

The following content is from an article prepared by our Chairman, Michael Blackband from his collection of Minute Books of the Chislet Colliery Welfare Bowls Club and forms an important document detailing the history of our club and its mining background.

CHISLET COLLIERY WELFARE ASSOCIATION BOWLS CLUB **THE EARLY DAYS 1937 - TO PRESENT**

Coal was first discovered in Kent in 1890 during exploratory works for the Channel Tunnel and it was thereafter discovered at Chislet 1919.

The miners originally lived in Ramsgate but in 1924 the Chislet Colliery Housing Association was formed to build a mining village of 300 houses, which became Hersden Village.

It seems the whole area of Welfare ground was purchased from Ellerman Property Trust Limited on 14th January 1937 on behalf of Chislet Colliery Limited, for the price of £801.12s.0d. The Conveyance Document was signed by John Edward Jones (Colliery Manager), Griffith James Davies (Company Secretary), Charles Dawson (Colliery Engineer), John Tounley (miner), Albert Hassell (miner) and Albert Robertson (miner).

These men were the original Trustees of The Chislet Colliery Welfare Association.

Permission was granted to erect a pavilion on the land (now the football changing rooms).

Under Sec 20 of the Miners Industry Act 1920, a fund had been established called the Miners Welfare Fund and was to be applied to the 'social wellbeing, recreation and conditions of living of the workers'. It maybe this fund which provided the means to purchase the land.

The mine closed in 1969 but the Chislet Colliery Welfare Association remains to this the day.

In 1971 it appears the Miner's Welfare Recreation Ground was handed over to the Council in Trust. This land (called Trust Land) includes the Bowls Green, the playing fields, ball park, BMX track and the children's playground area.

After payment of expenses, the net income was to be applied to 'the maintenance, upkeep and insurance of the property and the payment of rates, taxes and other expenses in connection with its use'. We shall see later there was a problem over this clause.

The first committee meeting of the Bowls Section of Chislet Colliery Welfare Association was held on 22nd October 1937 at 6.0pm. The Founders of the Club were:- Mr Sutton in the Chair, Mr A Hollis was proposed as the Secretary and Mr P McArthur was proposed as Chairman.

The first committee consisted of J Rogers, P Waries, W Waries and J Philpott. The meeting closed at 7.0pm.

At the second meeting on 25th March 1938 it was agreed the Bowls Section join the Kent County Bowling Association.

J Loudon was elected the first Match Secretary.

It was proposed that club equipment be purchased from a company called Taylor Rolfit Ltd (?).

The following was purchased:-

12 sets of bowls £43.4s.0d

8 jacks £2.8s.0d

250 yards of cord £0.1s.0d

Rink markers (1-6 twice) £3.18s.0d

12 mats £3.6s.0d

12 sheets £6.0s.0d

28 jack indicators £0.18s.8d

1 dozen pairs of shoes £2.8s.0d

1 pair of callipers £0.2s.6d

12 x 2-yard tape measures £4.0s.0d

4 x 25 yard markers £0.16s.0d

2 refuse bins £0.10s.0d

With various other bits and a 15% discount, it all came to £63.17s.6d

The Bowling Green was actually opened for the first match on Saturday 7th May 1938, with about twenty players present.

The second annual meeting was held 14th June 1938 when the Chairman outlined the scheme for forming a 'Club', (as opposed to a Bowls Section of the Welfare Association). Mr Beynon, on behalf of the Gentlemen of the Village, offered a substantial amount to purchase a set of bowls for a prize with Mr Beynon himself giving a prize for the second place.

It was decided to hold a match on Saturday 18th June 1938 when the Pavilion was to be opened for the first time. The match was to be England and Scotland versus Wales. (Result not known).

The officers were elected as follows:-

Chairman J Rogers

Captain W Beynon

Secretary S Louden

Committee Messrs Prothero, Marshall, Sommerville, A Brown, C Darwell,

W Simons, and W Waries.

On 4th July 1938 the draw for the first Bowls Tournament was held and a charge of six pence per entry was agreed.

The players used four woods and the first to 21 shots was the winner.

At a meeting on 8th August 1938 it was agreed that a Tobacco Jar was to be the second prize for the singles tournament.

All score cards had to be handed to the grounds man at the end of the match and signed by the umpire.

At a meeting on 15th October 1938, the subject of forming a 'Bowls Club' was brought up again. It would seem from the minutes that there was quite an argument over this.

No vote was taken and various people wanted the meeting suspended.

A vote was then held and the meeting carried on.

On 20th October 1938 it was agreed the Tobacco Jar be engraved.

The manager of The Black Horse Hotel (now the Indian Restaurant just along the road) was to be 'interviewed' concerning providing a supper. He obviously passed the interview and a Presentation Supper was to be held on 26th November, at 5.30pm at the cost of one shilling and nine pence each (1/9d).

The meeting on 15th May 1939 again discussed the formation of the 'Club'. The proposition was withdrawn because many members were either in favour or against the idea.

A meeting was arranged for 25th May 1939 and on this date agreement was reached in favour of a 'Club'.

All the officials of the 'Section' resigned. The following officers were elected:-

President Mr McArthur
Vice President Mr Griffiths
Secretary Mr Summerville
Treasurer Mr Mitchell
Captain Mr Beynon

Seven other members were elected to the Committee. (BUT only those that were 'working' could be elected!)

At a meeting on 5th June 1939 a discussion was held concerning the formation of a **Ladies Club**, and later on in July an invite was sent out to the 'ladies of the Village' to participate in a mixed triples match.

During that week a bus had been hired to travel to a match. The cost was two shillings per person (2/0d), the tip for the driver was two shillings and six pence (2/6d), the bus hire was £2.0s.0d, leaving a balance of one shilling and six pence (1/6s).

The credit balance of the club at that time was £2 which was said to be 'satisfactory'.

A meeting was held on 19th June 1939 and it was noted, with much regret, how slowly the ties for the competitions were being played. The time had to be extended and a Challenge Book was to be introduced whereby the challenger gave his opponent two alternative dates to play the match. None observance would result in the defaulter having his name removed from the competition.

From the Minutes it seems that teams were chosen at a Committee Meeting as opposed to the Captain.

In August 1939 a match was to be arranged for The County Homes for Cancer following an appeal by the Marchioness of Carisbrooke. The match was held in October and ten shillings and six pence was raised (10/6d).

Two clocks that had been presented to the Club were donated to the Nursing Association.

Up until March 1940, nothing in the Minutes mentions the commencement of World War Two. The Minutes just record the usual arrangements of matches and choice of teams and the forming of the Ladies Club.

A wife and family membership was agreed. Fees were seven shillings and six pence (7/6d) for a man, three shillings for a wife (3/0d) and one shilling and six pence (1/6d) for other family members under 18 years of age. These charges were considered 'very satisfactory'.

At a meeting on 1st April 1940, the club was formally named as 'Chislet Colliery Welfare Association Bowls Club' and on the 8th April, the rules governing the club were adopted.

The Committee would meet every Monday during the season, thereafter the first Monday of every month.

The Committee would choose the skips and the skips would choose their teams.

Members must place their cigarette ends and matches in the containers provided and spitting was forbidden on or round the green.

On the 6th May 1940, the President spoke over his concerns about dress code. He thought it would be step in the right direction if members wore white flannels and blazers.

The secretary was instructed to interview various merchants to get prices and terms of payment. The firm of W J Davies agreed to supply the clothing.

On the 13th May 1941, the President and two members met with a few ladies in the Club House. After the President outlined the 'pleasure and benefits to be obtained', the ladies agreed that they would like to play.

The ladies decided to form the Ladies Section and 'come in' with the men for the current season. The first two ladies who served on the Committee were Mrs Loudon and Mrs Morris. The Ladies Section was actually formed in 1974. The bank balance stood at £2.12s.0d.

All during the War, the Minutes just show club business was going on as usual, selection of teams for matches, election of officers etc. Apart from the occasional donation to the Red Cross and various POW organisations, there is still no mention of the progress of the War. There is even a meeting on the 6th June 1945 and all it mentions is matches against Canterbury and Wingham.

The accounts show a balance of about £4.6s.0d.

On Sunday 24th March 1946, concern was raised about the teas after matches. It seemed it was the same ladies who arranged the teas all the time and a question of a rota was brought up. (Nothing changes!)

Funds stood at £4.6s.8½d.

On 13th April 1948 there was a discussion about club badges. A member was tasked with selecting a suitable design.

One of the reasons for the badge was to exchange with visiting clubs 'who desired it'. A badge account was created and all available club funds were transferred to it.

On 31st October 1948 there was deficit of £7.1s.0d in the Badge Account but there was a stock of 47 badges. As these were to be sold at three shillings (3/-) each, it was felt the debt would be covered. (In July 1949 this was reduced to (2/-).

At this meeting several members made donations amounting to £5.18s.6d to the Badge Account, to which the Chairman expressed his gratification for that fine effort.

Over the years, the Minutes record the purchase of dozens of these badges and it seems they were given out as tokens to visiting club, similar to the pens given out today.

Jim Harlow has collected many of these and they are displayed in our Club House.

The price of the ticket for the annual dinner was set at seven shillings and six pence (7/-6d).

On 29th November 1948, the annual membership fee was set at ten shillings (50p). A charge of six pence (2½p) was made for the fixture cards.

Entrance for each Club Competition was set at one shilling (5p) per competition.

In October 1949 it was decided to send all the Club bowls to Messrs Taylor Rolph for re-testing.

On 25th November 1950 the Club proposed that a public telephone was to be placed in the Welfare Hall.

The Minutes just carry on with the general business of running the Club.

In 1952 the Club had to resign from the Thanet League because they could not fulfil fixtures due to lack of players.

At the AGM on 11th October 1957, it was reported that the Club had difficulty in raising teams during the previous year and it was thought advisable to obtain the members opinion whether there should be a Bowls Club or not. It was agreed by the members that they should try another season.

It seemed the Club carried on but there are only a few entries in the Minute Book until 7th October 1963 when the AGM begin discussions concerning the 25th Anniversary. (Nothing else reported on this subject)

In 1964 the Club Secretary was requested to get a catalogue to 'look' at Club ties. (Nothing further reported concerning these ties).

In 1966, 'The Captain gave his report, which was a nice compliment to all our members, who sat in silence and a hand clap was given when he finished.'

In 1971 it seems only 14 members had paid their fees and at a meeting dated 19th March 1972, members were again asked if the Bowls Club should continue. All present voted to carry on - with one exception.

In October 1973 J.Hodgson and F.Wallace were tasked to pursue the possible purchase of indoor bowling equipment on behalf of the Welfare Club.

The indoor mat was in place in December 1973 charges for its use was set at:-

2 persons 15p per hour
4 persons 12 ½ per hour
6 persons 12 ½ per hour
8 persons 10p per hour

Non-Welfare Club members were charged 25% above this.

This was a decision of the combined Welfare and Bowls Club Committees and Stan Davies and Fred Wallace were responsible for the mat.

In May 1975 a man was appointed to take the monies on the door.

On 28th October 1973, discussions began with the company of E.H.Bounds Ltd to provide an outdoor surface measuring 23 yards by 4 yards.

A representative of the company was to visit the Club to give advice.

In January 1974, Mr Eric Bounds and Mr Paul Cook, from the company, attended the Bowls Club and gave details of their 'SCAPAGRENE' surface.

The cost of the mat was £360.27p (inc VAT) and on 10th January 1974 the Welfare Club Committee approved the purchase.

In April 1974 a concrete base was laid at the rear of the present Welfare Hall for an artificial outdoor test surface. A fence was erected around the surface (at the expense of the Welfare Club) and the final surface would be put in place after the fence had been erected.

From the Minutes dated September 1974, it seems there was a Triples Competition played on this outdoor surface. It was not a Bowls Club matter and was run by the Welfare Club Committee.

A sub-committee was raised consisting of the Bowls Club and the Welfare Club so that competitions could be organised for the outdoor and indoor carpets.

In 1975 this mat was used for future bowlers aged 16 years of age. Also the 'Mick Fisher Cup' pair's competition was played on this mat. It was open to all Welfare Club members for an entrance fee of 10p.

(You may wonder where this surface is now? If you go to the gate of the green and look up towards the Welfare Club, the surface ran along the back of this building. Historically this was the first outside all weather bowling surface in the Country. I have tried to contact the company concerning this product but it had gone into liquidation so my enquiries have come to an end. Likewise I can find no trace of E.H.Bounds Ltd. M. Blackband)

The Club fees at this time were £1.00p for men and 80p for women.

In April 1974 (the year of its formation) a vote of confidence was given for the Ladies

Section for the coming year.

Metal badges cost 20p, blazer badges cost 75p and ties cost 95p.

Fees on 20th April 1975 were £1.25 for men and 75p for women. About 14 members were in attendance at that meeting.

A meeting held on 18th May stated 'more appreciation to be shown to the ladies'. They were to be included in the end of season Bowls Drive and there should be more liaison.

The Marlborough Cup Competition was proposed consisting of mixed triples (two men and one woman).

In April 1976 new mats and jacks were purchased for £60.93d.

Fees were £1.50p for men and £1.00p for the ladies. Later, in 1977, they were raised to £2.00p for men and £1.00p for ladies. Over 65's were charged £1.50p (good for current Chislet members).

The Bowls Tour to Wales was arranged and priced at:- £19.00p for three days, £5.50d for two days with B&B at £6.50d. According to the Minutes, this Tour was an annual event.

All during the 1970's the Committee Members continually complained to the Council about the condition of the grounds and buildings which were supposed to be maintained by the Council.

When it had been handed to the Council the green had been in a good condition.

Fees were paid by the members of the Welfare Association in general (Bowls Section, Football Section and Welfare Club) for this purpose.

As early as 1973 appeals (which were turned down) were made to the Council concerning the fees.

Various meetings were held with Council Officials and on 10th April 1979 a meeting took place between all the interested parties.

It was agreed that the whole area be handed to the Association on a year by year lease.

The Council gave £1000.00 for repairs to the Pavilion and would help in providing materials at cost price. They would provide fertiliser and grass seed for the pitches and the green but members must provide the labour and tools to carry out the work and further grants could be requested.

It was noted, 'that all sections to the Welfare Club must pull together to make a success of it all'.

In 2001 a thirty year lease was granted to the Club.

The Council agreed to pay the Club £1300 per annum for maintenance of the green only, payable in two equal instalments on a half yearly basis. This was stopped in 2013, but the Council still maintains all the other facilities on the original Trust land.

In November 1977 Mr G.Simpson was congratulated for doing well in the County Games and receiving his County Badge.

In 1979 indoor bowls was still being played as a trophy was being awarded.

A £20.00p grant was donated to take the 'old age pensioners' to a brewery trip (perhaps we could re-instate this!)

In December 1980, it was decreed that the practice of free drinks at the Committee Meetings would be done away with.

There were still complaints concerning players not completing their club competitions in time.

There were no fees for Senior Citizens who entered the Club Competitions. (Could we bring this back?)

It would seem that in about 1989 the Committee Meetings started to be mixed with both female and male members. This seems to coincide with the first discussions concerning the building of our present pavilion.

An application for a grant of £10,000 was applied for to Canterbury City Council. This was turned down but an interest free loan was offered which was accepted and finally paid off in 2000.

Our pavilion was formally opened on Saturday 3rd August 1991. It was festooned with black and gold bunting and champagne was supplied. 'Elsie made a cake'.

It was during 1991 that our club was given a 10 year lease by C.C.C.

Subscriptions in 1992 were £30.00 and eventually rose to £50.00 in 2004 where they have remained ever since.

In the early part of the 2000's, after the 30 year lease was granted, plans were put into the Council to extend the pavilion at both ends.

An application was made to the Mines Regeneration Fund to pay for this and other work, which included paving all around the green and £18,000 was allocated. Part of this grant went towards the fitting out of our bar which served its first drink on 1st May 2004.

All the founding members of our club were miners toiling away, underground, to produce coal. It must have been pleasing for them to come above ground, clean up, dress in their white trousers, blazers, shirts and club ties and play their matches.

They were all members of the general Chislet Miners Welfare Association and seem to have had quite a good social life. The Welfare Association Working Men's Club still remains today and that is where we have our winter, indoor mat competitions.

Apart from general maintenance and the installation of a watering system, nothing much has changed at our Club up to this time.

Although Chislet Bowls Club nearly closed on several occasions fortunately, for all of the current members, it has survived to this day. To date, we have nearly sixty members, and the Club is financially secure thanks to the good management of the various Committee Members over the years and the good housekeeping of the Treasurers.

Members have come and gone, new players have joined us and we still get moans that our competitions are not played in time.

We still have to wear a shirt, tie and blazer for league matches but we can wear soft tops for friendlies. Our fees have not changed for ten years - and Elsie is still making cakes!

Whilst compiling the story of our Club, I was fortunate in being able to refer to all the original Minute Books dating back to 1937. I have also spoken to the longer serving members of our Club who have assisted with gaps in the history.

Should anyone find anything missing or incorrect, please tell me and I will make the necessary amendments.

Hopefully our Club will continue to exist and in 75 years' time, someone will add to this narrative.

Michael Blackband - Chairman 2015