

30 years of Pentyrch Bowling Club

This year Pentyrch Bowling Club should have been celebrating its 30th anniversary since its opening in 1991, but the pandemic got in the way.

However, that is not the true beginning of the club, that moment came almost 40 years ago followed a public meeting in Pentyrch Rugby Club the seed of which came from Norman Follis MBE who made the suggestion of the village having a Bowling Club in the early 1980's. Norman was very keen to play himself, which was quite remarkable as he had been blind for most of his adult life.

A committee was formed and the first meeting was held at 5 Field Terrace, Pentyrch – the home of Marjorie and Donald Wibley – on the 12th May 1983. Present at that meeting were George Lamerton (elected Chairman), Shirley Cox (Secretary), David George, Marj and Don Wibley.

Creating the bowling green from nothing was a labour of love, determination and hard work. There were times recorded in the early minute of the committee when it seemed that the obstacles to be overcome were too great and would bring an end to their plans but they were a determined group who worked tirelessly for eight years to succeed.

The physical creation of a bowling green was the main task. Building up the ground levels to create as reasonably flat but free draining surface was difficult. Early ground preparation – measurements and excavation were done by Roger Jones, John Berry and Russell Howell with the aid of a landscape gardener from Miskin. With their local knowledge, pulling in quite a few favours and with help from the membership, they achieved their goal and a bowling green was born.

For me, my involvement was a little later in this story.

My wife and I had moved to Pentyrch in 1987 from our home in Scotland via a four year stay in Birmingham. I had joined Whitchurch Bowling Club, as I was already a keen bowler, having been introduced to the game by my father in my early teens. It was at Whitchurch that I met David George and it was David who told me of the bowling green project. Whither it was David's enthusiasm or my desire to be involved in some aspect of village life, I was hooked.

Sunday mornings working at the green became a regular feature of my week as we dug ditches to lay pipes and cables and planted trees to give shelter from the wind. For someone who sat behind a desk five days a week this was hard but enjoyable work and more importantly I made new friendships which have lasted the years.

Finally, at 2.30pm on Sunday 19th May 1991 the Pentyrch Bowling green was officially opened by Dr Kim Howells MP.

The first year was a learning process for the club, not just for those new to the game, but also in navigating the politics of the bowling world in South Wales.

During that first year the club pulled together, under the Chairmanship of Mike Morgan, as a single entity, not following the traditional gender lines of a male club with a "Ladies" section. We created male and female teams in order to play against other clubs in friendly matches, with a view to entering the league systems.

In 1992 we entered the leagues, I was privileged to be elected as Men's Captain and Jan Berry was elected Ladies' Captain. Our green was far from perfect and was frequently commented upon, never complimentary, but we did receive some positive help and advice, particularly from Whitchurch and St Fagan's Bowling Clubs.

At the end of that first competitive year we knew we had a bowling club we just had to build it and establish it as part of bowling community.

Those early years had ups and downs but we slowly developed not only the green but the facilities. Harold Evans a retired former Head Groundsman for Cardiff Council offered his services in 1993 and the change in the playing surface over the next 7 years was remarkable. From 2000 to the present day Bill Malcolm has been our Groundsman and the surface is now unrecognisable from when we started.

These past thirty years have not only established the club within the local bowling community but also as a regular touring side with trips to foreign parts across the bridge and to the west. These trips have had a knock on effect in that a number of touring sides now want to come to play Pentyrch.

Is Pentyrch Bowling Club one of the top competitive clubs in the South East Wales region – no, but do we enjoy competing with other clubs – yes, and we have had a few successes along the way. More importantly, as a club we warmly embrace all aspects of what bowls gives us, friendship, comradeship and great enjoyment.

Personally, I enjoy the competitive aspect of the game, I like to win, however, for me, being part of this club has given me so much more than a few moments of glory. I have made friendships, shared my enthusiasm for the game as a coach to new players, and met interesting people from different walks of life. I have even had the pleasure of introducing my own son to the game which I subsequently learned to regret as he defeated me in the men's singles final!

There are a great many people I have not mentioned who have played a significant part in the life of Pentyrch Bowling Club; , many are no longer with us, but hopefully their passion and drive is still within the fabric of the club. I hope, in some way, the small part I have played adds positively to their vision and enormous contributions.

Here's to the next 30 years!

Iain Russell

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Pentyrch Bowling Club