

History of Oakley Bowling Club

Part 2

1979 began with the bad news that the Borough Council and the Sports Council were unlikely to support an indoor green at Oakley and that they intended to back a proposal that had been put forward a few years earlier for a green at Whitchurch. That project had been shelved but Oakley's proposals had stimulated interest. The basis for the decision was claimed to be that the Whitchurch Trust was an established body so public funds would be less at risk! At an Extraordinary General Meeting, the members accepted that the indoor part of the Oakley project should be abandoned although many questioned privately what really persuaded the Council to support the building of a green on a site at the extreme edge of the Borough, where a large proportion of the users would be non borough residents. Despite their reservations most Oakley members threw their support behind the Longmeadow project and indeed many of Longmeadow's early home games were against clubs who were on Oakley's indoor list. This was not surprisingly given that Oakley's Secretary and Longmeadow's Match Secretary (for just one year) were one and the same person. Oakley did, however, decide to retain its own indoor games.

The Club's first Dinner and Dance was held at the Carnival Hall in February 1979 with the AGM following in March. Bill Hatch took over as President, with Fred Brickell becoming Vice President and with the only major change being Harry Rutherford, who had joined from Old Basing, joining the Committee and becoming Men's Captain. For 1979 the Club affiliated to all the County and District Bowling Associations and it is noteworthy that for the first entry into the BDBA League the Committee agreed that "the strongest possible team should be fielded and that two reserves should be selected and required to travel". Entries in outside competitions were particularly high with the few experienced players usually, taking with them, in rinks and triples, beginners who could gain experience. Successes for men were few and far between although Town were beaten in the Nat West Double Rink. The Ladies however, setting a trend which has continued in most years, were able to record the runner-up in the North Hants Singles in Vi Hatch, the McFauld Pairs runners-up in Glad Dolton and Edna Woodward and our first County Trophy, the Benevolent Triples. The team of Glad



Dolton, Edna Woodward and Vi Hatch defeated Follands in the morning 19-14 and the final was a see-saw game with Oakley leading 4-0 only to drop 8 shots in the next three ends. The Gazette commented that opponents Rowner "were the more composed side, but the Oakley skip Vi Hatch held her team together, and

a 2 at the ninth end saw them move back into the lead which they never again surrendered".

The 1979 club main competition results were:

Mens Singles	Fred Brickell beat Percy Hodgkinson	21-16
Ladies Singles	Vi Hatch beat Peggy Rutherford	22-16
Mens Novice	Bill Hudson beat Stan Cozens	21-11
Ladies Novice	Peggy Rutherford beat Peggy House	21-6
Pairs	Rutherfords beat Woodward/Brickell	19-15

Interestingly not one of these finalists was a member of the Club 40 years on (in fact only one is still alive – Peggy Rutherford (now Knowleden) and now lives in Cornwall.)

For Committee members life, however, was not all about playing bowls on the green at Popley. We wanted a green nearer home and numerous fundraising events were being held to further that aim. A Disco was held at the Andover Road Hall, there was a St Ledger Draw, a skittles night, a bazaar, a cheese and wine evening (including side shows) at Peter Bown's parents farm at Steventon. Barry Lee collected and sold waste paper (who remembers the skip at Steventon). By the year-end, the Treasurer was able to report a balance in hand of £1,084 and membership of 83 + 32 who paid a small sub to play indoors.

As 1979 came to a close, the prospects of our green in Oakley looked good. Much hard work by Committee members had taken us to the point where the Council had indicated they would consider proposals for the Club to take responsibility for the site at Andover/Rectory Road. Planning permission for a green had been established. Financial estimates had been submitted to the Council indicating a cost for the project of £38,000, of which the Club was willing to fund some £5,000. A major brewery had promised a low interest loan of £6-7,000. We had bought a building for £300. This was stored in sections in the woodshed at Malshanger.

At the AGM, now held in November, Fred Brickell succeeded to the Presidency with Spencer Kerley becoming Vice President. The Secretary's tasks were reduced by creating a role of Competition Secretary (Match Secretary came later) and Edna Woodward took on this task. Kay Kerley became the Ladies Captain. The AGM was noteworthy for its length (it was closed at 10.45pm) but also because it made the rules far more explicit than they had been in ensuring that ladies had equal voting rights. The meeting interestingly rejected a proposition that we should enter two teams in the BDBA league.

1979 closed with the club in good heart, financially sound and looking forward excitedly to the day when we would have our own green in Oakley and be able to entertain our guests. What would 1980 bring?