



A History of Coltbridge Bowling Club
Founded 1882
Reproduced from hand
scripted notes believed to have been compiled
by
Andrew Bogie Secretary, 1982
Also from a booklet produced by David Allan



Clubhouse taken November 2007
Compiled by Archie Drummond Past President November 2007

Coltbridge Bowling Club 1882 - 2007

Foreword:-

There are many notable events in the life of a Bowling Club including the Centenary and I have attempted to record some of these, with help from David Allan who along with Andrew Bogie produced a booklet in the Centenary Year of 1982

From the earliest times when bowling was a popular pastime the greens have been named after the district in which they were located and Coltbridge is no exception. Taking the name of the original hamlet which grew up at the eastern end of old Corstorphine Loch, which covered the area of the Valley to Corstorphine. The name Coltbridge has been given various derivations, the lampacre charter refers to the earliest bridge as the "Cowes Brigge" which must have been built in the sixteenth century as the Town Council minutes record a visit of inspection to the Coltbridge in 1637 and repairs were carried out in 1647.

The most likely derivation is to be found in a book by John Geddie "The Valley of the Water of Leith" in which he writes "the local etymologist would derive the name of Coltbridge from an earlier mode of crossing by a boat drawn from bank to bank by a horse or a colt. The old records mention that for those travelling from Corstorphine there was a regular crossing of the Water of Leith here by boat twice a day and three times on a Sunday for the benefit of the people going to St Cuthbert's Church, whose parish covered the large area lying west of the Church.

Geddie mentions that at the east end of the bridge there was a thriving change house or Inn which the Baronet of Ravelston would no doubt have used when he took his corn to be ground at the Mills of Coltbridge. He also mentions that the locality owes a debt to George Pape, the proprietor of "Coltbridge House" for the establishing of an alms house for three poor widows for all time coming. The Coltbridge House built in the mid 19th Century no longer exists but the cottages still remain to this day, near the bridge built in 1841. The present bridge being built in 1930.

From 1842 when Haymarket Station was built, building extended westwards reaching Kew Terrace in 1864 and as far as the present Roseburn Terrace in 1881.

Horse trams were started in 1871 and extended as far as Roseburn which name was taken from the early Roseburn House and replaced the Coltbridge name being the old title for the area up to that time. Cable cars replaced the horse trams in 1897.

Building on the north side of the Water of Leith began in 1869 on the lines of the Old Skinners Lane and was named Coltbridge Avenue. Old maps show a mill in this area. The old name is interesting as the title deeds of the Bowling Club show that a John Lindsay, a skinner and leather dresser was the original owner of the land which was about 12 acres. This also included three mills, one of which is shown in old maps in the area of Coltbridge Avenue.

The Caledonian Railway Company built the railway line to Leith. The bridge near to the bowling green being built in 1860. Following this the stations at Roseburn and later Murrayfield were opened (1879).

A search of old maps shows no building east of the bridge, however, the Bartholomew's maps of 1882, the first to be drawn up to a large scale for the Post Office directory, shows the area vacant, but their map of 1883 shows the green and houses at No 1 and No 2 Coltbridge Gardens. These houses were built by a builder Charles J. Henderson. Henderson discovered that the Railway Company had a restrictive clause in the Title Deeds over an area of about one and a half acres to build the railway. Finding that he could no longer build any closer to the railway he laid out the land as a Bowling Green in 1882 and thus began the playing of bowls in that year

The Club

In 1882 the nucleus of a Club was formed and was sufficiently organised to hold some competitions. The Builder Mr. Charles Henderson presented the Club with the handsome "Rink medal" inscribed with his name and that of the first winner Mr John Loudon and it is still contested to this day.

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 of the Club is displayed two silver mounted bowls which the Club presented to Mr. Haldane. These were at some stolen and turned up in a Pawnbroker's showroom where an alert C.I. D Officer saw the inscription and informed David Kyles. David immediately contact the Pawnbroker and purchased the bowls and presented them to the Club.

During research it was found that there were no records of the Clubs activities prior to 1938. No Club games were recorded in 1883 but in 1884 the Club joined the association of Bowling Clubs in Edinburgh and Leith. They participated in the "Trophy" game (now the Edinburgh and Leith 1stXV1 Trophy) and against Kirknewton, Pilrig and St. Davids Bowling Clubs. In the following year they also had games against Kirkliston, Ardmillan, Seafield and Drumdryan. In those days Points Competitions and tournaments were a regular feature of the Club. From the beginning the affairs of the Club developed to make the Club, what one well known bowling journalist was later to describe, as "Couthy Coltbridge. This was evident with many family associations among it's members. The sylvan secluded location lent itself to this happy atmosphere and as the results of outgoing games show, the bowling was very much played as a social pastime.

In early 1921 the Club purchased the title to the ground of the green from the trustees of the widow of the original builder of the green and the houses in Coltbridge Gardens for the sum of £400. For this purpose the Club had become a limited Company of 50 shareholders and 50 non shareholding members.

The title deeds were signed on behalf of the Club by the 1920 President Hugh W. Shannon, Vice President James A. Brunton and Secretary G.C. Macqueen.

A board of six Directors was formed and thereafter became ex officio members of Committee together with six of the ordinary members. At that time the playing side of the Club was run by the Club and the Financial side was run by the Limited Company until the liquidation of the Company in 1960. The fees at that time were £5 joining and £5 annual subscription.

THE GREEN

As every bowler knows, the green is the biggest asset of any Club and when running well brings much praise from visiting bowlers. Over the years the Club has been very fortunate in having a succession of devoted Green Rangers so the Club has a debt of gratitude to these men. Whilst there have been many Green Rangers I can only speak from my limited knowledge and it would be fitting to mention Tom Barrie, a retired farmer from Bigger who tended the green for many years. The Green Rangers jealously guarded the green and none more so than George Arnott who was quick to point out that your bowling technique required some adjusting, to prevent damage to the green. In more recent times Mike Brown a truly "Gentle" man and David Jamieson tended the green with great dedication.

THE CLUBHOUSE

There can be no doubt the original Club house was built on its present site very early in its history. It consisted of a single floor. The main area formed the locker and changing room and at a later stage part of the building was partitioned for a bar. In the north west corner a two gallon glass jar of whisky was kept and members served themselves leaving the money in a tobacco tin.

In 1956 with great foresight, the Club with a view to constructing a car park, purchased the vacant rising ground on the north side of Coltbridge Gardens from the trustees of St. Georges School for Girls for the sum of £100. The following year the Directors under the guidance of the Chairman James McArthur proposed that the Clubhouse be extended by the addition of an upper floor. This was agreed and the opening ceremony was performed by the Lord Provost Sir Ian Johnston-Gilbert, a member of the Club and indeed the fourth Lord Provost to enjoy membership. The other illustrious members being Sir Thomas Whitson, Sir William Y. Darling and Sir William J. Thomson the donor of the Championship Trophy which is still contested every year. The Trophy was first mentioned in 1930 when it was won by Mr. J. D. Smith.

It may not be inappropriate to quote from Sir Ian Johnston-Gilbert's opening speech "That a number of our members have served the community and Town Council and played an important part in the business life of the City."

In 1979 events overtook the club and it was realised that improvements would have to be made. It was decided to pursue plans to build an extension. Estimates were obtained with the lowest estimate being £30,000.

Fortunately at that time the Club received an offer from Cala Homes to purchase the spare ground to the north of the Club for the sum of £30,000. The offer was accepted with a proviso to retain enough space for parking 12 cars, which is the present day car park. The offer was accepted and at the AGM in 1980 it was agreed unanimously to accept the offer and proceed with the extension.

Despite initial objections which were overcome by creating the small car park at the gable end of the Clubhouse, planning permission was received. The contractors Scott and Brown commenced work in November 1980 and the Clubhouse was ready to be moved into in April, 1981. The new car park was completed in 1982. During this time a block of 12 flats was built on the ground acquired by Cala Homes.

As is usual in all contracts the cost of the extension rose to £40,000. However, the Club was able to obtain loans from the Sports Council and Ind Coope to cover the extra costs.

In addition to the sale of the ground some finances were raised by the fruit machine and the Tote Double which had been introduced in 1979.

The overall cost was also minimised by the sterling work of a small band of members. Foremost among them was Arthur Stenhouse who in addition to doing some of the work also acted as a 'Clerk of Works'. The Club was also fortunate to have had the benefit of the financial expertise of John Watt the Hon Treasurer.

Notable members

In reviewing the list of members in the early years of the club it became evident that family ties played a huge part in its development.

James Spiers who was President in 1886 was followed by his son James and his nephew. Probably the most notable contribution to the Club is that of Kyles family. John Kyles was a frequent prize winner from 1902 and was Champion in 1923 and 1928. He was followed by his two sons David Kyles (J.P.) and John D. Kyles. David Kyles junior completed the family connection. The Mc Donald family of John A. and son James L. were outstanding bowlers. John being the Champion no less than seven times and James on six occasions. John was also selected for International duty in 1925, 26 and 27.

Alex Henderson was to become champion on four occasions from 1954. In 1958 he was also selected for International duty. His son D.P. Henderson was to win the Championship in 1964. He also became President during the Centenary Year in 1982.

Others who served the club with distinction were W. Flynn (Champion on four occasions), J.D. Smith, John L. Robertson and John McCubbin who was the SBA representative continuously from 1920 to 1940 when records ceased. He also donated the Board listing our Presidents and Champions which hangs in the stair well. In passing I would like to mention the Rev J.J. Elliot, Minister of St. David's Church, Morrison Street. He was Club Champion in 1931.

It was reported that during one of his games he was called urgently from the green to officiate at a wedding he had forgotten about. He performed the ceremony and returned to the green to finish the game. He was sadly to die during his Presidential Year in 1947. Many others are deserving of mention but space prevents this. It is suffice to mention John Dods Champion in 1960 at the tender age of 81 and Charles Watt who was often called out to fill a vacancy in the Club match in his early 90's.

Following on from the Centenary Year the membership continued to flourish. There were 120 male bowlers and 36 lady bowlers. In 1990 the Club was to win the Top ten Competition and to this day it remains the 'jewel in the crown'. This was at a time when there were several useful bowlers in the club namely Willie Steven, Willie Garden, John Arnott, Andrew Sinclair, David Allan, Tom Barry and Jim McNiven but to name a few.

All Clubs have a debt of gratitude to members who have devoted both time and effort in support of the Club. During the nineties Jim Gibson took on the role of Treasurer and Bar Steward only giving up to become President. I am sure without his dedication to both jobs the bar side of the club would have closed. John Watt similarly took on multiple roles being Secretary, Treasure and Match Secretary and indeed was Green Ranger for a spell. John and Jim still perform the duties of bar auditors. There are numerous competitions during the season and on occasions it has been difficult in finding someone willing to organise them. During the nineties and more recently we have been fortunate that Len Lodge, was not only willing but carried out these duties with considerable skill.

In 1999 Frank Park who had joined us from the now defunct Gas Bowling Club was to prove a worthy competitor and won the Edinburgh Bowling League Singles Championship. He was also to win the Coltbridge Championship on three occasions before moving from the Club in 2002.

On the playing side several players have distinguished themselves in winning the Championship on more than one occasion. Viz: Tom Barry, Chris Crawford, Andrew Sinclair, Willie Steven., Willie Garden' Alan Gemmell, Peter Mason and John Arnott. It is unfortunate that only Tom Barry and Chris Crawford are still with the Club. Apart from the Championship there are other competitions which are competed for annually.

Thomson Trophy - Club singles Championship	Coltbridge Shield - Mixed Pairs
John Loughran Trophy - Under 30's Singles	Jeffrey Trophy - One day Singles
Bobby Baxter Trophy - Over 60's singles	Bryson medal - 2 bowl Singles
Cutty Sark Trophy - Winner of Waupinschaw	Martin Trophy - 4 bowl pairs
Henderson Quaich - Centenary nominated pairs	Kyles Trophy - Triples
J.L. Robertson Shield - Singles handicap	C.J. Henderson medal - Rink
Duncan Ferguson Trophy Mixed Triples	Bisset Trophy - One day pairs
Invitation Pairs -	



The Ladies enjoy several competitions throughout the season and the following Trophies are competed for:

Margaret Sinclair Trophy	- Championship
Allison Law Trophy	- 2 bowl singles
Evelyn Trophy	Pairs
Paddy Bowie Trophy	- American Tournament
Isa Laing Trophy	- Triples
Laura Trophy	

Playing the Game

Whilst the Club may not be noted for its competitive spirit, members are never the less, anxious to do well. Over the years the club has competed in various leagues. In 1963 the Club joined the West Edinburgh District League and in 1975 it joined the North West Edinburgh District League. This continued until 1996 when there was a move to create an Edinburgh Bowling League. This was to prove a popular decision and there was a coming together of some 30 Clubs. This was divided into 4 divisions with promotion and relegation each year. In 2006 six clubs from the South Edinburgh Bowling league also joined the Edinburgh Bowling League. To date there are 5 Divisions. In addition there was the introduction of the Edinburgh Bowling League Knock out Cup and competitions for the Juniors, singles, pairs, triples, rinks and senior rinks. Together with competitions in the S.B.A. E.L.B.A and internal competitions, this means bowlers are heavily committed during the playing season.

The Seniors also compete in the North West Edinburgh Bowling Association on Tuesday afternoon and in the West Edinburgh Seniors Bowling Association on Thursday Afternoons. The seniors on the Thursday afternoon have been successful in winning the league in 2004, 5 and 7.

The Club in an effort to encourage youngsters to take up the game of bowls, introduced coaching lessons. We are fortunate to have Bob Goodall our SBA qualified coach and his assistant John Dick who give up their time on a Sunday morning to introduce the youngsters to the etiquette and skills of bowling. This is also beneficial to new members who are able to equip themselves before entering the competitive fray.

Membership

The membership numbers have fluctuated throughout the years. The men's side of the Club has declined and at present we have 80 members. However, the Ladies section has flourished and today there are some 55 members. Whilst things could be better the present day membership ensures that bowls will continue into the future. The Water of Leith will still flow gently past the Clubhouse and the trees will ensure a sylvan setting. The Green will still echo to the voices of the bowlers And this corner of "Couthy Coltbridge" will continue to flourish.

Conclusion:

The recording of the History surrounding Coltbridge has only been possible by the intense research done by Andrew Bogie, with help from David Kyles and John McNaughton. Debt of gratitude is also due to David Allan who compiled a Centenary Booklet which I have incorporated in the presentation. I have include copies of various photographs and bits and bobs found languishing in the cellar. I hope this may be of interest and who knows someone in 2084 may well add to this story.