

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LAWN BOWLS & KEYSBOROUGH BOWLS CLUB

By Laurys Hartley 1995

NOTE: This document is incomplete – it came to the club starting at page 7. Should we ever locate the rest of the document, we will correct this. However, the following history appears to include all of the relevant information pertaining to the formation of the sporting facility (including Keysborough Bowling Club) that we see today.

The Beginning (Cont)

Soon the land appropriated by the Squatters would be reduced. The crown decided to auction the land, and speculators were only too ready to purchase. In August and October 1852 and March 1853 Crown sections of Dandenong went up for auction. There were three main types of buyers – speculators, genuine settlers, and the squatter. It was a time of land mania, the discovery of gold in the newly formed Colony of Victoria had attracted many shiploads of men to the diggings, all of them needing both supplies and food. However, at least two buyers in the March 1853 auction intended to settle. Thomas Corrigan purchased 2 Crown Sections, and John Greaves also bought 2 Sections, and both began to clear and live on their land.

Land prices declined somewhat as surveying was extended and families such as the Keysⁱ and McDonalds were able to purchase larger parcels of land.

By 1873 farming families in the Keysborough area had increased, and among them we had names familiar to us today; Keys, Corrigan, and Chandler. In 1925 old families in Keysborough had names even more familiar to us, they included such names as Rowley Allan, Keys, Fosters, Corrigans, Allens, Andersons, Trebilcos and Villiers, some of those names featuring prominently in our first membership records.

Some of first families have connections with present day members. Nance McMahan's family can be traced back to 1861. Margaret Pitcher nee Gartside, has family that leased land in Dingley in 1902 for Market Gardening, and later became famous, introducing the canning of vegetables, and providing much employment for the area in the 30's, when it was sorely needed.

Frederick Werrett was farming potatoes and onions as early as 1915. Charles Luxford came to Noble Park Estate in 1910, he later donated land for the first Public Hall in that area.

As roads were developed and rail began to reach out to all parts, Keysborough and smaller suburbs began to increase their population – Dingley, Noble Park, Yarraman and Bangholme.

It would seem that these smaller suburbs struggled for recognition, overshadowed perhaps by the larger powerful Dandenong, however under the protection of the Springvale Council, they have by dedicated hard workers, flourished and survived!

Now of course the wheel has come full circle, and we are now under the protection of Greater Dandenong.

Our Club

In the early 1930's communities began to seek Halls where adults could meet. Bangholme acquired such a hall in 1931. Keysborough too sought a hall, it was a very stable community with old established families.

For these older communities, the end of the war enabled them to update their facilities, and the ambition for a public hall had been cut short by the exigencies of the 30's and the war. Meeting at the Church Hall or the school had generally been abandoned in favour of the comfort of the Trebilco's billiard room!

A meeting was called in 1946 by some local residents anxious to form a Football Club – namely Jack Trebilco, Tom Trebilco, Cliff Trebilco, Jack Russell, Jack Conland and Don Werrett. The club was duly formed, but did not have a ground to play on, so the young team were loaded into Tom Trebilco's truck and taken to a grazing property in Bangholme. About this time a group of residents met with the wish to acquire 1 acre of land to build a Community

Hall. The young Don Werrett heard of the meeting, and he and Jack Conlan were nominated by the Football Club to attend that meeting with the aim of convincing the Committee that what was really needed, was to purchase at least 10 acres to house a Sports Complex; a football ground and enough land for future development of such sports as Tennis or Lawn Bowls. Don recalls that he didn't like their chances, since the meeting was being chaired by a Mr. Bowman, who was not in the least interested in sport, and was firmly committed to the building of a Public Hall. However being the good talker he is, good sense prevailed and the Committee gave consent, subject to suitable – both in price and position – land being found in a month, when a final decision would be made. This proved to be difficult, since no one it seemed wished to part with 10 acres of their land. Two days before the month was up, the late Rowley Allan approached Don with an offer that proved to be too good to refuse. He offered to sell 10 acres of land at a cost of 1,000 pounds. This land we occupy TODAY and is indeed a most central position!

This offer was taken up by the Committee and by canvassing at the meeting, 400 pounds was raised that very night, and Rowley Allan donated 50 pounds back to the fund to start forming the ground.

Residents worked hard with horse and dray using all their own time and equipment, and were ably sustained by their wives with many afternoon teas! Finally the ground was levelled and ready for use in the winter of 1948.

A hall was constructed to serve as Club rooms and a meeting place, and was officially opened four years later. The residents of the area turned out in full force to dance in the Hall, and enjoy a sumptuous supper. They also heard Charles Gartside M.L.C. commend Jim Mills and his group of stalwart Keysborough families for such "self reliance".

The 1950's were good time for the people of Keysborough, they worked hard raising funds which extended the hall and generally improved the reserve. Ruby Trebilco and Don Werrett were both involved with the original Committee elected to be the trustees of the Hall and the Sports Complex, they later handed the Complex to the Springvale Council.

In 1955 a Committee was formed at a meeting of interested residents who agreed to raise money to build a Bowling Green. The office Bearers elected at that meeting were as follows:

President	M. Walter Allan
Secretary	Mr. Ern Smith
Treasurer	Mr. Jack Trebilco

No time was lost by the enthusiastic group. They canvassed house to house, had billiard nights at the Trebilco's, and various other functions, to raise funds. At the end of the first year 1,376 pounds had been gathered. They were not idle on the ground either, and with tractors and equipment loaned by local farmers, at the end of 1960, the green was levelled, grassed, and electric lights were installed, sheds were purchased, both to house machinery purchased to maintain the green, and to double as a place loosely referred to as a "Club House". The shed, still in use today, was situated near the entrance on the Park Glen side, and Lena Hilton recalls that "afternoon teas were dispensed from here. Ladies brought ready-made sandwiches and cakes, but Special Functions were held in the "Reserve Hall". This shed was used until 1968. The whole project became a Community effort, many being involved who were not interested in playing Bowls, but anxious to contribute for the benefit of all.

Saturday, September 23rd, 1961, Keysborough Bowls Club was officially opened. The Club's first Annual Meeting had been held previously in July, when office bearers elected were as follows:

President	Mr. W. Allan
Vice Presidents	Messrs. V. Wood & B. Cochrane
Secretary	Mr. R. Williams
Treasurer	Mr. D. Werrett

A pleasing feature of the meeting was a Credit Balance shown of 340 pounds. The ladies also formed their first Committee:

President	Mrs. Ruby Trebilco
Vice President	N. Clarke
Secretary	Jean Allan
Treasurer	Thelma Alexander

The balance of members Mesdames: B. Allan, F. Brewer, G. Damon, P. Werrett, J Whitehead & J. Foster, were all incorporated as Committee Members. Both Men and Ladies voted to become affiliated with the R.V.B.A & V.L.B.A. in order to compete in Pennant competition. The Club was up and running with 30 male members in 1961-62. I am sure that they were all eager to learn because most were new to the game of Bowls!

Club competitions have not changed greatly over the years. Lena Hilton recalls that night Bowls played under Electric Light (no daylight savings in those days), was so popular that names needed to be down at least 1 week ahead. Separate Opening Days were held at first, Men's on Saturday, Ladies on Monday. Night time functions were tried out for Opening, but reverted back to the format that we have today, combined daytime on Saturday.

Indoor Bowls was played in the Reserve Hall, but Pennant Indoors was not played until after the Club House was built. Negotiations for Financing and Construction for the second green began in 1976-77. The committee at that time was:

President	A. Thompson
Secretary	Mr. G. Baldock
Treasurer	Mr. J. McKenzie

The council agreed to help with the excavation and to leave topsoil in a good level state. Fencing costs were found be \$3.30 per foot for fencing approximately 8 ft. high. The men responsible for putting together of Tenders etc. were: G. Baldock, R. Warren, B. Stevens, L. Lardiner, A. Brown and R. Dawson.

The 17 years that passed from the Club's opening until the Official Opening of the second green, had been filled up with high achievement and an enthusiastic increase in Membership. From our humble beginning with 30 males in 1961, by 1978 we had grown to 46 males and 58 ladies!

In October 1978, the second green was officially declared open by the late Bob Luxford in his capacity as Mayor of Springvale. Councillor Luxford represented the North Ward for 19 years, and served as Mayor for three terms. He was reputed to have founded 14 local organisations and held office in 22 of these. (? – ed.) It is not surprising that his dedication to the district was honoured by awarding him in 1976, a Member of the Order of Australia. Although not a bowler, his wife Betty certainly is, and a hard working much respected member of our Club.

Keysborough has been lucky to have also had another person involved in the Club who has the distinction of involvement with the Springvale Council, I refer of course to the late Harold Box. Harold was on Council for 18 years as the South Ward Member, and served two terms as Mayor. He too was dedicated worker in his Community – Dingley. Through his son's involvement in Baseball, Harold was the instigator of the Dingley Baseball Club and was made honorary member. He was also instrumental in the starting in Dingley of the Rotary Club and the offshoot – Probis Club. The Senior Citizens Club was also begun by Harold and more recently he was involved with the Abbeyfield Foundation. Harold and Jean joined Keysborough Bowls Club in 1982, and although never a Champion, he loved his bowls. Harold served on the Board of Management for several years, and would I am Sure, have been a most helpful and guiding personality. Jean is about to begin her second year as Ladies President. As you can see Bowls became a happy family involvement for Harold and Jean.

The present clubhouse was erected in 1968. A plaque to commemorate this, is located near the office. President in that year was Mr. Bruce Cochrane.

The flower beds that we admire today, were created in July 1984 and have been attended to since by caring members. These came along just in time for us to be looking our best for the 25th Anniversary of the Club – in 1985.

An evening of Dinner and Dancing was held to mark the occasion on Friday 5th September. Les Goeby was President, and Membership had reached 219. A “Back to” B.B.Q. was also held.

The Clubhouse was extended the following year, and John Carter as President, presided over a Social Evening.

The membership at this stage had reached a high of 239! Sadly, after that time, the membership trend seems to have been a downward one. 1990-91 we had 201, and 1994-95, we had 183. I expect it is even less now, but we do hope that this trend will not continue!

Pennant Achievements & Championships

Keysborough like all clubs would have had it's share of joys and disappointments. But since Pennant is such an absorbing part of the Bowling Season, I have noted the following results:

The first Men's Pennant match was played in 1962/63. Don Werrett recalls that the only team in Division C5, were, and I quote “THRASHED”. They came last, but with true fighting spirit they re-grouped, and in the following season, came second and went on to be Premiers in 1965/5.

Mens' Pennant

Sectional win	Division B5	1965/66
Premiers	Division B5	1965/66
Sectional win	Division B3	1967/68
Sectional win	Division Res 3	1979/80
Sectional win	Division 3	1980/81
Sectional win	Division 2	1982/83
Sectional win	Division 5	1983/84
Sectional win	Division 9	1984/85
Sectional win	Division 7	1988/89
Sectional win	Division 3	1990/91

Indoor Bowls Pennant

The Indoor Bowls pennant has been a most accomplished group, and Keysborough have many flags proudly displayed – 41 in fact.

Ladies Pennant

Sectional win	A2	1982/83
Sectional win	C1 & C2	1983/84
Sectional win	A2	1984/85
Sectional win	B2	1985/86

Ladies Pennant Contd.

Sectional win	E1	1986/87
Sectional win	B1 & C3	1987/88 - 4 Keysborough teams were entered in that Year: A1, A2, B2, C3
Sectional win	B1	1991/92

In August of 1987/88 Keysborough defeated Cheltenham by 42 shots – very good – however the four of Myrtle Fletcher, Sylvia Owens, Beryl Butterfield and Chris Watkins won their game 52 – 13, a huge 39 shots up! This was the highlight of the day.

Not many of us will have the distinction of being a Champion, but there a few who have done that not only once, but have repeated it.

The first Club Champion for the Men was R. Deakin, who went on to take this title six times!

Joe Hudson won his first Championship in 1978/79 and has 4 Championships to his credit.

The first Club Champion for the Ladies Section was F. Brewer. L. Sutcliffe won her first title in 1962/63 and repeated that five times.

Marion Stevens won her first Championship in 1976/77 and won ten such titles, the last seven being won successively. Marion Stevens of course, has gained a place at the Interstate and International Level of Bowls, as well as many State Titles, she was also Indoor Champion. People as talented as that do not come along too often, so Keysborough is proud to have known at least one!

Indoor Champions

Ladies	M. Stevens	6 times
	M. Rogerson	3 times consecutively
Men	B. Stevens	6 times
	E. Wright	6 times

Office Bearers

The honour of Life Membership is not given lightly; those that have been offered that recognition are few in number, which make it that much more precious.

Men	C. Clark
	J. Trebilco
	C. Dawson
	D. Werrett
	V. Wood
	R. Williams
	G. Baldock
	J. McKenzie

K. Shields

These men have worked for the Club in many capacities and would have given a great deal, not only of their time, but of themselves.

Ladies	G. Lehman
	J. Allan
	R. Trebilco
	M. Villiers
	N. Baldock

Some of these names are very familiar to us in 1995, and no doubt will be known well beyond that date.

Caring about the future of the Club and its Members is something that George and Nell Baldock have been doing ever since they joined in 1975, and demonstrate just what Life Membership, is all about.

I don't propose to go through all the Office Bearers, since they are well recorded on the Honour Boards in the Club House, but some have been particularly long serving and deserve our gratitude.

Secretary	Reg Williams	6 Years
	H. Howard	9 Years from 1967-1976, a long stretch indeed.
	P. Bloomfield	6 Years
	K. Shields	4 Years & 2 years President

Undoubtedly, the Man with the most stamina has to be Jim McKenzie. Elected as Treasurer in 1975/76 and re-elected at the A.G.M. in May 1995 to that same position for the coming 1995/96 season, his 21st Anniversary is coming up!

The Ladies too have shown a lot of stamina:

President	Ruby Trebilco	3 Years & 2 Years Secretary
	Lena Hilton	4 Years
	M. Villiers	3 Years, 7 Years as Treasurer & 3 Years as Secretary

Jean Lambden joined the Club in 1979/80. After the usual time served as Vice President, she became President of the Ladies Section, at the same time being Vice-President of the Club. Jean was Ladies President for 2 years, and then served as President of the Club for 2 Years. Jean has been the only lady to hold this office – so far!

The Lady Associates became Incorporated in Jean's first year as President of the Ladies Section in 1986/87, although negotiations and applications for Full Membership had been started the previous year.

Secretary	B. Bailey	6 Years
	D. Carter	7 Years & 7-8 years Treasurer
	D. Brown	6 Years
Treasurer	M. Finn	8 Years

The Club of course could not function without the help and dedication of all our worthy members.

From those that feed us, and look after our thirsts, paint and polish, tend our flower beds, simply administrate, run our Competitions, look after us when we are unwell, teach us and adjudicate for us, raise money, balance the books and spend money for us, make pots of tea, wash the dishes, care about us enough to send cards etc., laugh with us, grieve with us, cut the lawns, and most importantly, keep our greens beautiful for us..... in other words EVERYBODY!!

1995 Has seen our original Green Formed all those years ago, dug up, as you can plainly see it does not look much like a green.

This brings my part in putting this story together to a close, but since this is I hope, a “Never-Ending Story”, perhaps someone will continue it in the future. I am leaving space for a picture of our new Green filled with Happy Bowlers, and then I shall feel that my part of the story is truly complete!

FOOTNOTE: I did not set out to write “In Praise Of” any one person or group of people, but rather to present this as a token of gratitude to those intrepid souls, who having formed a Lawn Bowls Club by raising money, and help from all parts of the Community in the construction process, made a DREAM COME TRUE !

Laurys Hartley 1995

ⁱ Keysborough is named after the Keys family. Refer localhistory.kingston.vic.gov.au