PORTLAND BOWLING CLUB
CENTENARY SOUVENIR

Compiled by J. G. Wiltshire - Town Council Historian

Portland Bowling Club Committee — 1981-1982

Cover Pic: Model of Past and Present Bowlers made by Mrs. Min Carman, Secretary of Ladies Bowling Club.
PORTLAND BOWLING CLUB
CENTENNARY SOUVENIR BOOK

COMPiled FOR THE CLUB BY J.G.WILTshire. (Town Council Historian)

CENTENARY COMMITTEE:

V. CARMan     PRESIDENT
L.TAYLOR     SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
W.PITTS     SECRETARY
F.BREMNER     PRESIDENT ASSOCIATES (Ladies)
F.GREIG     SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
M. CARMan     SECRETARY

INTRODUCTION.

When I was asked to compile a Centenary Souvenir Booklet for the Portland Bowling Club I was told that all records up to 1960 had been mislaid, and that all information would have to be researched by someone with the necessary facilities.

I agreed to write a booklet suitable for a centenary souvenir.

It would not be a history of the club.

Such a work would require years of research, and would result in a volume of at least 300 pages costing no less than $20 a volume to publish.

So this little booklet deals only with the origins of the club, in detail, 100 years ago, culled from newspapers of the day.

Added to this there are statistics and dates of more modern times supplied from an unspecified list - just things which have been picked out by the club as informative, and appropriate to such a souvenir work.

Unpretentious though it is, there is no doubt that this Centenary Souvenir Booklet will prove a very interesting little document, not only to bowlers, but as a genuine historical document forming part of Portland’s 150th anniversary in two years’ time.

On Saturday, October 15, 1881, the Portland Guardian reported that "a meeting of gentlemen interested in the foundation of a "bowling club in Portland vas held yesterday afternoon, at four o'clock, in Mac's Hotel".

There were present Messrs F. Schofield (in the chair); S. Williamson, J.S. Jarrett, J. Chapman, S. Greer, H. Scott, T. Bennett, T.E. Woods, C.M. Maplestone and J.S. Stewart

The chairman opened proceedings by briefly stating that for a couple of months several gentlemen had been discussing the possibility of forming a bowling club in the town.

An application had been made for a grant of ground, and this had proved successful.

Mr Stewart had taken a lively interest in the movement, and had information on the subject which would be very helpful in furthering the object in view.

Mr Stewart remarked that for years he had been an enthusiastic bowler, and was passionately fond of the game.

He had felt, since taking up residence in the town, that a capital club might be established, and consequently looked about him for a suitable place for play.

No piece had satisfied him until he came upon a block behind the Town Hall reserve which he thought would do admirably.

It was central, tolerably level, and near the Government offices, and would be under the eye of some official, either from the gaol or police barracks, continually.

Application had been made to the Lands Department, which was refused in the first instance; "but with a little push, perseverance and persuasion the request for a portion of the land had been granted eventually.

It now rested with the meeting to organise the club, and arrange the preparation of the ground.

Mr Stewart spoke in high praise of the game as a pleasant recreation for gentlemen of middle age, whose football and cricketing days were past.

He moved that: "In the opinion of this meeting, it is desirable to form a bowling club in Portland".

The motion was seconded by Mr Samuel Williamson, and carried unanimously.

A committee consisting of all gentlemen present was formed to carry the first resolution of the meeting into effect, on the motion of S. Williamson, seconded by J. Chapman.

The committee undertook to set to work without delay to obtain an estimate of the cost of fencing, trenching, levelling and otherwise preparing the ground, and to report to the next meeting.

All present agreed that they would become, as soon as it was founded, members of the club.

The land granted was 150 by 100 feet, and it was proposed to prepare 130 by 80 for play.
This would accommodate 32 players. Consideration of subscription and entrance fees was deferred until probable expenses could be arrived at, but from conversation that took place it seemed likely that subscriptions would be two guineas for town members, and one guinea, at most, for country members.

The next meeting of the club was fixed for Friday afternoon, 21 October, at Mac's Hotel.

Over the next month or so several meetings were held.

Mr H.C. Cudden, secretary of the Richmond Bowling Club, sent information regarding formation, drainage, fencing, etc.; and enclosing a copy of the Richmond club's rules.

Mr Joseph Couch, of South Portland, had inspected the site with members of the Committee and had given a rough estimate of costs.

Approximate figures were:

Six foot fence, with sawn boards, and cap: 15 pounds. Seven foot high: h pounds more.
Trenching 8 pounds; labour erecting the fence: 5 pounds; drainage and pipes: 6 pounds.
Expenses for seed, manure and sowing would bring the probable total to 50 pounds.

At a meeting Friday, October 28, 1881,

Mr S. Williamson moved: "that a club be formed, and that it be called the Portland Bowling Club".

Mr J. Chapman seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Mr T. Must was elected the first President, by a unanimous vote.

Mr J.S. Stewart was first vice-President, and Mr C. Maplestone honorary secretary.

Mr S. Greer was elected honorary treasurer, and the Messrs Williamson, Chapman, E. Atkinson and J.S. Schofield, committee members.

Subscriptions were fixed at one guinea per year, those joining after the expiration of one year to pay an additional entrance fee, of one guinea, excepting country members, whose subscription would be one guinea and no entrance fee.

A list of probable members was divided among the gentlemen present, for canvassing purposes, and it was arranged that the gentlemen who had kindly taken in hand the farming of the funds should report to the next meeting.

And so the Portland Bowling Club was formed and founded on the 28th day of October 1881.

At the first meeting after lists of probable members had been distributed, it was re-reported that no less than 30 had promised to pay subscriptions when called upon to do so.

In addition to these, another 20 may be reasonably expected to become members.

In the light of such promising results, it was resolved to fence the site with a 7 foot fence of sawn timber, and to open an account with the Colonial Bank in the name of the club.
Mr W. Mackay, Clerk of Works for the Council, provided plans and specifications for the works.

Tenders were called, and were opened on November 17, when George Findlay's tender for 30 pounds, plus 15/- extra for tarring posts was accepted, three tenders being submitted.

At the same meeting it was reported that there were 41 members already enlisted.

For a long time after this no meeting was called.

It is certain that there was no match that season.

FIRST ANNUAL MEETING: FRIDAY 13 OCTOBER, 1882.

It had been stated by one of the founders of the club, at the very first meeting, that, apart from the pleasures of the game, "the establishment of a club would lead to matches probably with Melbourne players, and so be a means of attracting visitors to whom the beauties of Portland would otherwise remain unknown.

"It would also give much pleasure to gentlemen in the habit of visiting the town in the summer months".

This prophecy was fulfilled, according to the next report on club activities, which did not appear until the Guardian of October 12, in the following year, 1882, in which the first annual meeting was advertised.

There also appeared a paragraph which would seem to indicate that, although there had "been no report in the paper, activity had been continuous, and work done, all through the remainder of 1881 and the autumn of '82.

Now, in October of '82 it is reported that interest was being taken in the Portland bowling green by players coming from a distance.

One of the railway contractors, Mr J.H. Sutherland, writing to a friend in Portland, said that he purposed being in Portland on the day of the opening match.

He challenged the best players of the club and stated that he would give a prize to be played for by those who had never won a prize, under such rules as the committee may arrange.

"We understand that bowling green prizes are as a rule well worth competing for," said the Guardian, "as they are seldom of less value than 5 guineas, and often double that amount".

The first annual meeting was held Friday, October 13, and was occupied mainly with the adoption of rules and by-laws as laid down and practiced 'by the best clubs in the colony'.

There were 42 subscribers, who were urged 'to bestir themselves immediately, pay up, and get down to some energetic practice'.

Officers elected at the first annual meeting were: President, T. Must; vice-Presidents, J. Stewart and F.L. Lyne; honorary secretary, C.M. Maplestone; ("He was a useful secretary," said Mr Stewart, "and the secretary held a most important office.")

S.M. Greer was elected treasurer.

Members of committee appointed were Messrs Chapman, Atkinson, Rose, and Charles.
New members proposed and accepted were: Messrs D. McLeod; T.D. Hughes, T. Bell, N. Thornley, F.J. Thwaites, J. Elliott and J. Lee Archer.

Mr Stewart observed that the first duty of the President was to give the first prize of the season, which must be played for by every member of the club who has paid up.

The vice-Presidents have to follow in similar manner, after which special prizes such as that offered by Mr Sutherland would be played for, on terms to be specified.

The opening match was to be played on the following Saturday, November 4, beginning at 3pm and closing at 6.

Mr Stewart observed that he was endeavouring to negotiate with several Melbourne clubs to send up representatives on Boxing Day, New Year’s Day, etc., and believed he should be successful, "although the novices of Portland are sure to get woefully beaten!"

Unfortunately when the holiday season came round there was little news of the bowling club and none at all of any visiting challengers.

At this time bowling news and reports in the press become more and more scarce, until they fade completely, although the club itself prospered.

This is quite surprising, as before the opening match of that year there were frequent items reported; and of the opening day itself, there was a full and detailed report, players, winners, and all.

The Guardian of October 19, 1882, published the following:

"Activities at the Portland Bowling Green are now to be witnessed any afternoon, and the game seems to be greatly enjoyed by the members of the club.

"From a dozen to a score of players usually occupy the arena from U to 6pm, and play the game as well as they know how, or are instructed in its intricacies by Mr Stewart.

"Day by day the number of players increases, and the game seems likely to take fast hold upon the local population.

"When the summer visitors arrive in crowds and Mac's Hotel is obliged to close its hospitable doors against the new arrivals, being already full to overflowing, there will be many to whom the green will be a great boon, affording means of pleasantly while away those hours that intervene between lunch and dinner, and are sometimes, in the absence of fitting occupation, found to be somewhat tedious.

"And bowling is truly a gentle and alluring pastime!

"It makes no excessive demands upon the muscular energies of its devotees.

"It is not, like some other games, productive of fractures, dislocations, or even abrasions of the cuticle."
"And it has this advantage: that the player knows exactly when the sport will conclude; whereas, in aquatic amusements, for example, one may know when he will put to sea, but cannot tell, even approximately, when he will come ashore again.

"As to the quality of the play to be witnessed on the Portland green: it is, of course, various.

"Few of the players are experts; others have had some experience; others again are mere beginners; but there is not the difference in their play that might be expected, as the green is not yet in that perfect condition which is required to give superior skill fair play.

"We hope to see the arena on Gaol Hill a popular resort of the citizens of Portland for many years to come."

THE OPENING OFFICIAL MATCH ON THE PORTLAND GREEN.

The opening match of the 1882-1883 season, which was, indeed, the first official match of the properly constituted Portland Bowling Club, was played on Saturday, November 4, 1882.

"A few minutes before 3 o'clock," reported the Guardian, "saw a capital attendance of budding champions, and a number of veteran bowlers.

"Shortly afterwards a number of ladies and a few gentlemen visitors took their seats near the pavilion as spectators to what was for most a novel game.

"The weather was delightful, and the green in very good order.

"Mr Stewart was very energetic in his management and general preparatory activities.

"The sides were classified for three rinks and the "bell rung for play considerably before 4 o'clock.

"It was arranged that play should be continued up to 6.15.

"Interest was maintained to the finish, for each was so engrossed with the play of his own team that he had no time to enquire how the battle went with his neighbour, though it appeared from sundry signs and utterances that the President's team was getting the best of it.

"Some very good play was shown, and some very indifferent play also; but there is promise of very considerable skill amongst the novices, which may, with steady practice, develop to the credit of the club.

"A few of the spectators seemed a little bewildered at first; but in a short time they were able to see where the skill came in.

"They took a lively interest in as much of the game as they could see from their seats.

"The green will undoubtedly be a favourite resort for the ladies on summer afternoons, when the more violent exertions of lawn tennis has to be abandoned because of the heat.

"The President, Mr Must, officially announced the result to be:

"President: 106."Vice-President: 54"
"A return match will be played in one week; but to save the green, practice in the meantime must be across the green.

"Mr J.S. Stewart did not play, but managed all the rinks tirelessly, and was very severe on any who were guilty of the least breach of the rules.

"He evidently means the game to be properly played, and is perfectly right in insisting on the strictest attention to its laws."

The players were:

| No. 1 Rink | President: | A.D. Stewart | C. Nicolson |
| No. 1 Rink | Vice-President: | S.M Greer (Capt.) | T. Bennett |
| No. 1 Rink | Score: | T. Smith | C. Maplestone (Capt.) |
| No. 1 Rink | Score: | 31 | 16 |

| No. 2 Rink | J. Elliott | T. Lord |
| No. 2 Rink | J. Lee Archer | H. Brewer |
| No. 2 Rink | J.S. Charles (Capt.) | F. Lyne (Capt.) |
| No. 2 Rink | Score: | 38 | 15 |

| No. 3 Rink | C. Badnall | Lin. Clarke |
| No. 3 Rink | T. Must | W. Ponsford |
| No. 3 Rink | W.R. Rose (Capt.) | J. Chapman (Capt.) |
| No. 3 Rink | Score: | 37 | 23 |
| No. 3 Rink | Total: | 106 | 54 |

WATER!

The greatest problem facing the infant club was lack of water.

The Guardian of 31 October, 1882 recorded: "BORING FOR WATER IN THE BOWLING GREEN.

"What is most of all necessary to the integrity of a lawn or grass sward throughout the summer months is a plentiful supply of water, which together with the diligent use of the
mower and roller usually suffices to circumvent the effects of sun and North wind, as is very
evident by the admirable condition in which the bowling greens around Melbourne are found
to be from beginning to end of the playing season.

"But to keep a green in perfect playing condition far from the Yan Yean taps is a different
affair altogether, particularly when the sward is new as is the case here at the present time.

"The proprietors of the new green are eager to enjoy the use of it at once, and will not give
the grass leisure to establish itself, or gather strength.

"The members of the club are quite enamoured with their new amusement, and assemble in
such numbers every afternoon that every part of the playground is severely trodden.

"Although the conservator has done his best, and has rained a good deal of carted water over
its surface, it could not form a sole at all likely to withstand the summer heats unless some
better means were found to freshen it up, and to stimulate its growth. "It was accordingly
decided by the club to bore for water within the green enclosure -quite a feasible project since
water has always been found in and around Portland at a moderate depth. "The job was
entrusted to Mr Couch, who was supplied with a shell auger of 2 1/4 inch, also the necessary
jumper, and iron rods.

"On Thursday last a tripod was erected on the North margin of the green, and tackle fitted to
raise the apparatus as required.

"Boring was then commenced, and proceeded rapidly through a red tenacious clay for 25 ft.
when the texture stiffened, and at 60 ft. pipeclay was reached, it being pure white.

"At 4pm on Saturday water was struck about that depth, and here the boring rods sank under
their own weight to 81 ft., where operations on the drilling were suspended for the time being.

"The water stood in the bore at a depth of 39 ft. from the surface, and consideration was
immediately given to making it available for use. At a meeting held on November 6, it was
resolved to sink a bore of

"It was estimated that the necessary pumping apparatus would cost 6 pounds plus the cost of
sinking the well, and 400 bricks for the well itself.

"It was resolved that the committee obtain water without delay by the cheapest but best
possible method."

The Guardian of 23 November stated that the late warm and genial rains had saved the
bowling green, for during the late hot weather the supply of carted water had proved quite
inadequate to maintain the green's vitality.

The well was sunk to the required depth, and bricked; and after the usual frustrating delay a
pump ordered from Melbourne arrived, and was installed.

The water proved abundant, and of good quality, and It was decided to install a windmill, to
save the labour of pumping "by hand, and to "be in no danger of lacking a plentiful supply of
water above ground at all times.

"Yesterday afternoon," reported the Guardian of 30 December, 1882, "a machine was seen to
make its way through the streets leading to the pleasure ground on Gaol Hill. (Bowling green)
"Its strange appearance elicited a lot of comment; but the curiosity of the public was put at ease when it was made known that it was only a windmill constructed at H.C. Williamson's works in Henty Street to raise water from the recently sunk well at the bowling green in order that the 'convincing ground' may be properly watered over the long hot summer which we are likely to have before the close of this season".

This windmill was an unqualified success; but it brought about a strange reaction from a fellow who wrote to the Editor the following odd letter, which was published January 9, 1883:

"Sir, what are the God-fearing residents of Portland about that they should permit the bowling green windmill to work on Sundays?

"Why have not loud and indignant protests been recorded in your columns?

"The mill itself has protested in every way that it is possible for an inanimate object to protest.

"The first Sabbath it was made to work it shrieked its objections with horrible shrieks, but to no avail.

"The second time (yesterday) it got furious and smashed its connecting rod.

"Actions speak louder than words!

"How long is this desecration of the Sabbath to continue?

'Unco Guid'."

With the installation of the permanent water supply the green thrived; and that event was to mark the end of problems and teething trouble associated with the club's establishment.

It was, indeed, the close of that chapter of the history of the Portland Bowling Club.

**A NEW PAVILION AND MELBOURNE VISITORS: 1903.**

Now this is not a comprehensive history of the Portland Bowling Club.

As stated in the introduction, it is a souvenir booklet, the subject of which is the origin of the club, in the first place, and a brief resume of important events since.

Having given the actual history of the beginning, we will, very briefly indeed, list the outstanding 'milestones' which have been passed since.

Perhaps the greatest improvement, after 22 years in existence, and the most notable event since the installation of a water supply, was the erection 'at last' as the local paper said, 'of something like an up-to-date pavilion'.

The Guardian of March 20,1903, went on and reported that the building of a new pavilion at the green, and the expending of the money set aside for the project, had been entrusted to Mr A.H. Andrews, architect; and that at time of going to press, the builder Mr Papley had almost completed the work.
At Easter time that same year a Melbourne team came to Portland to play a four-rink match against the locals.

Although the visitors won the day, they do not go down in history as making a clean sweep, for they were soundly beaten in the first rink, Portland Captain being the Mayor, W. Hanlon.

These were the first Melbourne visitors to play a match on the Portland green, and it is a fact worthy of note that the new pavilion could have been only just finished when they came.

It would seem that the Portland club felt obliged to have facilities to match the event, and rose to the occasion.

The Melbourne team was from the bowls team of the Melbourne Cricket Club.

In the following year, 1904, the M.C.C. is reported as having played Portland at both bowls and cricket.

The Portland Bowling Club played on that original green for 88 years; but in 1969 moved to the present site on the bluff.

There it prospers today as never before.

LADIES' CLUB FORMED

The Portland Guardian of March 17, reported that a Ladies Bowling Club had been formed in Portland, with a membership of twelve.

The first President was Mrs Stewart Malseed, and Mrs Whitbourn was the honorary secretary.

The ladies were 'all very keen, and taking a great interest in the progress of the club'.

The club had welcomed to the green numerous lady visitors who were so pleased with the hospitality shown them by the ladies that trophies had been donated to the club by the visitors and the gentleman bowlers had also been generous in donating trophies.

The ladies were very grateful to all these donors, and several trophies had already been played for, as follows:

Singles:  Mrs Raymond Adamson
Pairs:    Mrs Malseed and Mrs Fredericks
Rinks:    Mrs Kurd, Miss Wiltshire, Miss Cameron and Mrs Otter.

THE LADIES v THE LORDS

The first match to be played by the ladies against the gentleman bowlers was reported in the Guardian of April 7, 1941:

"On Tuesday afternoon, April 1, the Bowling Ladies challenged the Bowling Lords to a friendly match."
"The Lords on the rink which I observed seemed to be only three in number, at first.

"Poor fellows! I pitied them. They were as nervous as cats. (Tom-cats, of course!)

"Why! The bowls fairly rattled in their hands, and would have done so if their hands had been big enough to hold two bowls at once!

"On the other hand the Ladies were as cool and confident as though beating a parcel of old Bowling Lords were an everyday performance.

"But why should these poor men be so nervous while the Ladies were so calm? Perhaps because the proximity of females where no female had previously intruded was disturbing even to those of the grandfather species.

"At first there were only three men on the rink I was watching - Lords G, R, and B.

"The opposition consisted of Ladies D, W, R and Da.

"I felt truly sorry for the unfortunate ' grandpas.

"Lord B led for the men against Lady Da. The excitement made him so weak he could not bowl hard enough to reach the kitty.

"As for poor Lord R, he had to play against his wife.

"It was terrible!

"He simply dared not allow his bowls to kiss 'Kitty'. On the previous afternoon this same Lord's bowls were constantly kissing Kitty; but you can understand how different it would be to carry on with all this kissing with a wife present! It simply isn't done!

"Lord G was fairly trembling with excitement and his bowling was awful. I heard one Lady say: Why! I thought Lord G was one of their very best bowlers!

"Naturally the Ladies were delighted with their success, and clapped their hands as the Lords went down end after end, (or end over end so to speak) until afternoon tea, when the score stood at Ladies 12; Lords 1.

"After calming their nerves with tea, scones and tobacco, the three Bowling Lords G, R, and B were joined by a fourth player, Lord F, who was unwillingly pressed into this rink, with which he should have been playing from the start.

"The Lords having reinforced themselves with the aforesaid stimulants, they were now enabled to throw off their shyness, and show that they knew something about the game.

"Regardless of the Ladies' feelings, all four Bowling Lords now started kissing 'Kitty' in the boldest, most shameless manner, so that at the conclusion of the game the score was:

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"However, all jokes aside it was a very meritorious performance by the Ladies, considering that they were almost all new chums; and also that until the last week or two they have only
being used to playing in the 'bull paddock' (the South green recently established) though why 'bull paddock' I don't know, but obviously not because the Ladies play there'.

"Well. Here's to a return match; and may it "be held on an equally fine day, and with equal good will and friendliness on "both sides".

The Guardian of May 5, 1941, reported:

“The Ladies' Bowling Club has just concluded a. very successful season. All the members have been very pleased with the progress of the club, and it is hoped there will be several new members next season.

"Mrs Malseed was the winner of the Champion match, with Mrs Dusting runner-up.

"Mrs Fredericks won the President's trophy.

THE MOVE TO HANLON PARADE

The last match played at "Gaol Hill' was Saturday, March 22, 1969.

The first match on the new greens was that of the ladies, March 25, 1969 -

The Hanlon Parade greens were officially opened by the Mayor, Cr R Halliday, 29 March, 1969.

The cost of the new greens was $3,608. The cost of the buildings was $23,464

All loans were repaid by July 1, 1981.