



A Brief History

CENTENARY - 1882-1982

A BRIEF HISTORY

"Coltbridge" - The Centenary of a Bowling Club is naturally a notable event in the life of the Club. Ours is an interesting history, and it is fitting that we should pause at this milestone and look back, however fleetingly, over the road that has been travelled.

From the earliest times since bowling has been a popular sport, clubs have been named after the district in which they are located and Coltbridge is one such, taking its name from the hamlet which grew up at the eastern end of the old Corstorphine Loch, which covered the area of the Valley to Corstorphine.

The name Coltbridge has been given various derivations, but the most likely is given in a book by John Geddie on "The Valley of the Water of Leith" in which he says that the derivation is from an earlier mode of crossing by a boat drawn from bank to bank by a horse or colt. Following the drainage of Corstorphine Loch, completed in 1837, a bridge was built, named the Cowes Brigge, which became the route across which cattle were driven to the market in Grassmarket. This old bridge was replaced by the present one on the main road. By the time horse drawn trams had started, the name "Coltbridge" was superceded by "Roseburn". The original name of Coltbridge Avenue was Skinners Lane, there being mills in the vicinity.

The railway bridge near the green was built by the Caledonian Railway Company in 1860, and Post Office Directory maps of the district dated 1883 were the first to show the bowling green - and houses Nos. 1 and 2 Coltbridge Gardens (those nearest the green). These houses were built by Charles J. Henderson who found that the Railway Company had a restriction clause in the title deeds over an area of about 1½ acres which prohibited building any closer than No. 1 Coltbridge Gardens. Consequently, he laid out a bowling green in 1882 and bowling commenced in that year.

The Club - In 1882, the nucleus of a club was formed and sufficiently organised to run some competitions. The builder, Charles J. Henderson, presented the Club with the handsome Rink Medal, which is still competed for, and shows a date, August 1882.

The first President of the Club was Richard Haldane who remained in office until 1885. He was a founder member and an Office Bearer in Murrayfield Church to which he, and later, his widow, presented the Communion Table and Communion Silver.

In the bar is displayed 2 silver mounted bowls which the Club presented to Mr. Haldane. These were at some time stolen, and in 1958 were noticed in a pawnbroker's saleroom by a member of the C.I.D., who, on reading the inscription, told David Kyles about them. David immediately bought them from the pawnbroker and presented them to the Club.

The first outside competition in which the Club took part was in 1884 (when the membership was 75) in the "Trophy" game organised by the Edinburgh and Leith Bowling Association, which our Club had joined as ninth member. This Trophy was purchased by the E. & L.B.A. in 1878, and is still competed for as the 1st XVI Trophy. The first recorded Club Matches were also in 1884, against Kirknewton, Pilrig and St. Davids, to be followed in 1885 with additional matches against West End, Ardmillan and Seafield. In the first three matches in 1884, we were 34 shots up on Kirknewton but 12 and 61 shots down respectively to Pilrig and St. Davids.

The Club seems to have had a tradition of poor results, as the following record shows:-

1885 -	Played	7	Won	0	Lost	7	-	Shots down	172
1886 -	"	9	"	2	"	7	-	"	107
1887 -	"	8	"	2	"	6	-	"	150

However, results started to improve, until 1891 when the results were:-

Played 9 Won 6 Lost 3 - Shots 10 up.

The first record of having matches of 1st XVI and 2nd XVI was in 1900 when the results were:-

1st XVI	Played	6	Won	2	Lost	4	-	Shots down	74
2nd XVI	!	6	"	1	"	5	-	"	115

The membership had by then declined to 60.

Five matches then were against West End, Northern, Portobello, Parson's Green, Seafield, the sixth being the afore-mentioned "Trophy" game. It is interesting, that as the Club developed, one well-known bowling journalist described it as "Couthy Coltbridge" - probably because of the considerable number of family relationships among the members and the happy atmosphere in the Club, contributed to by its secluded sylvan situation and (as the afore-mentioned results of matches show) the bowling was played very much as a social pastime.

In 1921, the Club purchased the title to the green from the Trustees of the widow of the original owner, Charles J. Henderson - purchase price £400. The Club then became a limited company of 50 share-holding members and 50 non-shareholding members. A board of 6 directors together with 6 ordinary members was formed. David Kyles is the only director who is still a member. The limited company was liquidated in 1960, the reason being the refusal by the Sheriff to grant renewal of the bar license, but it was renewed for the newly constituted Club. All assets, including the green and clubhouse, were transferred to the new Club to be administered by all the members. The transfer of the assets was very amicably arranged and a new Constitution and Rules were drawn up and duly adopted at the A.G.M. in May 1960. The fees agreed then were £5 entry and £5 Annual. Before a proper bar was constructed in 1925 there was an arrangement that a gallon jar of whisky was kept in the N.W. corner of the Clubhouse. Members served themselves and put the money in an old tobacco tin!

The Green. Over many years, the Club has been very fortunate in having had a succession of devoted Green Rangers and Greenkeepers who have provided us with a green which has been widely acknowledged as one of the best in the country. So the Club owes a great debt of gratitude to these men, and mention ought to be made of one - Tom Barrie, a retired farmer from Biggar, who, for many years, has given quite outstanding voluntary service to the Club, as Green Ranger - and in many other ways. In 1979, the banking of the green was renewed and brought to S.B.A. requirements.

The Clubhouse. The original clubhouse was built in the early history of the Club on its present site - as a single storey building, the main area forming the locker and changing room, and, later, part was partitioned off as a small bar. Many older members have very happy memories of the old, primitive bar. In 1956, with considerable foresight, the directors purchased the vacant rising ground opposite the green, from the Trustees of St. George's School for Girls, with a view to constructing a car park. The purchase price was £100! In 1957, at the A.G.M. the Chairman of Directors proposed, and it was agreed, to extend the clubhouse by the addition of an upper floor at a cost of just over £3,000. This extended clubhouse was officially opened on 28th September of the same year (a tribute to the Contractors!) by the then Lord Provost, Sir Ian Johnston-Gilbert, who was a member of the Club. He was the fourth Lord Provost member of the Club, the others being Sir Thomas Whitson, Sir William Thomson, and Sir Will Y. Darling. Sir William Thomson presented the Club with the Thomson Trophy, which is still our Club Championship trophy. This extension to the Clubhouse greatly added to the amenities of the Club.

At various times since its purchase in 1956, the question of the sale of the rising ground opposite the green has come up for discussion, as we were only able to make use of the small flat area at street level for parking about a dozen cars. Various offers were received, but none of these were completed because of failure to obtain planning permission on the grounds of use - for commercial purposes.

With the increasing number of members who played frequently, the need for a further extension to the Clubhouse was felt desirable. This has now been achieved in very interesting circumstances.

In 1979, the Fire Authority told us we would require to erect a new fire escape. It had been long realised that the original one did not comply with up-to-date requirements. When the estimate of £6,000 was received, it was felt that, if we had to spend that amount of money, we wanted something more than a fire escape. With this in mind, and the need for an extension to the clubhouse, and the approach of our Centenary, it was decided to obtain plans and estimates for an extension which would embody the required fire escape.

Attractive plans were prepared and estimates obtained. The lowest estimate was £30,000, a large proportion of which was involved in under structure work necessitated by the ground's steep slope down to the Water of Leith. - Just as we were considering how we could raise that amount of money, providentially, and "out of the blue", came an offer from CALA (City of Aberdeen Land Association) to purchase the ground for £30,000!! The offer was accepted subject to our retention of sufficient space for a car park for at least 12 cars. At the A.G.M. in February 1980, the recommendation of the Committee of Management, was agreed unanimously - viz. to accept CALA's offer and to proceed with the extension to the Clubhouse.

Difficulty was experienced in obtaining the necessary planning permission for the sale and change of use of the ground for house building and for the new car park, because of objections lodged by the local residents. However, by proposing to provide parking space for 4 cars on the ground between the clubhouse, and the road, planning permission was eventually obtained. Work was commenced on the Clubhouse extension by the Contractors, Scott & Brown, in November 1980, and was eventually ready for use in April, 1981. The new car park was ready for use in April 1982, by which time the new houses - a block of 12 flats, had been completed. The extension of the clubhouse consisted of an extension to the east side to provide a much needed larger cellar storage in the basement; a locker room, and a smaller room and toilets for the ladies on the ground floor, and, upstairs, a new bar and lounge. The former ladies' accommodation was reconstructed for gents' toilets (replacing the old inconvenient outside toilets) and the gents' locker room was fitted out where the old bar had been. The whole extended upstairs accommodation was panelled and carpeted (leaving a small square uncovered for dancing), and, with a new, well furnished bar and lounge, and by providing much more window space for viewing the green, the overall result was to provide a Clubhouse worthy of our Club, and an effort appropriate to commemorate our Centenary.

As is usually enevitable, various extras in the Contract were agreed and the ultimate cost of the extension to the building and the new furnishings was about £40,000. However, we received valuable assistance from the Sports Council by an interest free loan of £5,000, repayable over five years,

and by a grant of £5,000 from Ind Coope, the brewers, towards the cost of the new bar. These, along with the proceeds of the sale of the ground, enabled us to complete the job within our financial resources, which had been greatly assisted by the proceeds of the fruit machine and a Tote Double which had been introduced in 1979. We were greatly indebted to a small number of members who did a considerable amount of the work, including all the panelling and the transfer of the lockers, also the wall tiling in the toilets. Foremost among these members was Arthur Stenhouse, who, in addition to doing a considerable amount of the work, gave invaluable service as the Club's Clerk of Works - all voluntarily. Thus, these members saved the Club a considerable amount of money. The Club was also indebted to the Hon. Treasurer, John Watt for his expertise in financial matters.

Bowling Associations. The Club has always played its part by actively supporting the work of the various Bowling Associations. For example - the following members became Presidents of the Edinburgh and Leith Association:-

1910 Alex. Murray	1943 Wm. Flynn	1973 David Kyles, J.P.
1925 John McCubbin	1953 Harry Henderson	

Social Activities. In 1957, it was agreed at the A.G.M. to open the clubhouse in the Close Season for social functions. For a time, these consisted mainly of monthly Whist Drives and annual Burns' Suppers. In 1981, it was agreed to open the clubhouse every Wednesday evening during the close Season for the playing of darts and dominoes, and teams for both participated in the leagues organised by the North West District Association with a view to maintaining the interest of the younger members of the Club. Our darts team have been very successful in their matches, the enjoyment of which is contributed to by the provision of hot pies (with accompanying refreshments) by the home club.

The Annual Dinner Dance in November when the season's prizes are presented, continues to be popular as the closing event of the season.

Playing the Game. The Club has not been one of the most competitive and consequently not one which is notable as Winners of Honours, most members still preferring to treat the game as a social pastime. Nevertheless, some honours have been won over the years as the list on pages 6 and 7. shows.

In 1963, we jointed the West Edinburgh District League and in 1975 transferred to the North West District.

We also played in numerous competitions organised by these associations and by the Edinburgh and Leith Association and by a number of other Clubs.

In 1966, an Annual Invitation Triples Competition was started and still continues as a very popular event in the Edinburgh and District Bowling Calander. Over 50 clubs accept the invitation to send one or more triples teams. The event is held on the second weekend in August and for the past few years it has been generously sponsored by Haig's Whisky.

Within the Club, the number of Trophies competed for has increased from time to time, and the playing off of ties now accounts for most of the evening play throughout the season. However, the Waupinshaws every Monday evening continue to be very popular, as are the mixed Waupinshaws with the ladies on Saturday evenings.

The following trophies are competed for annually:-

Club Trophies

Thomson Trophy - Club Championship

J.L. Robertson Shield - (Presidents & Vice Presidents Prizes) -
Singles Handicap

Bryson Medal - 2 Bowl Singles

Martin Trophy - 4 Bowl Pairs

C.J. Henderson Medal - Rinks

Duncan Ferguson Memorial Trophy - Mixed Triples

Kyles Trophy - Triples

Coltbridge Shield (Presented by Tom Barrie) - Mixed Pairs

John Loughran Trophy - Under 30's Singles

Bobby Baxter Trophy - Over 60's Singles

Cutty Sark Trophy - Winner of Waupinshaws

Henderson Quaich - (Centenary Trophy) - Nominated Pairs

Jeffrey Trophy - One Day Singles

Bisset Trophy - One Day Pairs

LADIES SECTION

At the A.G.M. in March, 1969, a motion to admit 12 ladies to associate membership without voting rights was carried by a narrow majority. The members were increased to 24 in 1970, and to the present 36 in 1971. The introduction of lady members has proved to be a great benefit to the Club in many ways, not least financially. The first fees for ladies were £3 Entry and £2 Annual.

The following is a list of Presidents and Champions of the Ladies Section.

<u>Year</u>	<u>President</u>	<u>Champion</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>President</u>	<u>Champion</u>
1969	Margaret McEwan (Chairman)		1976	Chris Cook	Margaret Sinclair
1970	Margaret Sinclair	Nan Lennox	1977	Winnie Allan	Barbara Vallance
1971	Margaret Sinclair	Margaret McEwan	1978	Edith Cook	Morag McIntosh
1972	Margaret McEwan	Agnes Kerr	1979	Agnes Kerr	Winnie Allan
1973	Margaret McEwan	Winnie Allan	1980	Kathleen McGovern	Margaret Sinclair
1974	Ella Kyles	Kathleen McGovern	1981	Morag McIntosh	Barbara Turnbull
1975	Eileen Hay	Agnes Kerr	1982	Ella Kyles	Winnie Allan

The following trophies are competed for annually:-

Margaret Sinclair Trophy	- Championship
Alison Law Trophy	2 Bowl Singles
Evelyn Pairs Trophy	Pairs
Paddy Bowie Trophy	American Tournament

To commemorate our Centenary, the Ladies Section presented the Club with a new flag which was unfurled on the Opening Day of our Centenary Year by the President of the Ladies' Section, Mrs. Ella Kyles, wife of David Kyles, whose family connection with the Club now extends over four generations. It is of interest that our flag pole was presented to the Club by David Kyles' father to commemorate the safe return of his three sons from the Second World War.

Membership. The number of members fluctuated in the early years of the Club, but, in recent years, it has increased to the present 120 and the 36 ladies. There is always a waiting list of applicants, and in recent years a very welcome feature has been the admission of a goodly number of young and middle aged men - which augurs well for the future wellbeing of the Club, which, in its Centenary Year, is in very good heart, and so enters its Second Century, which we naturally hope will be as happy and successful as the last has been.

Unfortunately all the earlier minute books have been lost.

The history has only been possible by the intense research done by Andrew Bogie. Apart from what has been written, other valuable information has been collected for the Club. We are most grateful to Andrew.

For putting the many and diverse pieces of information together in this short history of the Club, thanks are due to John McNaughton and David Kyles.