HAMPDEN PARK BOWLING ASSOCIATION HISTORY

In 1898 Mr Freeman-Thomas, the MP for Ratton offered the Eastbourne Council 44 acres of wood and pasture around a duck decoy pond. The sale would go ahead only if the council constructed a road from Eastbourne to Willingdon. The final transaction involved a total of some 88 acres sold for £3,000, the council in turn spent £10,277 on the construction of the road now known as Kings Drive. The council then set about the creation of the first publicly owned park in Eastbourne for the purpose of sport and pleasure.

On 12th August 1902 Lord Roseberry opened Hampden Park which was named after Lord Willingdon's grandfather Viscount Hampden.

"Councillor John Easter, Chairman of the Pleasure Grounds Committee invited his Lordship to perform the opening ceremony. He said that 'nature' had laid the foundation of the park and art with the assistance of the committee who had beautified it, he now asked his lordship to 'cap' their efforts. He then presented his Lordship with a key. The key was a handsome silver gilt key, a singularly pleasing specimen of the silversmith's art. The handle affixed to the stem beautifully pierced and engraved. In the centre, in relief, was a shield bearing the Eastbourne coat of arms. The padlock was richly engraved and of a handsome appearance."
[Local newspaper report 1902]


Lord Roseberry 1847 - 1929

There were reports in the press of some decisions which took place as to the allocation of the fields at Hampden Park to various sports lawn tennis, cricket, and football. There was no mention at this point of 'lawn green bowls.'

Another report at the same time included a rather worrying quote from a Councillor Maude.

"If you get some of the rough element which parades certain parts of the town and get them to stop out there, [Hampden Park] they may well be better there than on the crumbles."

Despite what the councillor said, or perhaps as a result of what he said, Lawn Bowls did come to Hampden Park a decade later. The first report of a match was recorded in the press as taking place on 19th July 1911, when the Mayors team played the Eastbourne Redoubt team. This 'interesting' match took place at Hampden Park. The Mayor was captain of a team consisting of players from Motcombe and the Prudential bowls clubs.

"*A very pleasant match it was too, resulting in a win for the Redoubt team by twenty-four points. The Mayor and his Lady extended a kind invitation to the players and their friends to tea on the green, and some fifty accepted."*

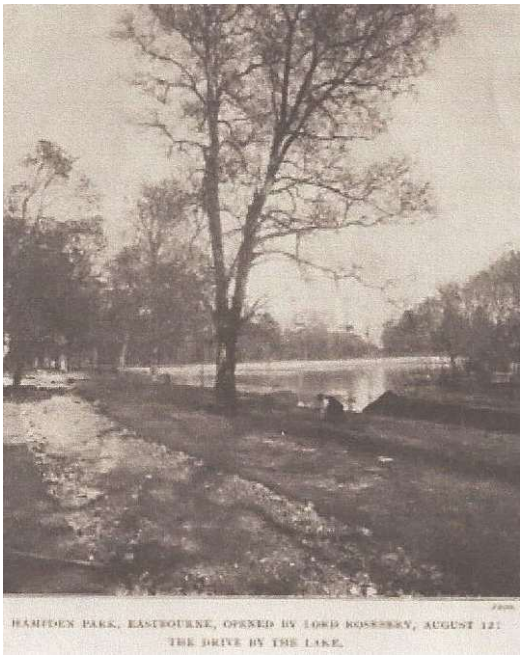
The very thought of a giant picnic on the green fills one with horror, however, the Mayor in his speech made special reference to an increased interest in the game.

In 1912 the Hampden Park Bowls Club was formed with Lord Willingdon as its first president. Members of the new club took part in the Mayor's Championship Trophy on 21st August 1912. Mr Breach of Hampden Park beat Mr McLachlan of Saffrons Bowling club only to lose to Mr Ashman of Motcombe Bowls Club in the final.

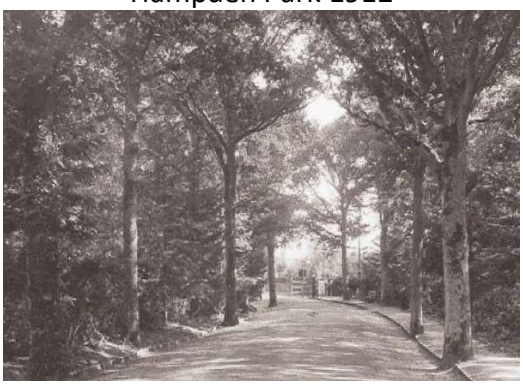


Lord Willigdon 1866 - 1941

On 28th October 1912, a Hampden Park team played a team from Meads, at home. The game of two rinks, was won by Hampden Park by a score of 51 to 21 points. In 1913 Ward Lock's Eastbourne Guide stated: *"The bowling green in Hampden Park is open for bowlers at a cost of 2p per hour or one shilling for a day ticket".*



Hampden Park 1912


Hampden Park 1921

In the 1920s Hampden Park was described as having 'a well matured' look'. It was surrounded by a high fence and locked gates at night. Henry the first park keeper wore a serge uniform in summer as well as winter.

Other eccentric characters included a lady who used to hire a cart so she could distribute birdseed to the ducks on the pond. A man who obviously had suffered with legal problems walked round the park with a sticker on his hat saying, 'beware lawyers.'

There was no evidence that either person played bowls.

Up to 1928 the Hampden Park Bowls Club was exclusively male, it was in this year that the ladies formed a separate club under the same roof. It was not until 1988 that the two clubs combined to form the Hampden park Bowling Association.

A number of the residents of Hampden Park served in both World Wars and their service is commemerated on the war memorial in the park. Many served in the 'Home Guard' and the 'Civil Defence Volunteers' and these include a number of bowlers from the Hamden Park Club.



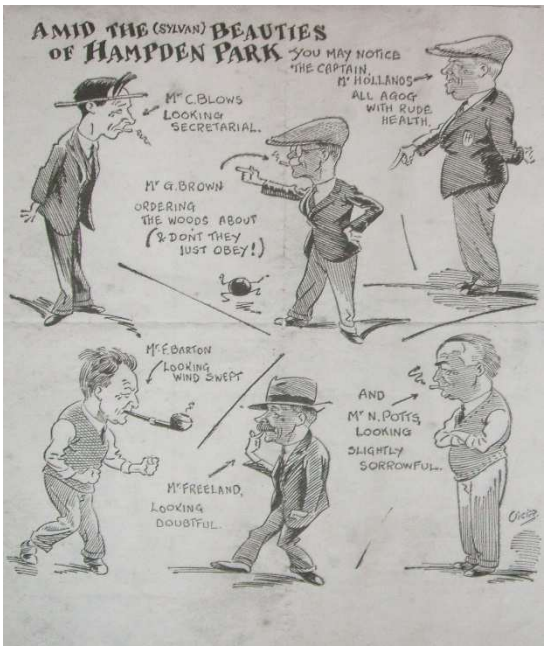


Hampden Park Bowls Club 1947

After the Second World War bowls started again in earnest and as this photo of club members in 1947 the club was flourishing with a good membership, and they appear to be winning trophies.

In 1946 and again in 1949 Mrs Chillman won the Eastbourne Ladies Bowling Association singles trophy.

As the cartoon opposite shows the club was full of characters. Mr Brown is ordering the bowls about "and don't they just obey!" One assumes there is a touch of irony in that statement. The players are portrayed as 'doubtful', 'sorrowfull', 'windswept'. So nothing really changes over the years.

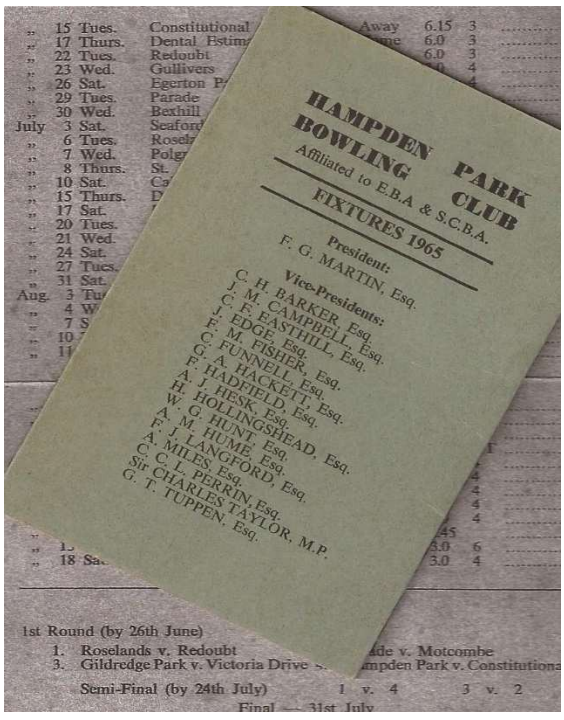


In the 1950s the club enjoyed an end of season presentation lunch, with the ladies decked in their finary.





Even in these days the 'gentlemen' were taking a pride in their surroundings as can be seen from the row of pot plants. It is interesting to note the giant scoreboard which is worthy of any cricket pitch.



As this fixture card of 1965 shows the club enjoyed a full programme of games throughout the season with 29 home and 23 away games against predominantly local clubs, most of which we still play today.

From this point on there are records of the club members enjoying success in Town and County tournaments. 1976 saw success in the Cavendish Cup [1976, 1979] and the Osbourne Shield, both local competitions.

In 1976 M. Powell and I. Atwell were finalists in the Sussex County pairs. Success was carried over into the 1980s, winning the Cameron Cup [1980] and reaching the final of the Sussex County rinks [1981] and winning the Sussex County Triples in 1983.



Showing off the silverware. [circa 1960s]

On 10th August 1984, a new clubhouse was built on a second green to replace the old one which was situated on the lower green. The new green became the green of preference for all the major matches and competitions. As can be seen by the photo the grand opening was attended by all the members of the Ladies and the Gentlemen's Clubs.



HAMPDEN PARK BOWLS CLUB 10TH August 1984



Mrs L. Maynard was a Sussex singles finalist in 1985 and won the County title in 1988 going on to become the Champion of Champions in the same year. In 1993 she again reached the finals of the Champion of Champions.

In 1991 the club won the County Double Rink trophy and Mrs C. Kiernan won the Cavendish Cup in 1990 and again in 1992.

On 1st April 1992 the clubhouse was severely damaged by a fire of what was said, in the Eastbourne Herald, to be of 'doubtful origin' according to the Fire Officer. However the club bounced back and were back playing in the same season, winning the Lifeboat Triples and the Eastbourne Town Pairs. The following year the club won the Tolley Bowls Trophy and in 1994, the Gentlemen won the Godfrey Cup, with the Ladies topping the Eastbourne Ladies League winning the Georgina White Trophy in 1995 and again in 1997.



PAVILION BLAZE DRAMA

(Apr 25/3)

FIRE broke out at Hampden Park bowling pavilion on Wednesday night and police are investigating for arson.

The building was severely smoke damaged by the blaze which started in the building's electrical intake room just after 7pm.

The fire brigade were hampered by dangerous sparking cables and had to wait for the power to be shut off before tackling the blaze.

Fire officer Mick Greenwood said the fire was of 'doubtful origin' and police were on sight the next day to investigate.

He said there was 100 per cent smoke damage to the whole building and the electrical room suffered bad structural damage.

Fortunately, there was nobody inside the building when the fire broke out.

A witness to the blaze reported seeing smoke pouring out of the burning building.

Miss Sharon Papps, of Lushington Road, Eastbourne, was playing tennis on nearby courts when the fire started.

She said, 'There was thick smoke billowing from the roof.

'We saw flames inside, the curtains were blazing and there was a lot of crackling coming from the building.'

Miss Papps' boyfriend, Stephen Head, called the fire brigade on his mobile phone. 'They were on the scene very quickly,' she said.

■Pictured, bowls club members survey the damage to their pavilion.

Eastbourne HERALD



In 1998 the club won the Sussex County Pairs and the Lifeboat Triples, and Mrs M. Barber was the Eastbourne Ladies Singles finalist and in 1999 she was a member of Lifeboat Triples winning side and in the following year with D. Stanton won the Eastbourne Town pairs trophy. In 2008 the ladies won the Georgina White trophy again.

Sadly, on 15th August 2008 the clubhouse was again burnt down, this time by teenage vandals who were later arrested, but showed little remorse. The club with the help of the Indoor Club were able to continue their fixtures. Over the next months the club was rebuilt and refurnished and normal service was resumed the following season.





Murder Mystery based on Allo Allo.

The club embarked on a variety of fund raising events to raise money for the repairs these included art shows part of the Eastbourne Festival of Art, race nights, quizes and murder mystery nights, all of which are continued today.

In 2009 Barry Fordham became the Eastbourne Open Singles Champion.

2012 was the club's centenary year and the Mayor of Eastbourne and the local MP Mr Stephen Lloyd were invited to captain their respective teams in a celebratory game.



The Mayors team.



MP gets last minute tactical advice from Danny O'Neill.



Bowls at Windsor Castle 2012



Later in the year the club was invited to play the Queen's team at Windsor Castle. We tactfully came second in a close fought game played on a perfect sunny day.

The ladies continued their winning ways J. Fordham and J. Mortlock securing the Eastbourne Open pairs trophy.

The following year 2013 C. Greenaway won the Croall Singles and with J. Gibson, B. Pride and K. Limage won the Eastbourne Town Fours trophy.

The B Team against all odds were runners up in the League Division Two championship showing that even at the highest-level bowls can be fun too.

In 2014 our A Team went one better and won the League Division Two trophy. 2015 T. Huggett and G. Owen won the Vets pairs trophy.



League B Team Runners up Division 2 – 2013



In 2016 the club took part in the Hampden Park Open day and opened the greens to all the residents to try their hand at bowls. Around 100 children and their parents enjoyed a fun game of target bowls on our lower green. The club also hosted the Mayors Charity Tournament raising over £750 for her charities.

Throughout the year various members of the club were active in improving the appearance of the greens planting flowering bushes and plants much admired by passers-by.







2016 saw the B Team win the Second Division League Title and they went on to win the Eastbourne Plate trophy at the end of the season. In the same year, the club went on tour to Wales and from what one is lead to believe their bowling performances were stronger than their singing.



2016 League Division Two Winners

2017 our Ladies won the Eastbourne Town League and Fred Titchener and Peter Walker won the Eastbourne Town Veterans Pairs title, this is the second time the club has won this trophy in recent years, showing bowling ability improves with age!

At the Mayor's Bowls Tournament the club raised almost £850 for her charities, an increase of £100 on the previous year. Fun was had by all taking part and in the afternoon session a team from the USA won the prizes at their first attempt, in a truly hilarious game. The cheque was presented at a tea party in the Mayor's chambers.

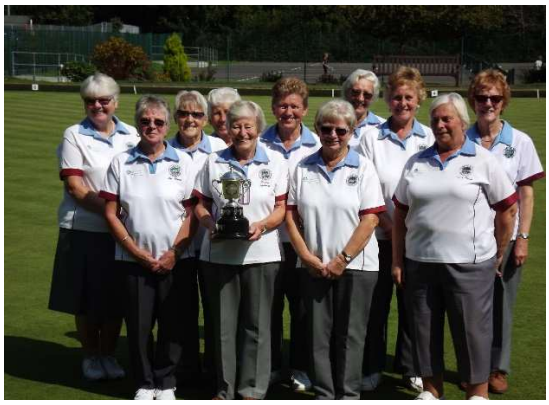


Mayor Pat Hearn and club members.



Phil and Jill Martin organised a very successful trip to Portugal enjoyed by all who went. They were based in Praia da Rocha on the Algarve and apart from sampling the 'port' they said they played four bowls matches.

2018 proved to be a good year for our members in the Eastbourne Town Competitions reaching five semi-finals and two finals. The 'B' Team narrowly lost in Tolley Bowl final and Ron Fenner and Derek Wells in the Veterans Pairs. The highlight of the Presentation Lunch at the Lagham Hotel was the award of Life membership to 'our Brian' Brian Robinson for years of devoted service to the club.



Ladies Eastbourne Town League Winners 2017



In 2019 the A Team were runners up in Division 1 of the League and in the Tolley Bowl Competition.

A team of four Derek Wells, Mike Crowhurst, Mike Rew and Fred Titchener won the County Area Fours and Senior fours Competitions. The club successfully hosted the Eastbourne Town Finals.

The club continued to support a variety of charities including the RNLI, JPK Project and the Brain Appeal raising nearly £1000.

2020 saw the club restricted by a 'Global pandemic' however members were still able to play within a strict cleansing regime on alternate rinks at a social distance.

May 2021 the club returned to normal play. A number of members entered National and County competitions and represented the Sussex VPs and Eastbourne Town and performed with distinction raising the profile of the club within the wider bowling community.



Tolley Bowl Winners 2021

Mike Crowhurst led the 'A' League Team to take the First Division Eastbourne League Title for the first time in the clubs history and there was success in the Tolley Bowl and Mike Rew won the Lifeboat Singles title.

The club supported a number of charity events and an Art Exhibition raising not inconsiderable sums for the Chestnut Tree House, JPK Project and the National Brain Appeal.

In 2022 the club won the Towner Rinks Trophy [F Titchener, M Rew, L O'Leary I Catling] and were finalists in the Aussie Pairs [K Townsend K Brooks] and Tolley Bowl. Fred Titchener was made a life member of the club. Mike Rew got to the National Finals at Leamington Spa.

2023 saw the completion of better storage at the club and improved disabled facilities. The club had three teams in the Eastbourne League thus saving the second division of the competition and it was the C Team that went on to the finals of the Eastbourne Challenge Cup.

The club continued to support charities with £1,000.00 raised from an art exhibition for the National Brain Appeal and £700 for the Red Cross Ukrainian Humanitarian Relief Fund.
The picture shows Daphne Buxton on target at the Big Bowls event 2023.





The club hosted the Eastbourne Town finals and the Open Tournaments as well as a Sussex County match, and took part in Bowls England's Big Weekend and Big Bash initiatives when youngsters ran riot playing a variety of games. We raised money for the JPK Project and the Sussex Masonic appeal to supply teddy bears to sick children in hospital.

The greens never looked prettier surrounded by flowering shrubs and the clubhouse festooned with hanging baskets.



During the winter months the club played short mat bowls and enjoyed a full programme of social events with quizzes to stimulate the mind, a cabaret night to dance to, murder mystery to puzzle over, and a race night to lose your shirt.