

Pinner Bowling Club

(founded 1953)

By Jack Larcome

FOREWORD

by

T. BANKS, ESQ.

Past President of the English Bowling Association and First President of the Pinner Bowling Club

We live in times when events like everyday life seem to be moving faster. If a Chronicler does not act without undue delay, the early happenings can so easily be completely overlooked. Jack Larcombe after very extensive reading and research has made it possible for us to have this very effective background to the formation of the Pinner Bowling Club,

The community was growing, the residents were retiring earlier and had more leisure, the need to have exercise and relaxation was apparent to the enthusiasts responsible for the proposal to the Local Authority, whose support was forthcoming.

The early records of the Club so clearly recorded in our minutes by Arthur Young, Eric Newnham and Bill Wilson and the excellent support of our fine membership, give complete justification to the confidence of all responsible for the early years' activities. Tribute must be paid to Ernest Price for his support, first as a former member of the Local Authority, later as a President of the Club, and now for meeting the financial responsibility for the production of this excellent record. The fine work of Jack Larcombe, as author, in keeping the records of the Club fresh will go down to posterity.

May 1968

ORIGINS

It is easy to forget the effort of individuals in promoting the inception of any club. This is an attempt to place on record (for the benefit of present and future members of the Pinner Bowling Club how much is owed to the zeal and hard work of others.

How better to begin than by knowing a little of the surroundings in which so many of us find pleasure and friendship very often quite ignorant of what has gone before. To give an exhaustive account of the origin and subsequent history of West House would take great deal of time and would probably blur the true purpose of this record, but certain facts are readily available and will be of interest.

A map made of Pinner in 1757 shows districts named West End and East End. It is therefore perfectly clear why West House was originally named West End House and that East House and East End Farm should be in Moss Lane. The most outstanding feature of a painting of Pinner Village by a John Proctor about 1780-90 or possibly somewhat earlier, is the dominant position of West End House as seen from the front of the Parish Church long before the trees (and the railway) grew to hide it from view.

One hundred years later, when the population of Pinner was just under 2,500, Mr. Nelson Ward, the third son of Horatia Ward, daughter of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton, left his mother's house at Woodridings to live at West End House where he and his family, were to stay from 1873-83. During his occupation, Nelson Ward, who was a keen cricketer, made an excellent cricket ground which was the scene of many enjoyable matches. local and otherwise. Thus, the ancient game of bowls was not the original sport introduced to the grounds of West House.

Later occupants were a Mr. and Mrs. Dickson after whom Dickson Fold, housing the old people's bungalows at the side of the green on land originally forming part of the estate, was named. The Dickson's youngest daughter married Mr. J. S. Hogg and soon after their marriage they took up residence at West House, the "End" having been dropped. Mrs. Hogg was a grand-daughter of Mr. F. West, a Deputy Lieutenant for the County of Middlesex and a descendant of a Thomas West (born 1606) and it was therefore fitting that she should live her married life in a house bearing the family name. It is interesting to note that the July 1862 Register of Voters for the Hamlet of Pinner contains the name Francis George West of Horham Hall, Thaxted, who had copyhold house and freehold land in West End.

Chairman before the 1914-18 war of the Hendon Ruislip District Council which used to embrace Pinner, Mr. Hogg had many interests - political, judicial, parochial, horticulture and sport. To this extent it can be understood why it was once written that West House was the centre of political social life during his residence. The Hogs were certainly the last occupants of West House—leaving about 1934-35. Mr. Hogg (died in 1952 when it was written that "... his service to Pinner will be remembered for many years to come and his name revered for his part in making it a better place than he found it."

It is extremely likely that West House was first appearing in the property market about 1933-34, since W. Weston (later to become a Founder Member of Pinner Bowling Club) in his election manifesto of 1934 when standing for Harrow Urban District Council at a time when the Parish Council was to disappear, came out in favour of acquiring West House as an open space. On his election, Bill Weston continued prominently in this matter and was largely responsible for collecting and presenting to the Council a petition containing nearly 1,000 names. Among the amenities he constantly urged was the provision of a bowling green. So here perhaps, was the origin of a green. These efforts were only partly successful in so far as the Council would only agree to acquire that portion of West House estate nearest the highway, later to be known as Bennett's Park.

For four years or so the estate apparently lay fallow but for the outbreak of war it is fairly certain that house development would have taken place on that part of the estate not held by the Council. September, 1939, found West requisitioned and used throughout the war years as a centre for decontamination squads and for rescue and demolition parties. The writer well remembers going with his neighbours to West House for stirrup pump drill on that part of the estate where the bowling green now lies.

As early as March, 1944, the Pinner Association who had, for some years, been actively concerned with efforts to preserve an open space in the centre of the village, began to consider plans for a war memorial with particular regard to the delay had occurred in developing the West House estate and its possible acquisition as a permanent open space. Out of this came the formation of a War Memorial Committee whose objective was to raise funds for the purchase of the estate from the builders then in ownership. The response made by residents and friends of Pinner was such that the estate was purchased and legally transferred to the Council in October, 1949.

The Council having agreed that Bennett's Park be absorbed into the new Memorial Park, much work, including partial demolition, had to be done to the house and grounds to adapt them for public use and it was not until

August 1950 that part of the new Park was opened. About this time the Council published a design for the Park's layout which included a bowling green in the same position as it is today. A great deal of money had, of course, to be spent but much of it came out of monies remaining from the sale in 1936 of the old Parish Hall and from monies held by a succession of public authorities in respect of the sale in 1886 - to the Metropolitan Railway - of the site of the old workhouse.

Although the Pinner Association had continued to urge the provision of a bowling green, it was not until the summer of 1952 that positive action started. Members of a neighbouring Bowling Club (C. P. Chapman, T. A. Hardy, E. T. Newnham and A. S. Young) returning from an away match discussed the possibility of starting a Pinner Bowling Club and decided to try to do so. Arthur Young undertook to look into the feasibility of forming a private club and with this in mind he looked at several plots which would have been suitable, but the expense that would arise was such that the idea had to be dropped. Then occurred a chance meeting which was to mark the origin of the Pinner Bowling Club at West House.

It so happened that Mrs. Newnham, coming home from a meeting, met Councillor Mrs. Potts in a 'bus and during the conversation mentioned that her husband, a very keen bowler was ever resentful at the lack of bowling facilities in Pinner. To this Mrs. Potts replied this appeared to be due the lack of sufficient local interest. Apparently, the Council were considering the question of an additional bowling green in the Harrow area and were proposing to provide it at Headstone Manor Recreation Ground. On hearing of the conversation, Eric Newnham asked Arthur Young to join him in trying to arouse local interest with the object of forming a club. As a preliminary, Arthur Young agreed to discuss the matter with Mrs. Potts who informed him that the appropriate Ministry had still to be consulted and approval obtained before any expenditure could be incurred on laying an additional green. One such application had already been made and refused but the Council were to try again.

In response to an enquiry as to how he and his friend could back Mrs. Potts in their mutually agreed view that Pinner should have a green, it was suggested that letters be sent to the Chairman of the Open Spaces Committee pressing that Ministry approval be sought for a green in Pinner Memorial Park. Various people were then approached whom it was thought would be interested with the result that at least thirty letters were written to the Chairman together with a personal one from Arthur Young which guaranteed a minimum of fifty members.

Quite early on, Eric Newnham and Arthur Young had the foresight to enlist the support and experience of T. Banks who was, at that time, one of the leading personalities in the bowling world and who, a few years later was to be elected the to the highest honour - President of the English Bowling Association.

To implement the guarantee given by Arthur Young, the next step was to call, by personal endeavour and with the aid of publicity in "The Villager", an exploratory meeting. Tommy Banks, who had agreed to take the Chair, was able to secure the attendance of Councillor Collins, Chairman of the Open Spaces Committee, at this meeting held on 15th December, 1952, when two other Councillors, including Mrs. Potts, and thirty-eight possible members were present. The meeting was to hear that Pinner now had priority in the Council's programme for bowling greens and that the Memorial Park was planned as the venue, but all depended on Ministry approval. In these circumstances it was unanimously decided to take preliminary steps to form a club and the following Founders Committee appointed -

Chairman - T Banks
Treasurer - E. T. Newnham
Secretary - A. S. Young

A. Birch, C. P. Chapman, H. W. Collins, J. F. Goodger, T. A. Hardy and H. J. Russell

Although a collection was taken to defray the cost of the meeting and to provide a sum for incidental expenses, the Chairman generously intimated that he wished to bear the cost of hiring the accommodation used and so here was the origin of the Club's finances.

The Founders Committee met twice and was concerned with a draft constitution prepared by The Secretary and with the arrangements for an inaugural meeting. Here it is proper to pay tribute to the kindness of Tommy Banks and Charles Chapman and their wives who, in the absence of club facilities, provided this Committee and the one appointed later, with accommodation and hospitality, Fred Prescott and his wife were later to follow this generous action.

Inauguration of the Pinner Bowling Club formally took place in April, 1953, when the Club's first Constitution was approved and officers and Committee elected. Members of the Founders Committee continued in their respective offices with the exception that H. W. Collins became the first Deputy President and C. J. Allwood and V. M. Woodman were added to the Committee. It was further agreed that Founder Membership would be given if the entrance fee of £1 was paid by 1st June, 1953. In due course the names of 59 such Members were recorded in the Minute Book. Today (1968), 23 Founder Members are in Club membership.

The year was to be spent in preparation for the future although a few away matches were played to introduce the Club. More important were the consultations with the Council over the laying of the green. While there had been some opposition to the proposal to provide a green for “a few elderly people” and “for a fairly exclusive club”, the Council responded extremely well to the many representations made. Certainly, it had been made clear almost at the outset that financial circumstances would not permit the Council to erect a club house for some considerable time but, nevertheless, the ultimate action of the Council, particularly the Open Spaces Committee in laying the green, should ever be remembered with gratitude.

Although a start had been made in clearing the site, it was obvious that the green would not be available for play until 1955, so 1954 was to be very much a year for further planning and introducing the game to the many novices with no previous experience. In the latter respect, arrangements were made with the Ruislip-Northwood Council for the use of the Bessingby green at South Ruislip and here, for the first time as a Club, many members played together with a great deal of pleasure, and it was fitting that the season should culminate in the club winning the Ruislip-Northwood County competition for the Coronation Triples Trophy and be represented by three bowlers—Tommy Banks, Eric Newnham and Arthur Young—all of whom had done so much to get the Club started. To celebrate the season a first and last Bessingby Supper was held at the Whittington Hotel on 25th November with 33 members present.

The year was not, however, all pleasure since many matters had to be resolved if a successful start was to be made at West House in 1955. Frequent and lengthy meetings of Committee were held at a local hostelry and it is no surprise to read that “the Chairman bought drinks all round and through his generosity many parched throats were made comfortable” and, at a later meeting, “the President, showing an uncanny appreciation of the needs of an active Committee, bought drinks all round and he was cordially thanked for his offices, both spiritual and temporal.”

Adaptation of furniture stored in West House and purchased out of entrance fee monies was completed—mainly by Arthur Young, while the Club badge, designed by Eric Newnham, was approved. The design of the Club badge is probably unique in the sense that it attempts to portray the location of the Club by its representation of West House with the sun sinking in the west and the River Pinn in the foreground, the laurel wreath and crossed arrows showing the association with Harrow and the Latin exhortation to the wearer not to be short. Two years later Eric Newnham was to design the Club tie using the motif on the badge.

In the meantime, the question of Club accommodation had to be resolved and here the Committee were successful in obtaining the use of the A.R.P. accommodation erected during the war opposite the main door of West House. There was also no reluctance on the part of the Committee in tendering advice on the laying of the green, particularly of the foundation drainage.

The 30th April, 1955, was a red-letter day, for the green was available for play and Pinner Bowling Club had come home. With its first Captain (Arthur Young) and Vice-Captain (Fred Prescott) and the exclusive use of four rinks, Pinner now had Bill Wilson as Secretary to serve the Club so faithfully for nine years. Unfortunately, the green was in a relatively rough condition, so much so that the proposed Inaugural Day had to be deferred, while a number of members preferred to play at Bessingby as a temporary arrangement. The green was not fit for matches which had to be played on away greens, but quite a number of members obtained a degree of enjoyment on the green, if not from the true run of the woods, at least with the friendly association with each other. Although it is always sad to sound a discordant note, honesty compels the writer to record that 12 away matches were played and 12 were duly lost.

To give shelter at the side of the green a display tent was hired and erected and the serving of teas began in the Club accommodation on 11th June. Here much credit was due to W. E. Holmes who, with the guidance of a sub-committee got matters under way. He will be remembered by older members (and their ladies) for determining the “weights and measures” necessary to provide adequate refreshment complete with a reasonable profit. All in all, most members felt it had been a happy year and it was duly celebrated when the first annual dinner was held at the Headstone Hotel on 2nd February, 1956, with a company of just under 100.

Official opening of the green was delayed until 2nd Jun 1956 when the Mayor and other civic dignitaries attended for the occasion and their representatives played a match against the Club. The Committee's main concern was now with the question of accommodation at the side of the green in order that the Club's future could be firmly based. A sub-committee, chaired by Ernest Price, put in a great deal of work obtaining estimates of various schemes and taking soundings of the Council whose consent was a pre-requisite.

Meeting the cost was, naturally, the most important issue, but the outcome was never in doubt when some 40 members attending a Special General Meeting unanimously supported a Pavilion Scheme and completed slips indicating that loan of £305 was available from those present. These members were later to lend their monies within a week of being asked. With such a generous response, the Annual General Meeting that followed gave full support to the proposed purchase and erection of a pavilion (Phase 1) leaving Phase 2 - kitchen, urinal, water and light—until funds permitted. Agreement was also reached on the establishment of a Pavilion Mutual

Subscription Fund with Tommy Banks, Eric Newnham, Fred Prescott, Ernest Price and Douglas Callender as Trustees, the last named acted as Hon. Treasurer and Registrar until the Fund wound up in 1962. At the same time the annual subscription was raised from 15/- to 20/- to provide the basis for the Fund.

The Fund was constituted by the issue of Registered Notes in units of £1 each, but the names and subscriptions were private and kept strictly private and confidential and were ultimately destroyed. It was provided that at the Annual General Meeting each year, a sum of not less than the additional amount of the annual subscription should be made available to the Trustees for the repayment of Registered Notes by means of a drawing. The full support now assured, enabled the Committee to go ahead with Phase I.

Much detailed work ensued. By-law, planning and Council consents had to be obtained, beams for the foundation bought, cut and laid and negotiations with the contractors finalised. Despite the many problems that arose, the Pavilion was ready for the official opening on 11th May, 1957, by the President of the Middlesex County Bowling Association. The pleasure felt by the members was increased when, in the three-rink match that followed, the Club beat the Middlesex Executive.

Enjoyment of the necessarily restricted facilities in the Pavilion which were being coupled with the original Club accommodation, led to the popular demand for Phase 2 to be completed. Again, there was a generous response to the Committee's appeal that additional Registered Notes be purchased. The process of securing Council, by-law and planning consents had once more to be followed and estimated obtained for the additional structures. In negotiating these matters and hoping for financial support, the Club found it necessary to give the Council an assurance that members of the of the bowls playing public and not being members of the Pinner Bowling Club, were at liberty to use the Pavilion. This assurance resulted in the Council bearing the cost of providing a water supply, necessary drainage, paving around the Pavilion and, at a later date, planting a hedge on two sides of the green. For this the Club is grateful.

The beginning of the 1958 season found the Pavilion self-contained with all "modern cons." and the Club had really come into its own at a cost of just under £800. been met by the issue of 569 Registered Notes to members, donations and raffles amounting to £110 of funds. To clear the debt in six years was made by the generous cancellation of 115 Notes in favour of donation of prizes for raffles and whist drives, and increase in the annual subscription borne by all - indeed a remarkable achievement. To complete the Pavilion, mention must be made of the Visitors Room erected at a cost of £168 met out of Club funds.

During this time members had been playing for splendid trophies presented to the Club. They, and their donors, must take their place in any account of origins so here for the first year of play of each trophy, is the record -

1956

BESSINGBY CUP presented by Fred Prescott for pairs handicap. Named after the enjoyable season of bowling and inscribed with the date of the donor's 60th birthday.

GIL SIRKETT CUP presented by Ernest Holmes for singles handicap. Named after a popular Founder whose date of death is inscribed on the Cup.

1957

VENTURE CHALLENGE CUP presented by Eric Newnham and Arthur Young for singles championship marking the success of their venture in initiating and founding the Club.

NOVICE CUP presented by Charles Chapman for competition among members who have not won a singles competition. Here Charles Chapman also gave a cup for the runner-up.

1960

WEST HOUSE CUP presented by Reg. Barton for two woods singles competition with handicap.

WESTFIELD CUP presented by Reg. Barton for match play competition between Pinner and Field Place, Worthing. The original match was arranged at the instigation of a Founder member who had moved to Worthing.

At the time of writing this record (1968) it has been agreed to award an Arthur Young Trophy to the winner of the midweek aggregate competition from 1968 onwards.

Mention has already been made of the Club's first competitive success in 1953 to which must now be added the following:

1965

Harrow and District Veterans League championship and award of the Fred Prescott Shield.

1966

Mayor of Harrow and District Bowls Drive Trophy

1965-66

Kodak Indoor Open Fours

1967

Harrow and District Coronation Shield

To conclude this account at a time when the Club now has the exclusive use of five rinks to cater for a membership totalled by few clubs in Middlesex, tribute must be paid to the early pioneers and those that followed. Although a number of individuals have already been identified, it would be an unenviable task to name the many others whose devoted work and generosity make the Club what it is today. Freely given expertise in building matters and Council procedure, skills whom and applied in carpentry and painting and generosity in gifts such as rink-markers, timber for lockers, electric cable, flag and pole, scoreboard, clock etc, free typing, duplicating and printing, are but a few reminders of what the present owes to the past. Above all, the name of Arthur Young should be remembered for the enthusiasm with which he pursued his self-appointed task of bringing bowls to a great number at Pinner.



FINNER BOWLING CLUB
(WEST HOUSE, FINNER)

22nd SEPTEMBER, 1956.

F. E. Legg	A. M. Brown	A. W. Green	G. Evans	M. A. May	A. E. Hall	J. P. Clappell	W. J. Tott	Park-keeper Harry	C. H. Gorrings		
A. Fisher	W. E. Holmes	A. Birch	J. Sedman	M. C. Savithers	L. Coler	E. S. H. Watkins	A. M. Lagden	H. E. Weeden	P. Gladman	A. J. Kirkwood	R. T. Dod
G. E. Clacko	R. I. Barton	H. I. Barton	E. A. Hornby	E. T. Newham	T. Banks	F. M. Prescott	A. S. Young	M. B. Wilson	H. D. Gallender	R. M. Gillson	
M. J. Agnew	R. W. Brash	W. Weston	O. H. Bailey	R. H. Paddock	T. E. Stacey	W. E. Spence	A. Bibb	J. P. Larcombe	A. C. Phillips		