

## The History of The Mount Gambier Bowls Club Inc.

*The first Hundred Years 1904 - 2004*

**In 1946 The Club created a full time greenkeeper position**, applications were called and Mr. P. Pepper , who had been the greenkeeper part time was contracted to fill the position. With the increasing membership the club decided to **prepare a third green and in 1947 the new green was prepared and sown**. It was ready for play in 1948. By 1950 there were 143 members and 30 Associates at the end of the year, the president Mr J. Miller stated that the club had reached saturation point as far as membership was concerned. The building committee asked the Ladies for their requirements in the building and Mr.Stan Boothy drew up sketch plans for building alterations to the Clubhouse. In 1950 The secretary Mr Ralston became ill and was unable to continue, Mr. Bert Uhe was appointed till the Annual meeting when Mr.George Small was elected. The building Committee applied to the Corporation for a renewal of the lease for a further twenty years and for permission to build the alterations to the clubrooms. While Mr. J. Miller was president the brush fence on the Western side of C Green was removed in December 1950. **It was agreed that a Club Pennant with a navy blue base and gold lettering M.G.B.C. superimposed be purchased**. The pennant would be broken out at the Centenary Carnival at the end of the year. This was to celebrate the sesqui-centenary of the State. In the 1951 J.W.Miller's Presidents report it was noted that Sir Willoughby Norrie and Lady Norrie visited on 2<sup>nd</sup> December and the Club was bedecked in flags and bunting and the Jubilee rinks contest was won by Mr Skinner's team

A report was submitted by Messrs. Hemmings and Sealey regarding the suitability and desirability of the old show grounds as a suitable possibility for the formation of a new club and the laying down of two greens. A request was made to the Corporation for consideration of leasing that land being vacated by the A & H society when they moved to the present showgrounds. The Council agreed and it was passed to the Parks & Gardens committee but was not proceeded with. On the greens in 1950 Casterton Bowling Club proposed that a pennant league be formed, this was discussed and it was resolved that a smaller league might be better and that Millicent, Casterton, Naracoorte and Penola Bowling clubs be approached.



The picture of the Bowling Club is taken from a postcard found in a shop in West Australia. It was taken after 1952 when the machinery shed was built, and before 1957 when the greens lighting was refurbished.

In 1952 during G.Adams Presidency Bert Uhe was elected secretary and continued as secretary until 1954, when D.Skinner was elected. Les Perkins was admitted to membership and he had been a member for fifty years when he died. Mr. Walter White drew up plans for the clubhouse improvements with Mr. Skinner and Mr. Braithwaite. Mr.R.V.Lock submitted

a tender for the masonry work.

**The main assembly hall was extended and a storeroom and toilet facilities were built.** Mr. Adams spoke of **the erection of the tool machinery and drying shed**. The shed is needed to house a workbench and to cover top dressing soil. The lighting of "C" green , funds were given to a special appeal and the work carried out ready for use next season. There was much activity around the club at this time, a portion of the verandah used as the secretary's office was relocated to the other side and the vacated area added to the area for the Associates

In 1954 at the end of G.Adams presidency, at the Annual meeting, a motion was passed that the Mount Gambier delegates be instructed to advise the S.E.B.A. that **the Mount Gambier Bowling Club would enter a team in the pennant matches**. In March 1955 a motion was carried that the Club was not interested in a new Bowling Club being established at Olympic Park but that funds be set aside for twelve rinks and a clubhouse.

At the end of his four year tenure as president of the club G.Adams said in his report **"Our membership in the past year has grown to such an extent that we will either have to curtail our membership or lay down another green"**

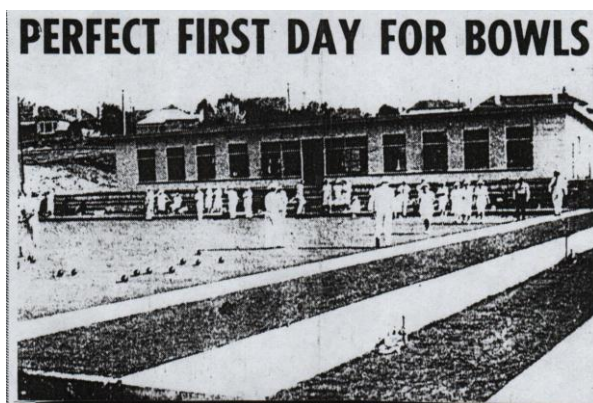
At the annual meeting in August 1955 L.W. Battye was elected secretary, a position he held till 1960. Associates were given permission to increase their numbers to one hundred (this was because they had a waiting list). The President Ferdie Elkan was to approach a builder for plans and estimated cost of building a sun room.

Mr. George Adams was made a Life Member for his untiring work for the club and it is interesting to note that he was also made a Life Member of the Mount Gambier branch of the R.S.L. and the same year was President of the S.E. Bowling Association. Mr. George Adams won the South Australian Country Singles Championship In 1956

In 1957 Club President Mr. Elkan was getting plans for the new sunroom and extensions to the Kitchen. and in 1959 Mel Walters was contracted to install a new toilet block.

In 1957 Ben Bruhn supplied his semi trailer to carry rails which were being installed for lighting A and B greens, Norm Probert offered to erect the poles and the lighting was installed by Mr. Moulden and opening night for the lighting was 29<sup>th</sup> November 1957. In 1958 Joe Davis was president when the club hosted a visit from a team from South Africa over the Christmas period.. In 1960 Club President was Mr. J.P.McGregor and Mr. Elkan was secretary Mr. C.H. Hirth was made a Life member of the Club for his great contribution to the club over many years.

In 1959 Indoor Bowls became an activity in the Winter at the Club The ladies had been having bridge for many years. **There was a need for another green** as the membership was continuing to grow, the ladies had permission to raise their nmbership to 140 as they had a waiting list, the men were about 150 members. **So in 1960 work was started on the land opposite the Park Hotel, with levelling the area, removal of trees, and filling with surplus earth, by the Council.** The work on the new green was under Mr. Elkan's supervision. A new lease was being negotiated with the Council for a period of twenty one years and this was tabled while further negotiations took place as the cost seemed excessive. In 1961 and 1962 Mount Gambier won the S.E.D.B.A. Pennant . The hedge between A and D (the new green) was removed and a retaining wall was built on the Commercial Street end. The wall was built by G.Lock for £ 90 (labour only), the stone was supplied by E.C.Bruhn and Sons at no cost. Water pipes were extended to the new green at a cost of £ 115. Further work took place on D green and it was expected to be ready for play at the opening of the 1963 1964 season. Border Watch of 7th October 1963 states "The four greens are in very good shape having made excellent growth in the past few weeks. **Members can look forward to a good season with the fourth green available. This was when the new RSL&D Bowls Club opened.**The green was built in an area which, I am told by older residents, was a swamp but was found necessary due to expanding membership.



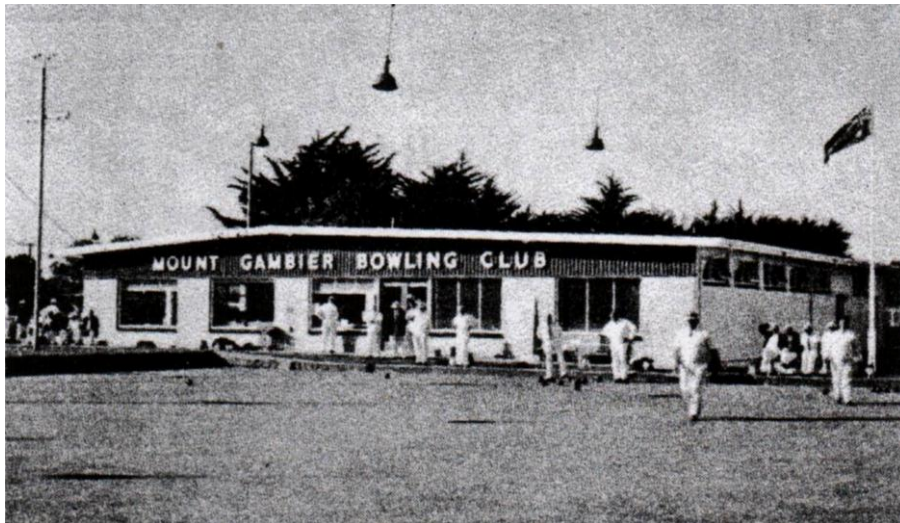
The need for a second Bowls Club in Mount Gambier was becoming more evident and the search for a suitable site ended when the present site of the RSL & District Bowling Club was found. There was a Public Meeting to form another bowling club in Mount Gambier and **in 1961**

**the R.S.L.& District Bowling Club was formed** The new club started with 45 members including 13 Associates. In 1961 members of the newly formed RSL&District Bowling Club were invited to play on our greens until their greens were ready for play. The RSL&D Bowling Club was opened on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1963 and the Mount Gambier Bowling Club was represented by The President, two vice presidents and the Secretary.

**In 1963 at the S.E. Womens Bowling Association pennant bowls for womens teams was discussed.** The Miles Shield, a mixed fours competition, started in 1964 was sponsored by Jack Miles and was played between the two clubs for many years and was eagerly looked forward to by members of. both clubs. Shelters were built on the South side of D green and on the West side of B Green with Les Fartch, a life member of the club, who is still alive as we prepare for the club centenary being very involved with the work. **In 1964 the club entered a team in the Mount Gambier district indoor bowls Association competition. Also in 1965 Mount Gambier Red won the S.E.B.A. Flag.** At the same time members were asked **whether they wanted a canteen**, to allow liquor to be kept and sold to members for consumption on the premises. At a special general meeting it was put to members and **the vote was 36 against and 44 for.** Plans for a new clubhouse, which had been displayed, were approved in 1964. In 1966 after Council approval an application was made to the licensing court for a permit to sell liquor and this was granted .

At the Annual meeting in 1965 under President Mr. Ben Bruhn a building committee was set up. Plans were drawn up and submitted for approval and fund raising was actively pursued and debentures were raised from members. Life Membership was bestowed on Mel Hosking and Claude Ralston. **A new constitution was adopted and the old one rescinded in October .**In 1966 plans were submitted to Council for approval. Also in 1967 the

Club won the Division 2 Pennant. In 1967 Mr. Walters was appointed to supervise the building. Tenders were called and Mr. Adams was the successful tenderer.



**In 1968 The new Clubhouse was built. ready for the opening of the 1968-69 season.**

Fund raising efforts and debentures taken by club members raised \$10,000 and a loan was raised from the Corporation for \$15,000 to build the Clubhouse. There were many innovative fund raisers such as an auction held in the clubrooms where members brought their goods and they were

sold on commission or else donated to the club.



(Border watch 2 Jan 1969)

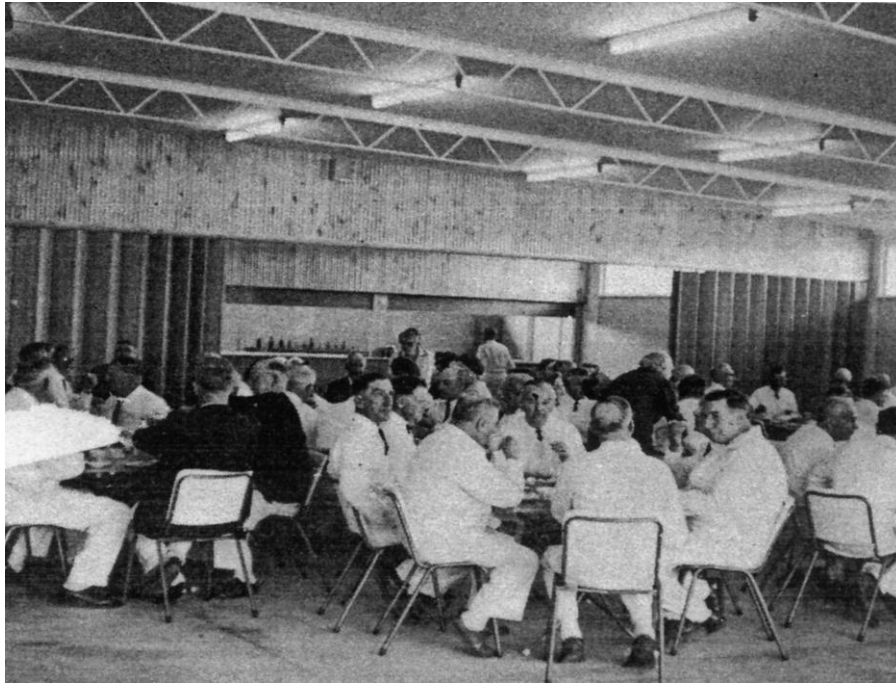
The Mayor Mr.S.H.Elliott Opened the 1968-69 season and was introduced by the President Mr. C.P.Kenny and at the conclusion of the Christmas Carnival on 28th December 1968 The Clubhouse was opened by Mr. H. Leedham the President of the R.S.A.B.A. who affixed a plaque to the wall and officially opened the new Clubrooms.

In 1968 there was a Public meeting to approve the new lease negotiated with the Council for the bowling club. Club Members agreed to the storing and selling of liquor by 86 votes to 4. The Club constitution was amended to this affect. While the new Clubrooms were being built the Indoor bowls players were allowed to play in the St. Johns building at Frew Park. During 1969 Perce Pepper decided to retire after being associated with the Club greens at the club in Hedley Park and then on the establishment of the greens at Vansittart Park and being our first contracted greenkeeper and keeping the club greens the envy of many clubs. He did this with the help of many willing members and when he retired, he was to be replaced by MR.Witney but he withdrew, so Perce stayed till June Mr.Lee Dowdell was employed as an assistant greenkeeper while Perce was available for training. Mr. Les Fatch filled the position and Mr.J. McGregor was greens director until November 1971 when Brian Smith, a seventeen year old was engaged as greenkeeper. Perce Pepper was greens director in 1972 till he went to Adelaide to live and Ben Bruhn became the greens director.

In 1968 Club President Mr. Col Williams. Mount Gambier held a "Back to Mount Gambier" celebration was opened by Sir Marcus Oliphant the Governor of South Australia. At the time the club ran a "Back to" carnival. Ern Bruhn was carnival chairman and the carnival was opened by Mayor Mr. Arch Sealey.

1969 Ern Bruhn and Ern James were runners up in the Australian Pairs Championship in Tasmania They lost the final by one shot.

In 1969 an honour board for Life members was made from donations of members and was hung in the Clubrooms. Two shelter sheds were built on the Southern side of B Green.



Two hundred bowlers sat down for afternoon tea in the new clubrooms during a big tournament.

The picture of the clubroom inside the main hall shows the Snow Keen bar at the back through the concertina doors. This bar was used till 1982 when a new extension was opened.

In 1970 on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> January The Club held its first Mens' Invitation Fours sponsored by the New Zealand Victoria Insurance Group in the

first year. (and several sponsors over the years) This event has grown in stature over the years and is still a major event on the club calendar today. It was the brainchild of the club secretary Mr. Tom Hall O.A.M., and attracts bowlers from far and wide.

Also in 1970 Mr. George Laslett a super veteran member and Gallipoli veteran published his memoirs "Reflections of Anzac Cove" and presented a copy to the Club.

The L.S.E. Champion of Champions was Ben Bruhn in 1972-73 and Division 3 Blue won the flag in the L.S.E. Pennant competition in 1973-74

In 1974 Mr. Ted Bailey, who was affectionately known as "Tiger" around the Club, a professional painter, went right round the outside Mount Gambier stone brickwork and painted it to look like bricks. He did such a good job that little has had to be done since.

In season 1975-76 Division 3 Red won the pennant

In 1976, at the Club annual meeting Life Memberships were bestowed on Mr. Tom Hall O.A.M. for his devoted work for the club and his many years as secretary, on Mr. Ted Bailey for his work over the years painting the outside of the Clubhouse, and on Mrs. Belle Malseed for her work with the associates over many years.

Division 1 won the division 1 flag after a ten year drought.

1977 saw Claude Downs take over as Secretary from Tom Hall. Claude continued as secretary until 1999 and Tom continued with the Invitation fours for many years.

For the 77-78 and the 78-79 seasons Division 3 won the pennant flag. In 1978-79 the L.S.E Champion of Champion Pairs was won by Les Free and Graham Cornish And in 1981-82 Division 2 was won by the Red team. Then in 1987-88 and 88-89 The Division 2 team were again successful and Division 1 also won the Flag.

In 1978-79 the club membership was at its peak over the eight or so years, in the seventies since the building of the new Clubhouse. At the 1979 Annual meeting life membership was bestowed on Mrs. Zoe Willis for her wonderful work for the club over many years. However it was found that the bar in the main hall was not capable of providing good fast service to members and visitors on big tournament and pennant days. Funds were built up by the holding of an auction in 1980 The committee decided to extend the Clubhouse on the Eastern end of the main hall. These extensions were to add a bar lounge and give the Club a better bar area. The committee addressed this and in 1978 Plans were lodged with Corporation for Clubhouse extensions and at the same time it was decided to improve the toilet facilities. Raising funds for the project continued with a monster raffle in 1980

and a loan was negotiated with the Corporation for \$20,000 and at a special meeting the members agreed to go ahead with the alterations and tenders were called.



Ben Bruhn directing the work on the laying of the foundations for the bar extensions.

The work was done during the winter and was completed by the contractors I. Adams ready for the opening of the season of 1981-82 season. The extensions were opened by the His worship the Mayor Mr. A.L. Sealey



The Mayor Mr.A.L.Sealey opens the bar extensions with the Club President Mr I. A Bruhn

The bar extensions were furnished by the ladies with chairs and tables. Curtains for the arches between the main hall and the bar lounge were also added from funds raised by the ladies. The Ern. Lewis engraved glass doors were hung between the Locker room and the bar lounge in memory of Ern.



The photograph shows the ladies on a classic day in front of the new clubhouse.