

# Narre Warren Bowls Club



30 years 1987-2017

## **NARRE WARREN BOWLS CLUB**

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# Introduction

This document covering the first 30 year history of Narre Warren Bowls Club is divided into three broad sections, namely the *Beginning* and first 10-year period, the *Consolidation* and second 10-year period, and the *Change* and the third 10-year period. A brief concluding section provides information on plans already in place for the beginning of the next decade together with some crystal balling on where the club may travel during the period.

## The Beginning and First Decade

The club commenced with a letter written to the City of Berwick in March 1984 by two Berwick bowlers who lived in Narre Warren. The bowlers, Lorna and Bill Wilson pointed out the need for a second bowling club in the district as the existing club, Berwick, had reached saturation point. Very little information is available on what took place over the next 18 months. A newspaper article, retained in club records, and marked as being published on the 23/10/1985, says that 31 bowls enthusiasts met at a public meeting called to look into the possibility of a second bowls club being formed in the area. The article also says that two sites were suggested for the new club, being beside the Fountain Gate oval and east of the Civic Centre.

The article also mentions the council had tentatively set aside \$100,000 in the 1987/88 estimates to establish a new club; however, the City Manager explained to the meeting that Council would need to be convinced a need for it existed before making a final commitment. The article further mentions that a Steering (Foundation) Committee had been formed.

The Foundation Committee of the proposed Narre Warren Bowls Club met for the first time on 29 October 1985. This committee was very active, and

started raising funds and running bowls tournaments with the help of the Berwick Bowls Club. The Foundation Committee called a public meeting, and it was held on 9 April 1986 – ‘for persons 18 years and over who are interested, and wish to become members of this worthwhile club’. A total of 74 people attended the meeting and, of these, 72 paid \$2.00, and thus became the foundation members of the club. A Steering Committee was elected at the public meeting. The meeting was chaired by Councillor John Bryon. Records show that the meeting was informed that the Berwick Bowls Club had approximately 300 members, and had a waiting list of people wanting to join the club.

The need for another bowls club in the general Fountain Gate area had been clearly demonstrated, and Council set about finding appropriate land, preparing cost estimates and allocating the required monies in their planning budgets.

**The Foundation Committee of the proposed Narre Warren Bowls Club met for the first time on 29 October 1985**

The decision on the site was made in February 1986 based on advice the council received from an organisation called the Turf Research and Advisory Institute. A local newspaper article published in February 1986 detailed the advice given by the Institute. It says that included in the Institute’s advice was a statement ‘the site next to the oval allowed for the development of two good greens, with the potential for a third if the cricket oval was moved closer to the highway’. The article also said the Institute cautioned that wind could be a problem, adding it could be diminished with the planting of suitable shrubs. It also said that

flooding of the greens was unlikely. Work started on construction of the Green A in April or May 1987. Green A was constructed first and was completed some two years before Green B was completed. While Council approved plans for the construction of two greens it provided money initially for full construction of green A only and partial construction (earthworks only) for Green B. Photographs taken in August 1987 show Green A having been formed and levelled, and concrete ditch walls, water service, shelter sheds, fence posts erected/installed and screen trees planted. So much was achieved between May and August 1987. A newspaper report of the time says in one article ‘the building of the green, under the guidance of City Contracts engineer Graeme McMillian included the use of sterilised sand, like that used at VFL Park, and the installation of an automatic sprinkler system. No effort was spared, and special drains were brought from Albury and had to be carefully laid as they had a tolerance of only a few millimetres’.

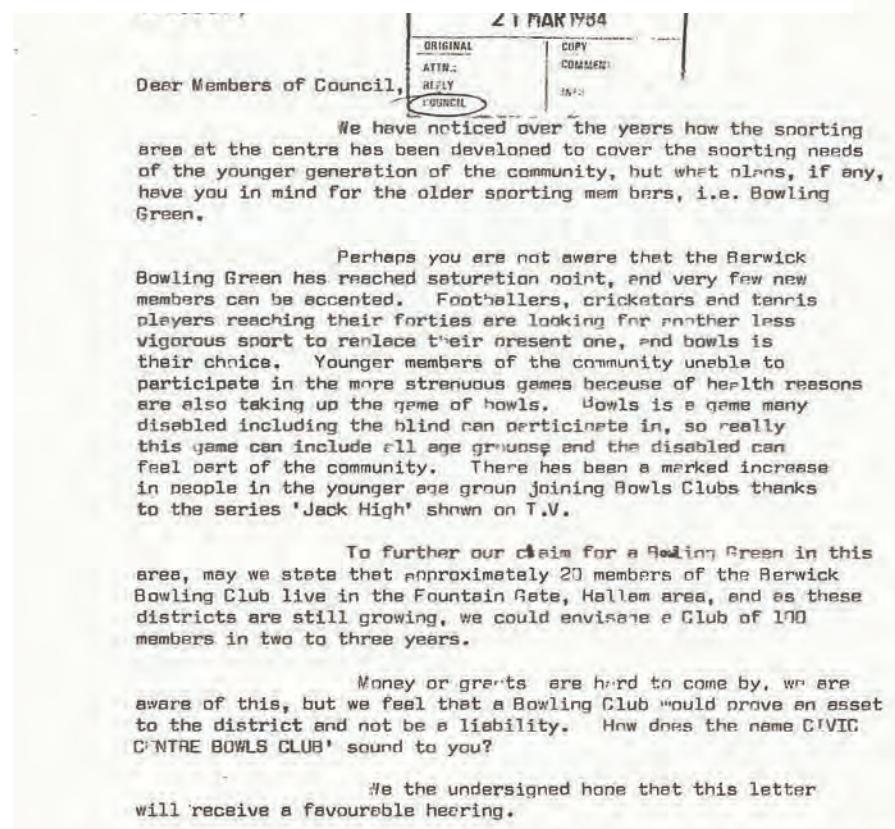
The first AGM of the Narre Warren Bowls Club was held on 12 May 1987 at the Fountain Gate Cricket Club Pavilion. A councillor of the Royal Victorian Bowls Association, Harry Reid, took the chair for the election of office bearers. Bob Roff was elected president. The meeting agreed on a joining fee of \$30.00 and an annual fee of \$50.00 per member. The bank balance at the time was \$3,819.84.

While it is known that the first AGM of Ladies’ Section was held on 12 May 1987, no record of the meeting has been located.

A temporary clubhouse and external toilets were installed in September 1987. Construction of the permanent clubhouse commenced in early 1989, *(Continued on page 8)*

# The Beginning

In March 1984, Lorna Wilson sent this letter to the City of Berwick requesting the formation of a second bowls club in the local area.



Awaiting your reply,  
Yours faithfully,

Lorna Wilson

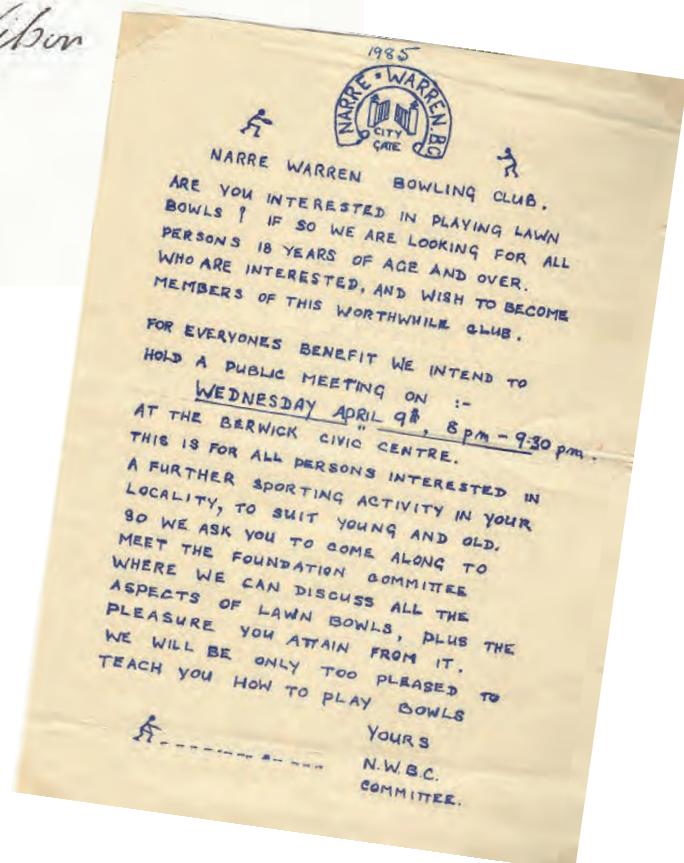
*J. Smith*

*L. Wilson*

Maurine S. ...  
 H. Hartley, T. G. Hunter  
 C. J. Smith A. Sanders  
 E. Smith P. Sanders  
 A. Roffe.  
 G. Huntingford  
 M. Brownfield.  
 K. Brownfield  
 G. Gibbons  
 M. G. Gibbons  
 D. Jones.  
 R. D. Jones  
 C. Dromers.  
 F. Jones.  
 A. Wattie  
 Ann Roffe  
 Hazel Langdale

129/84

3.4.84



Records are not available to show what negotiations/considerations were devoted to the proposal between the Wilsons' letter of March '84 and October '85 meeting



# Site chosen for new bowling club

Star Newspapers has kindly given its permission for us to reprint clippings and photographs for this publication.

## Move for another lawn bowls club

23/10/75  
A steering committee has been formed to work towards the establishment of a second lawn bowls club in the City of Berwick.

## Strong support for bowls club at Narre Warren

## Bowling club takes shape

## Earlier start likely on new bowling club

9/7/86  
Narre Warren bowlers could be playing on their own green some time next year.

**Bowls club annual meeting**  
THE first annual meeting of the Narre Warren Bowls Club will be held on 12 May at 7.30 pm in the Fountain Gate Cricket Pavilion, off Fountain Gate Dve, Fountain Gate.  
All members and intending members are invited to attend.  
On Tuesday 19 May the ladies committee will hold its annual general meeting in the Tennis Club at 7.30 pm.  
pushing ahead and fencing is now being erected. The contractor's hope to sow the greens shortly.  
To raise funds for the club an informal games night was held on 25 April at Ruby and Jim Jenner's home and 20 members were welcomed.  
Another function also to fund raise is planned on 26

Leader Newspaper Group has kindly given its permission for us to reprint clippings for this publication.



# Club hopes to save \$35,000 on clubrooms

New clubrooms for the Narre Warren Bowling Club are to be built by sub-contract.

Normally they could be expected to cost about \$160,000, but the club believes it can get the job done for around \$125,000 using sub-contractors and volunteer tradesmen.

A master builder who is a member of the club has offered his services and by using volunteer labour where it can, the club expects to be able to make

considerable savings on the project.

Berwick Council has set aside \$100,000 in this year's loan programme towards the cost and the club has undertaken to raise a loan for any amount over this.

Council's architectural draftsman has drawn up the plans for the clubrooms.



*Memorial gates at Fountain Gate, from which design of Narre Warren Bowls Club badge was taken*



*Above and right: Site clearing*



*Below: Delivery of first load of timber*



*Construction commences*





*Installation of temporary clubrooms in September 1987*



*Above: Jim Jemmer puts some final touches on the edge of the green.*

*Below: Roy Mundy, President Bob Roff, and Ron Cooksley carefully bury a hose for the green. In the background is Jack Heathcote.*



## Busy bees for bowls

The Narre Warren Bowls Club held a successful working bee last Sunday as part of the energetic preparation for the grand opening of the green on the 19th September.

Members of the club have been busy over the past few weeks preparing the club and the green for the opening day.

The club now has a temporary clubroom and the green is starting to shape up—members are even optimistic about holding a bowls event on their first day.

The bowls club will be opened by City of Berwick Mayor, Cr John Hastie, and the opening for the ladies will be held on the 24th September.



*Frame of the clubroom*



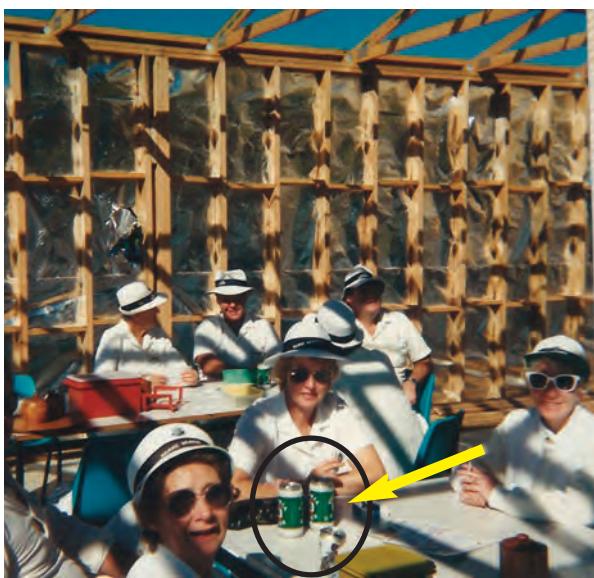
# Members praised for self-help efforts towards new clubrooms



MEMBERS of the Narre Warren Bowls Club have been highly praised for work they did towards completion of their new clubrooms, officially opened by Cr Rob Wilson.



In contrast to today, when very little is expected of members in the upkeep of the club, it was 'everybody grab a hammer, nail or shovel and put your back into it' when the club was being formed.



*Air conditioning had a different meaning during construction of the clubhouse. I presume the 'tinnies' were dispensed from Eskies.*





*Continued from page 2*

and photographs included in this document show the installation of the slab in 1989, and the first lunch in the building (only framed) on 23 April of the same year.

The Narre Warren Bowls Club was formally opened on 19 September 1987. A large crowd attended the opening, including special guests from the City of Berwick, RVBA, VLBA and West Gippsland Bowling Association. A special guest was Mrs Sylvia Nobelius who was presented with a club badge. The significance of this presentation was that, while the club badge was designed by Secretary Wattling, it depicted the Narre Warren Memorial Gates -

which in turn had been built by Jack Nobelius. The memorial is a substantial structure built in 1923 in memory of locals lost in WWI, and originally sited at the entry to the Narre Warren Sports Ground.

Opening day for the ladies was held five days later on Thursday 24 September. The opening was well attended. Among those present were **Norton** and president of the West Gippsland Bowling Association, **Mrs Margaret Burgess**, who put down the first jack and bowl respectively. Narre Warren Ladies' President, **Mrs Ruby Jenner**, and Secretary **Mrs Lorna Wilson** were heavily involved in the opening program.

During the long fight to have it

recognised that another bowls club was needed in the area, and the subsequent work performed in installation of the greens and erection of the clubhouse, many strong and lasting friendships were forged. Photographs taken at the time depict a highly social group, and that there were numerous 'fun' events. The creation of a new entity/association/club is a special event, like the creation of a new person. From the memories of the few remaining 'originals' and from written and photographic records, the early hard work and excitement matured into a stable and successful first decade in the history of the club.

The Foundation Committee of the proposed **Narre Warren Bowling Club** was held at the home of **Gwen Greentree**, 5 Oakwood Court, Narre Warren on 29/10/1985  
Committee Members were:  
**B Wilson, L Wilson, H Sanders, F Sanders, M Gibbon, G Gibbon, H Jones, F Jones, S Leveque, H Watling, G Greentree**

Present at the committee meeting held at the home of **W & L Wilson** on 29/5/1986 were: **W&L Wilson, H&F Sanders, M&G Gibbon, H&E Helms, S Leveque, R&J Jenner, R Roff, H Watling, D Jones.**  
Office bearers were: President **R Roff**; Senior Vice President **L Wilson**; Junior Vice President **D Jones**; Secretary **H Watling**; Assistant Secretary **W Wilson**; Treasurer **R Jenner**.

Narre Warren Bowling Club's First Annual Meeting was held at Fountain Gate Cricket Club on 12/5/1987. Present were **52 members**.  
Office bearers: President **R Roff**; Senior Vice President **J Allot**; Junior Vice President **R Ireland**; Secretary **W Wilson**; Assistant Secretary **H Watling**; Treasurer **R Mowatt**.

**Committee:** **H McCombe, John Brodie, J Jenner, R Mundy, W Stevens, Jean Brodie, H Fox.**

Bowls Secretary: **D Jones**; Bowls Committee **R Ireland, K McCann, John Brodie, B Woodward**; Selection Committee **W Wilson, R Ireland, L Buchanan, H Watling, R Chanter**; Greens Director **E Stephenson**; Greens Committee **W Wilson, J Jenner, S Leveque, P Curmi, Woodward, Jack Heathcote, W Dawkins, R Mundy, J Allott, R Cooksley**



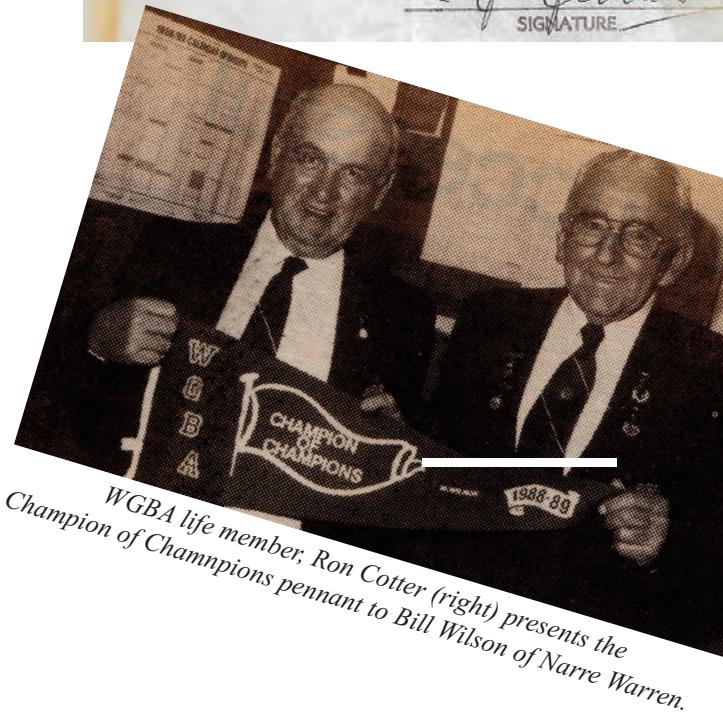
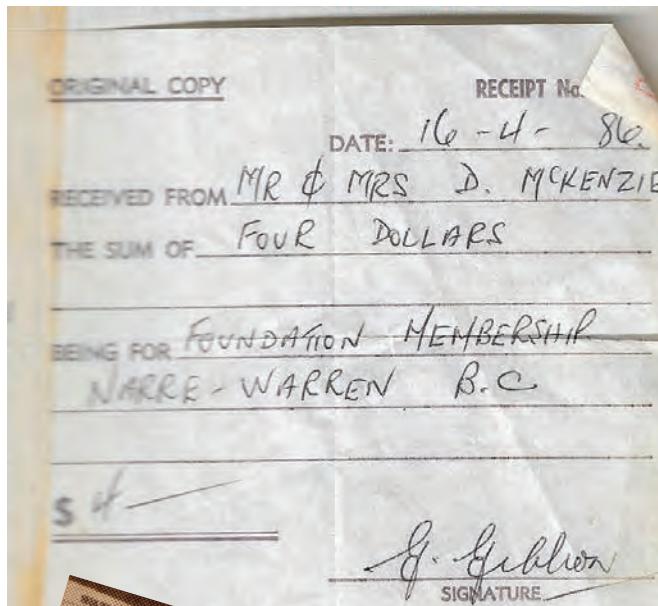
## Luke Donnellan MP

State Member for Narre Warren North

*If I can be of any assistance to you or a member of your family, please don't hesitate to call me.*

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Authorised by L. Donnellan, Shop 101, Endeavour Hills VIC 3802



## Bill Wilson group champ

**Bill Wilson of Narre Warren Bowls Club added another title after his win at Healesville on Sunday, 19th.**

He is now not only champion of champions but Group 7 champion. Keep it up Bill.



Pictured left, the Tuesday pennant side when we were in the West Gippsland Bowling Association.

Back Row: Beryl Johnson, Jean Morrison, Hazel Jarvis, Thelma Dawkins, Lorna Wilson, Wilma Parker, Mien Gerraeds, Muriel McCombe, Dot Seal, Val Madigan, Vera Smith.  
Front Row: Sally Scarlet, Dot Farrell, Vi Allen, Frances Jones, Dot Hamilton, Joyce Heathcote, June Buchan, Freida Browning, Nell Henson, Margaret Clarence.



# The 1990s



*What appears to be a 'roaring '20s' day at someone's home, featuring from left: Ann Powell, Noel Ratcliffe, Doreen Collier, Wilma Parker, Thelma Dawkins, Sheila Ballard, Wally Ballard, Ruby Jenner (after whom our Ruby Jenner Pairs is named) and Val Madigan.*

*Right:Mick Olden - a coach, nice bloke and an excellent bowler*



*We have always put up a good fight in pennant, and these ladies in the 1997/98 season were no exception. The first four, from left: Lois Schwennesen, Lorraine Evans, Aileen McKenzie (Life Member) and Rita Joynson lost by one shot. And the next four: Ivy Bertram, Dot Farrell (Life Member), Audrey Mortimer and Margaret Sheridan lost by five shots.*

*Jan and John Heathcote, Helen Fox, Lorraine Evans and Bernie Turnbull at Inverloch in 1994.*





**Lorraine Evans and Bridie Baldwin** being presented with their runners-up trophies in the club pairs for 1994-95

1995 New Bowlers competition. Back row: **Gordon Lowry**, **Ken Tomlin**, **Lorraine Evans**, **Andy Sheppard**.  
Front Row: **Jim and Val McCartney**, **Esma and Roy Naismith**.



**Laurie Butler, Les Egan, Ian Adcock, Ray Ireland**



**Muriel McCombe** and **Shirley Butler** won the 1994-95 West Gippsland Pairs.



**Fred Johansson, Joy Tomlin, Ken Tomlin, Andy Sheppard, Bert Clarke, Wilma Johansson, Ann Sheppard**



Left: In the same year, foundation member, **Harry McCombe** and his partner **Shirley Butler**, were runners up pairs



**Lorraine Evans and Norm Fergusson** with the Stan Tolley trophy 1993-94. Norm did a lot for the club in sponsorship and as bowls secretary.



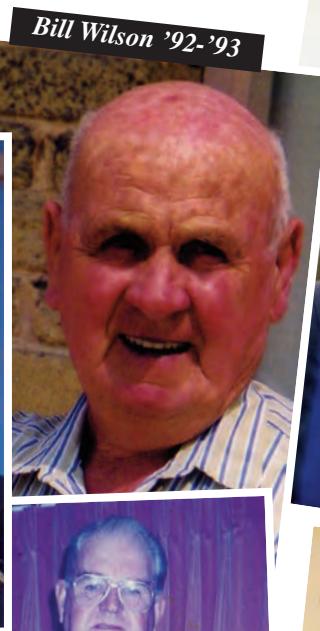
## Club Presidents



Roy Mundy '86-'88



Bob Roff '88-'90



Bill Wilson '92-'93



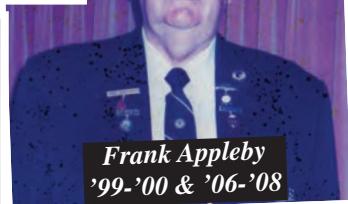
Ray Ireland '90-'92 & '96-'98



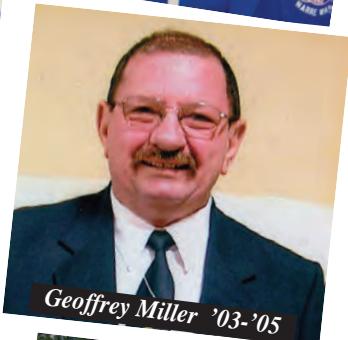
Les Egan '93-'96



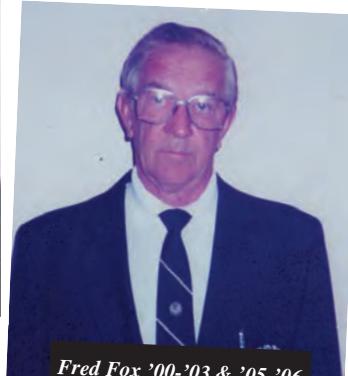
Jack Allott '98-'99



Frank Appleby  
'99-'00 & '06-'08



Geoffrey Miller '03-'05



Fred Fox '00-'03 & '05-'06



John Uren '08-'10



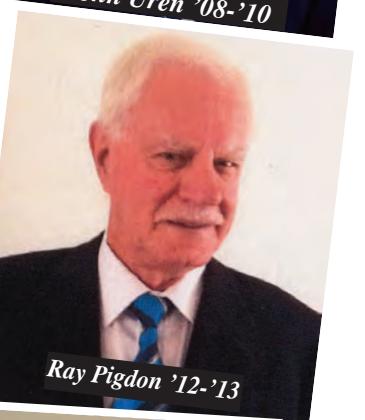
Judy Naughton -'10-'11



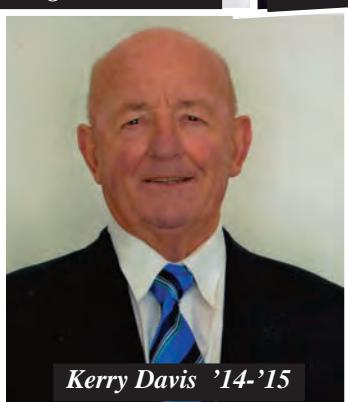
Kieran Fitzsimons '11-'12



Peter Rouse '13-'14



Ray Pigdon '12-'13



Kerry Davis '14-'15



Reg Johnstone '15-'16



Eric Sydenham '16-



## Lady Presidents

Ruby Jenner '87-'89



Lorraine Wilson '90-'91



Joan Buchan '91-'93



Jean Douglas '95-'97



Aileen McKenzie '97-'99



Wilma Parker '99-'01



Shirley Butler '93-'95



Audrey Mortimer '02-'04

Nancy Pugh '04-'06



Dot Farrell '01-'02



Judy Naughton '06-'09

Pam Uren '09-'11





# 1996



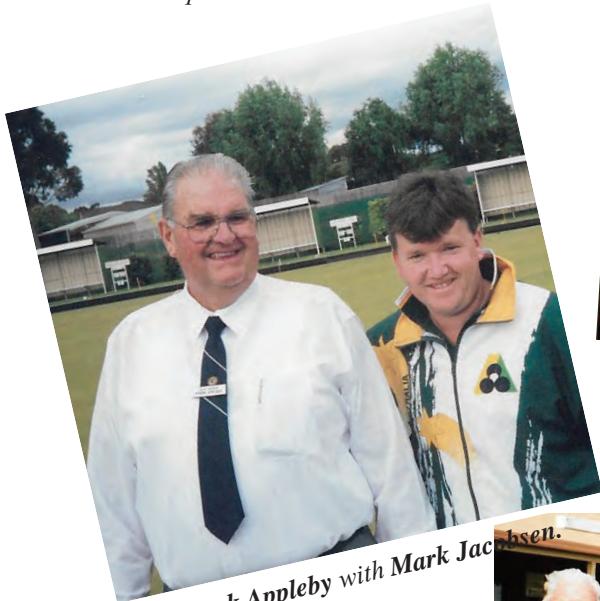
**Lorraine Evans and Dot Farrell**, the social committee, dressed for and ready to cook the Champagne Breakfast and Presentation in April 1996.



The NWBC choir (aka the Greens Committee), from left Frank Appleby, Jack Heathcote, John Schwennesen,



Lorraine Evans, Muriel McCombe, Betty Bemrose, Pat Yates



Frank Appleby with Mark Jacobsen.

In the days before we could afford a greenkeeper, this maintenance and grounds crew slaved away every Monday morning to keep the greens and surrounds in tip-top shape. From left:

Jack Allott, Jack Heathcote, Wayne de Ruiter, Ray Ireland, Bernie Turnbull, John Schwennesen, Keith Blencowe, Peter Geraeds.





## Second Decade

THE SECOND DECADE was, in general terms, a period of consolidation for the club. The consolidation was achieved in a difficult outside environment. Near the end of the previous decade, and leading into the second decade, Australia was experiencing a period of economic depression. Manufacturing was contracting, and unemployment exceeded 11 per cent. Many Australians were worse off than they had been in previous times. In addition, there was an influx of newly arrived people from overseas, particularly from Vietnam. Significant technological change was also occurring, particularly with the introduction of the internet and mobile phones. In concert with the drift in membership occurring throughout Australia, the Narre Warren Bowls Club experienced a reduction in membership during its second decade. In addition, members' participation in the club drifted during the period. For example, at the beginning of the period, social bowls during the summer was played on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. On Sundays, it was impossible to get a game if you did not book a spot a week in advance. By the end of the period, Sunday bowls has lapsed due to lack of interest.

The indoor bowls section of the club also suffered a downturn during the decade. Indoor bowls had been a popular activity of the club during the first decade, and it continued to be so at the front end of the second decade. During winter in the early part of the period, it was played Tuesdays, Friday nights and Sundays, when there were generally five mats being played.

There were three pennant teams on a Thursday day and night, and a social inter-club once a month on Saturday, when there would be six mats played. Income to the club from indoor bowls grew steadily, and peaked in the 2001 season, when a total of \$6,840.45

(mostly from mat fees) was remitted to overall club funds. This level of funds from indoor bowls was approximately halved in the following (and subsequent) years, due mainly to the club opening the greens for outdoor bowls during the winter.

With the reduction in membership over the second decade, there was also a lengthening in the average age of club members. When the club was formed, the average age of members was approximately 50 years. While the average at the end of the second decade is not precisely known, it is known it was 69.4 just a few years into the third decade.

At the beginning of the period, the club maintained its assets with a large

***The RVBA was ordered to amend its rules so as not to prohibit women.***

group of volunteers who worked on Monday mornings. Typically, the number of outdoor volunteers (Greens Committee) on site each Monday was about 20 members, while indoor volunteers (House Committee) was at least five. By the end of the period, the numbers in both committees had dwindled in a significant way. During the period, the club found it necessary to employ a contract/professional greenkeeper.

The decade commenced with the club playing pennant in the West Gippsland Bowling Association (as it had since the club's formation). For the 1997/98 season, and since, the club has played Metropolitan, which is run by Bowls Victoria. A significant legal decision early in the second decade had a huge impact on the operation of bowls in Victoria.

In the year 2000, a 17-year-old young lady, **Emily South** from St Kilda Bowls Club, decided she wanted to play bowls at the highest level of

competition. This was the Saturday afternoon men's competition that ran under the control of the Royal Victorian Bowls Association (RVBA). The St Kilda Bowls Club believed she was sufficiently skilled to play in the Saturday competition, but the RVBA would not register her. Emily South took her case to the Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission. At a subsequent hearing, the RVBA defended its position by using the 'strength, stamina and physique' exception which applies in discrimination legislation. However, the Commission rejected the defence presented by the RVBA on the grounds that strength, stamina and physique were not significant in lawn bowls. The RVBA was ordered to amend its rules so as not to prohibit women.

Throughout the first decade, the lady members of the club supported the Saturday pennant for men by providing afternoon tea. This was always more than adequate, and sometimes sumptuous. It is understood the need for a substantial afternoon tea on Saturdays was justified on the basis that many male bowlers worked a five-and-a-half-day week, hence were in need of sustenance by afternoon tea time on a Saturday. By the beginning of the second decade, the need for a big repast was being questioned. The dwindling availability of lady members was also a factor. By the end of decade, afternoon tea at many clubs had become a modest affair, with the men players also having a role in the presentation of the refreshments.

The club celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday with a dance in its clubrooms. Approximately 150 guests attended, including the original president, Bob Roff. Rock band IC Rock provided the musical entertainment during the evening. The band plated a goodly amount of old-time music, which allowed guests to dance. According to newspaper reports, the event was a great success.



## The 2000s

In the 'noughties', rules are relaxing somewhat, and ladies are wearing trousers as a matter of course. Official whites are giving way to uniforms in club colours, and a few ladies dare to play in Saturday pennant (properly affiliated, of course). The RVBA and VLBA amalgamate to become Bowls Victoria, and - horror of horrors! - men join Tuesday pennant, heretofore the bastion of the ladies.



*The pennant finalists at Garfield in 1999-2000, proudly celebrating their "winning 75-71 score. From left: Rob Naughton, David McKenzie, John Herschell, Andrew Evans, Fred Fox, Sholto Douglas, John Schwennesen, John Green, Dennis Amezdroz.*



*Melbourne Cup Day was wholeheartedly celebrated until only a few years ago. One of the events was 'Best Hat'. Here are the finalists for 2000.*

**Rob Naughton,  
Dot Farrell, Enid Gibb,  
Neville Bell, Barbara Cowley,  
Lois Schwennesen,  
Nancie Burton**



*Indoor bowls was big business back in the 'noughties', with five and six mats being the norm on Tuesday and Sunday, and three on Friday nights. We still hold our own in pennant, but participation is down on the 'glory days'.*