."



There were several other significant events during 2018 which were overshadowed by the difficulties of the club with its Landlord.

In June we invited two sets of guests from local societies to come and trial an evening of bowling. Firstly, the guides, who turned out to be enthusiastic and surprisingly good, and then later we had about 20 U3A members try us out – and several of them joined. All in all, these samplers were a success, and were one small part of our recruitment campaign to bring the numbers of members up to 100 in anticipation of our 100th birthday in 2019.

In September the club was honoured to host the Thames Valley and South Middlesex League Finals for the first time in its history. It turned out to be a very busy day for the bar.

Another first for 2018 was the club being sponsored by a local business. Notcutts Garden Centre became our official sponsor. They provided the club with 5 new benches and donated materials and plants for our garden, which helped to maintain the very high standard achieved by the gardening team headed by Margaret George.

Of course, green bowling is dependent on fine weather, and it must be said that Summer 2018 was an exceptional one, with long hot days all the way through. Murphy's law dictated that the watering/irrigation system chose this year to break down. Lots of hand-held hoses were required to stop the grass completely dying. After several weeks of vain attempts, the system was eventually made good and automatic timed watering resumed, much to the relief of our groundsman, Trevor.

The club was honoured yet again when Dot Stanners (our current vice-president) was nominated and elected to be President of Middlesex Ladies in 2019. She will have her work cut out, as it's a very intensive schedule of matches.

2019

Potters (a venue in East Anglia that has activities including indoor bowls) has turned into a very polar annual trip away for the club. Organised by Clive Lintott since 2005 for mid-January it is proving more popular than ever with 63 members signed up for the 2019 "bash".