

Cambridge Chesterton Indoor Bowls Club

**A brief history of the building of the Club, compiled from
notes left by the late Dennis Sparrow and Mick Nunn**

By Walter Golby

THE EARLY YEARS

The Indoor Club officially opened on the 26th September, 1974 and was an immediate success. The membership had now reached almost 500, the Club being open seven days per week, with four main sessions for bowling, morning, afternoon and two evening sessions.

Prior to the opening the Steering Committee appointed Mr. Norman Harper Scott as General Secretary and he had overall responsibility for the appointment of officials and preparing the Constitution for the first five years. A Joint Establishment Committee was formed consisting of the members of the Outdoor Club Committee, plus five members from other Clubs. A great deal of credit for the smooth opening of the Club must go down to Mr. Norman Harper Scott. He also introduced the 1-2-3 Tournament, which proved most popular for top quality bowlers from throughout East Anglia for over 20 years. Mr Harper Scott was assisted by Mr Malcolm Driver in organising the Leagues & Competitions and Malcolm is still involved to this day, which must be some sort of record.

In 1978 there was a disagreement between the Joint Establishment Committee and Mr. Norman Harper Scott and he was replaced as General Secretary by Mr. Kenneth Gilbert, who some of you will remember as a well known butcher. Mr Gilbert and his father before him had great experience in bowling circles particularly outdoors and they presented numerous trophies. Mr Gilbert was the old fashioned type who kept strictly to the rules in both dress and conduct. He did not endear himself to everyone. The Indoor Club continued to grow and financially all the loans were being paid off. The original constitution was for five years and after this all members of the Outdoor Club believed there would be amalgamation of the Clubs.

I moved into the Cambridge area in the summer of 1979 and joined the Outdoor Club followed by the Indoor. During the summer I mentioned to Mick Nunn, a stalwart of both Clubs, of my experience as a Secretary. I was invited to join the Committee in the September as Minute

Secretary which I was happy to do. At only my second meeting Mr. Gilbert announced that he would shortly be going away for six months on a world tour and a replacement should be temporarily appointed. To my surprise Mr. Keith Gatward of the Newnham Bowls Club proposed my appointment as General Secretary. I pointed out that although I was willing to take over I was completely new to the area and did not know the names of the Committee. Keith's proposal was seconded and I was appointed General Secretary, without knowing the background history to the building of the Indoor Club, but for the next 25 years my life revolved around the Indoor Club. I believe now that Mr Gatward wanted a General Secretary not tied to the Outdoor Club.

The original Constitution was for 5 years and the then Chairman, Ted Cooke was very keen to get the Clubs amalgamated and research was carried out to see if the two Clubs could be joined by a passage across the road, but this proved to be a non starter. The membership of the Indoor Club had now reached almost 700 and it was necessary for the Indoor facilities to be improved. Mr Keith Gatward and Mick Wright proposed that the rear wall be removed and a raised viewing area be built. However before this could be achieved the question of amalgamation had to be decided and a referendum was held of all members, but this proved a non event. Forms were sent out to all members but from the 700 members 175 voted against and 145 for amalgamation.

Following the vote against amalgamation a constitution was drawn up whereby the Indoor Club would be run by an Executive Committee consisting of the Club Officials plus five elected members with the General Secretary having overall responsibility. This was successful up to a point but the land was still leased by the Outdoor Club, with the rates etc still in their name So before anything could be done, approval had to be agreed by the Joint Establishment Committee which consisted of the Outdoor Club Committee plus four members of the Indoor Club.

In 1985 it became quite apparent that the Club was outgrowing itself, with no satisfactory lounge area, and being extremely crowded at change-over times. Messrs Keith Gatward and Mick Wright continued to press for the back wall to be removed and a raised viewing area and lounge installed. Mr Donald McLeod, an architect, was then a member of the Outdoor Club and was invited to submit plans. Numerous Indoor Clubs were visited before the plans were submitted and it appeared that the cost would be over £100,000. As the original loans had been paid

off, little money was available. The City Council offered £1,000 and Greene King £20,000. I read in the Bowls magazine that the Egham Club had borrowed £50,000 from Lombard North Central PLC and I took it upon myself to visit their Cambridge office and request a loan of a similar amount. Certain members of the Committee were against borrowing. However the Treasurer Neville Auker and myself were satisfied that with the pre-season booking we could repay the loan. Lombard agreed the loan providing the City Council acted as guarantors. Again the approval of the Outdoor Club was required. Work commenced in May 1986 and was completed prior to the start of the new season and the project was officially opened by Trevor Brooking, who was then Chairman of the Eastern Sports Council in October. Although we had to request the bank to provide an overdraft facility we managed to repay the loan without going into the red. The raised area set a standard and Mr. Mcleod was commissioned to carry out similar work at Ely IBC.

THE STORY CONTINUES.

Before I continue with the history of the Indoor Club, I would like say I was fortunate to have these gentlemen and ladies who were all dedicated to making the club one of the leading venues for Indoor Bowls.

KEITH GATWARD, was Chairman on two occasions and our first President, he worked tirelessly on behalf of the Club, in the early years. He has been known to stay up all night with his son, rubbing down and filling in cracks in the concrete surface. He was also a most generous benefactor, providing one of the trophy cabinets (in memory of Jackie), the training cupboards, and when the cash flow ran dry at the time of the lottery he provided the funds for the carpet to be fitted around rinks 7&8. A man most generous, always game for a laugh and one had to be on tenterhooks when he was making his speech at the Annual Dinner.

DEREK ASHMAN, worked tirelessly as League Secretary, building up the leagues to their full capacity, and persuading members to provide cups for the winning teams. A weekend holiday in Jersey was donated by Premier Travel, and Derek organised a raffle which raised over £1,000 and enabled us to purchase the first trophy cabinet & honours boards. The holiday in Jersey was won by Mrs Maureen Mallows. Derek always

wanted members to get together for Christmas to sing carols, and we ran the band concerts for a number of years with an audience of over 200 but the carol singing was never as envisaged by Derek, the band leader usually reduced the number of verses. I must not forget the work Derek did following the flood in cancelling and re-organising the League fixtures.

LES HOWE, what a worker, he was our first building manager, together with Vic Tiplady they rewired the electricity over the green, he also fitted the wooden floor in the restaurant. We hoped to have small dinner dances but I am afraid it did not come to pass. Les & Lilly also donated the Hammond organ which I am afraid has never been played. During all this time Les had a heart problem but it never stopped the worker. Les has told me that this period of his life was the happiest. When I got one of my ideas for developing the Club I always discussed it with Les first before approaching the Architect.

JACK BAUGHAN, he was the assistant treasurer responsible for checking & banking the rinks fees and subscriptions. Jack in the early days used to put all the money in his brief case and take it home to Duxford. If you were short in the envelope or put in too many coppers Jack would be on the phone. One of Jack's proudest moments was shortly after we had installed our first computer, Jack who was then over 80 had his picture taken at the computer & the photo appeared in one of the bowls publications. Jack did an enormous amount of work during the time of the Lottery extension when the appeal was made to members for donations and loans.

MICK NUNN, what a servant for the Club, he was one of the original members who installed the central heating system and then extended it over the balcony area. He was always working for the club, whether it was collecting glasses when he came in at 7 o'clock each evening or shouting 'phone'.

MAURICE HARRADINE, also a member of the original team who installed the central heating, was Chairman during the year the balcony was built and did a great deal of work. Maurice has vacuumed the bowling carpet once a week, usually at 5am, since the opening of the club. Now that is dedication

The Treasurers NEVILLE AUKER AND KEVIN KENT, Neville was Treasurer at the time of the balcony extension and had many worrying

moments particularly in August when cash flow got down to the hundreds, and we were still paying off the Lombard & Greene King loans. Neville was always very calm when dealing with the cash, but what a different character when skipping on the green, he then grew horns. Although on several occasions we had to make arrangements for overdraft facilities at the bank we have never been overdrawn.

Following the sudden death of Neville, we were fortunate to be able to recruit Kevin Kent as Treasurer and he has done outstanding work to the present day. Soon after taking over, Kevin made a claim for the reduction of the VAT payment, and in one refund we received £19,000 which enabled us to continue with the improvements to the changing rooms and toilets. When making the lottery application Kevin did an outstanding resume of our cash flow and how we could proceed with the venture.

KENNETH GILBERT, was acting Secretary prior to my appointment, he was from the old school who wanted everything done properly in dress & etiquette. He was very interested in training, Mick Langley was one of his trainees, so we have a lot to be thankful for. Mr Gilbert was a well known butcher, and a former City Councillor and could negotiate with numerous traders on behalf of the Club. The scoreboard now redundant, the loud speaker system, and the trees alongside the road were the result of his negotiations.

DEREK SILK, was an efficient Competition Secretary for a number of years, and the banter between him and Derek Ashman on who needed the most rink space was something to behold

DONALD MCLEOD, our Architect, for the balcony, the changing rooms and toilets, and finally the extra rinks, dining room and kitchen. He was outstanding in being able prepare plans from the ideas of the Committee. Having retired from practise his fees helped the Club by being very reasonable. I had many arguments with Donald but we got there in the end. In those days I had a reputation for being like 'Victor Meldrew'.

We were one of the first Committees to involve the Lady bowlers and they have given outstanding service. I must mention one or two Cynthia Crisp was our first Lady Chairman, and in many ways was the best and most co-operative I had to work with. In her year we had the flood, and although some of the visiting Chairman at that time did not approve of Lady Chairman, she did outstanding service, even finding time to rewrite

the Constitution. Cathie Fraser has been tremendous over the years, she started training the youngsters many years ago and she must be very proud of the way they have developed. Liz Messer was Assistant Secretary and did a great deal of work in the preparation of the Lottery grant. Joy Evans has been Assistant Treasurer for over ten years and done a tremendous amount of work in the checking and banking of rink fees and subscriptions. Prior to Joy, two members used to do the work she is now doing so we are very grateful.

I must have forgotten someone, I apologise but I must also thank Barry Green and John Christmas who at that time were Chairman & Secretary of the Outdoor Club, but were always most co-operative. They even had to stand as guarantors for the loans etc. when the Indoor Club was not officially recognised.

With this years new committee elected, I hope they will work with the same enthusiasm as the above ladies and gentlemen. When we held the annual dinner or other function you could be certain of their attendance.

I will now try and continue the story of the progress of the Indoor Club. The seasons following the opening of the balcony area, membership continued to grow and rink space was at a premium. Derek had to introduce the two sessions on Wednesday and Friday afternoons to allow more teams to get games. It got to the stage that members joining could only get a game at the drive or roll up sessions.

The cash flow was very tight for several seasons and within months of the season starting the heating boiler gave up on us, but fortunately with the tremendous help of Stan Topham we got through.

We had several matters that caused a great deal of argument. Firstly the banning of smoking at the end of the rinks, and then the introduction of the time bell. These we passed and are now accepted by almost every member.

We were still getting a great deal of adverse comments regarding the state of the playing surface and at this time Messrs Greengauge had consulted a carpenter & cabinet maker by the name of Dickie Dales to advise on the possibility of installing wooden flooring. Dickie came down and spoke to the Committee and it was decided to go ahead, and this club was one of the first half a dozen in the Country to install a wooden floor. Although we still get complaints of varying runs on the green, on the

whole it has been a great success. It was sad to hear of the recent death of Dickie Dales, he was a great character. There was quite a history between Messrs Greengauge and Mr Dales. When it appeared that wooden flooring was a success Greengauge started their own department for wooden flooring, however Dickie set up his own business which now is apparently the major force and responsible for the greens for the World Championships etc.

Indoor bowls was still growing in popularity with membership full and any new members had to be advised that there little chance of getting into a team and their only chance of getting a game was in the roll up sessions. This and the difficulty in arranging meals for friendly matches lead to the application for the lottery grant which I will deal with in the next edition.

THE STORY CONTINUES - THE LOTTERY GRANT

It is now difficult to believe that in 1995 we were still having to make use of the Outdoor Club for meals after friendly matches and during Tournaments. It was getting more difficult each year and the members of the Outdoor Club were finding it increasing difficult to find volunteers to open the bar etc. The Chairman of the Indoor Club at this time was our present Secretary, Hugh Wilmot, and he came to a meeting and proposed that a dining room and kitchen be built at the end of the balcony & rink 6. We had quite a healthy bank balance and the proposal was approved. Our Architect Donald McLeod who had done first class work for the Indoor Club, with the design of the balcony & the improvements to the dressing rooms, toilets & the new entrance, was unwell at this time, and by chance I met the Greene King area manager, who suggested making use of their architect. At this time Messrs Greengauge were the leading lights in the design etc of Indoor Clubs, and they held a seminar in the Outdoor Club inviting Clubs from this area to attend. The National Lottery had just come into being and an Officer was invited to talk to delegates on the opportunity for clubs to obtain grants.

At this time I had an excellent working relationship with the Director of the City Leisure Services, and he advised that there was no way we could get a grant towards the building of a kitchen and dining room but if we could make a case for having two extra rinks we could be

successful and as a result we applied for a National Lottery Application pack. This then took over my life for a number of years.

Messrs Greene King's architect had already prepared plans for the dining room and kitchen and he was requested to amend them to include the extra two rinks and the Director of the Leisure Services agreed to get his grants officer to assist me with the completion of the application.

Prior to making an application for Lottery funding it is necessary to have applied for planning permission, have an estimate of the cost but one major obstacle was that at this time the Indoor Club had no standing in Law. Application was made to the City Council for the Indoor Club to be included in the lease. This could only be done with the approval of the Outdoor membership, and this was done at a Special General Meeting, and the then Chairman of the Outdoor Club, Mr John Drury was most helpful. Legal advice was sort and Mr Charles Webb of Messrs Few & Kester was appointed to represent the Indoor Club and he suggested that the Indoor Club become a Limited Company by Guarantee and this was done with the Executive Committee becoming the first Directors. Application had been made for planning permission and this was granted at a cost of £2,068. The plans were sent to Messrs Salmons Bros, of Ely who kindly agreed to give a provisional price to enable me to complete the application. This was duly done and sent to the City Council Grants Officer and came back covered in red ink, it was similar to sending in your composition at school. A second effort was completed and the application for funding was made, similar applications were made to the City Council, South Cambs & the Foundation for Sport & the Arts. Now that the Indoor Club had some identity it was necessary to sort out the rent and rates & the Club appointed Mr. Charles Ward, to negotiate on behalf of the Club.

On the 1st April, 1996 I was informed that our application for funding had been approved and the amount of £167,000 would be granted on condition we installed a disabled lift and toilet. Confirmation of the grant was received on the 22nd July, 1996. The drawings were then sent out for tender and it became obvious our original costing was way out. I immediately contacted the Senior Case Officer of the National Lottery and he advised that we could receive up to 60% of the additional cost. On the 13th November, 1996 a quotation from Messrs Salmon Bros for £418,261 was accepted subject to the additional lottery funding being received.

A scheme to obtain further funding was put to the membership;

1. A member willing to loan £3,000 or above received free membership for four years & received interest at Building Society Rates.
2. A member willing to loan the Club £1,000 received free membership for four years
3. A member willing to pay 4 years membership in advance at the rate of full membership £100, senior citizens £80.

Resulting from this appeal over £70,000 was raised and went a long way to ensure the success of the venture. Loans were also received from Greene King £40,000 and a Life member £5,000 so we were now well on the way to obtaining our share of the cost. Information was received in early December that the National Lottery grant had been increased by £65,219 making a total of £232,219 towards the cost. Messrs Salmons £418,251, Legal costs £25,000. Salmons agreed to commence work on the 4th January, 1997 and it was completed on the 4th August as promised, which was quite amazing and the work was of a very high standard.

I must mention the work by Mr Kevin Kent, the Treasurer, who put in an early report on our cash projection, and each month he put in an invoice to the National Lottery who repaid the amount in a few days. Although we had authority for a bank overdraft, at no time did we go into the red. Mr Trevor Brooking agreed to open the extension, but was at this time employed by the BBC and was not available, and it was officially opened by the President of the English Womens Indoor Bowling Association. I must mention the assistance I received from, the late Keith Gatward. Donald McLeod, Les Howe, Jack Baughan and from Dr. Harry Thomas the then Chairman who made a video of the whole operation, also Mrs Liz Messer who did the majority of typing.

THE STORY TO THE END OF AN ERA IN MY LIFE.

The building of the dining room and two extra rinks was completed on the 4th August, 1997 at a cost of £421,777.89, of which we received the Lottery Grant of £232,219. This grant was paid in monthly instalments according to the invoices provided. Treasurer Kevin Kent did a tremendous job, although we were very close at times, we never went overdrawn. The official opening of the facility was held on the 2nd October, 1997, Mr Trevor Brooking had accepted the invitation but at the time he was still under contract with the BBC and at the last moment was

sent on a European match involving Chelsea. A representative match was held involving bowlers from many parts of the country and the official opening was performed by the President of the Women's Indoor Bowling Association. ITV attended and made a short film involving two of the elderly bowlers Jack Baughan, the Ass Treasurer and Gladys Gould, that fine lady now 102 and still going strong, also the youngest bowlers who were Cathy Fraser's granddaughters. Past Chairman Harry Thomas made a video of the building of the extension and the opening ceremony. A copy is available in the office, should anyone be interested. The project would never have been completely without the wholesale support of my Committee, particularly the late gentleman, Keith Gatward, Chairman, Le Howe, Building Manager and Donald McLeod Architect. The next season was one of continued progress and the membership eventually reached 1,200. The restaurant proved popular but we had staffing problems for the first few year and Mr Ken Light was appointed in 1998 and stayed with us for over ten years.

In 1998 we suffered a spate of vandalism of vehicles in the car park, and the CCTV cameras were installed at a cost of £2,950. During this years efforts were made to get disabled chairs for coaching and we were fortunate to receive grants of £789 from the Masonic Lodge and £250 from South Cambs Rotary. The late Keith coached a number of disabled bowlers but none continued for many months

In 2000 Mrs Cynthia Crisp was appointed Junior Vice President, which was a big step for our Ladies Section, as in some clubs they were still not allowed on the Committee. In 2001 the Club staged our first National Finals which were successfully held over a weekend with teams attending from various parts of the country. The cost of accommodation put them off returning.

On the night of the 21/22nd October, 2001, my home telephone was receiving calls every 15 minutes giving warning of flooding. I attended at daybreak and the flood water was up Logans Way to Phillips Car Park entrance and there was no way of getting into the Club. I went home and rang Maurice Harradine, whom I knew was a fisherman and had waders. Maurice met me in Logans Way, and managed to make an entrance by way of the road alongside the Outdoor green. Maurice managed to get into the Club and said I would not like what he had seen. Derek Ashman had then arrived and we waded waist deep into the Club. Water had come up through the ditches, and there was severe damage to the bowling carpet. Water had also entered via the front door and there was

an inch of water over the entrance hall, Office, toilets and changing room, completely ruining the carpets. The day the water receded I managed to get the Insurance Assessor to meet the Greengauge rep at the Club. It was agreed that we must have a new carpet for the green, the remaining carpets be taken up a destroyed . A number of driers were obtained but it took several weeks to dry out. The Water Board had insisted that the two new rinks were built 18inches higher than the remainder and they were not damaged. Some bowling was played on rinks 7 &8, particularly National championships but the Club was more or less closed for a month. Derek Ashman worked tremendously hard re-arranging league matches etc which resulted in his home telephone bill being trebled. The green was re-opened on the 22nd November and the insurance claim amounted to £44,776.99p. This all happened during the year Mrs Cynthia Crisp was Chairman, and she dealt with the matter brilliantly and even found time to amend the rules and constitution, and she proved to be the best and most reliable Chairman during my tour of office.

Owing to the failing health of my wife it was necessary for me to resign as Secretary in October, 2003, I enjoyed almost every minute as your Secretary and I had some first class Committee members who gave me their support. What a shame time has taking its toll or I would love to make a comeback.

May the Club continue to prosper and good luck to your present Secretary, Bernard, I feel sure you are in good hands.

Walter J Golby September 2008