

In the bleak, 'locked-down' winter of 2020/21 Christine and I agreed that we should respond to the appeal for new members at the club and take up the offer of a taster session or two. Between us we had little or no experience of bowls, certainly not at a bowls club, but we were both attracted by the idea of playing.

After several telephone calls with a very accommodating Brian Ilbery, we arranged a couple of sessions with him, during which he introduced us, very expertly, to the basics of bowls. Brian's kindness and encouragement left us in no doubt that we would join the club, which we did almost immediately. And we haven't looked back! Despite our status as 'novices', we are now bowling in league and friendly matches against other clubs in and around Cardiff. We also participate regularly in the Monday 'Spoons' Evening, where club members play against each other in teams drawn out of a hat. Such has been our enthusiasm that we have also joined two of the sub-groups (Christine, the Gardening Sub-Group, and myself, the Maintenance Sub-Group). In that way, we can both contribute to the week-to-week running of the Club. We have even brought two of our grandchildren (Mari and Ted, 10 and 7 years old) to add to their already substantial sports experience, using the club's sets of junior bowls. Sadly, an enjoyable first 20 minutes came to an end rather abruptly when the heavens opened and before long the green was more like a lake!

As a rule, it takes some considerable time for new members to integrate fully into the social structure of a club, to feel comfortable, to feel accepted and a part of it all. Here at Pentyrch, this has happened surprisingly quickly, and there are reasons for this. Firstly, it would be difficult to find a friendlier group of people. Our Monday 'Spoons' evenings are a perfect blend of gentle, friendly competition and enjoyable social interaction. Furthermore, they have given us the opportunity to experience playing in the various positions in a team (Lead, Second, Third and Skip). In the potentially daunting – especially as beginners – league and friendly encounters against other clubs, the skips have gone out of their way to be supportive and encouraging, even when, at times, our lack of experience has shown.

Pentyrch Bowling Club is a community, a community to which we are happy to belong and contribute, not only through our annual subscription but also voluntarily, in the activities of our respective sub-groups.

And beyond the sporting and social aspects of the club, what an extremely pleasant way to spend an hour or two up here bowling, under Garth Mountain and amidst the vast, green expanse of Parc y Dwrlyn!

*Gordon Tucker and Christine Pegg, Radyr.*