

The Thurmaston Bowls Club History.

The following information is based on extracts from Thurmaston Committee, Pre-season and Annual General Meeting Minutes

The Thurmaston Bowls Club was founded in September 1977 as a mixed club where both ladies and gents and take part in mixed home and away matches.

At the first meeting there were 16 members with other prospective members who would be available for the new bowling season starting in 1978.

The members held meetings at various venues including their own homes both in Thurmaston and Birstall.

The Club was very fortunate to have some experienced bowlers and some of these were also members of the Thurmaston Parish Council. This was extremely useful as they contributed a lot towards the initial formation of the Club. They suggested that the Club members should notify the Thurmaston Parish Council of their intentions to form a Bowls Club. The experienced bowlers also advised the Club to join the Leicestershire Bowling Association.

At Elizabeth Park in Thurmaston there was a wooden pavilion with changing rooms, toilets, a good kitchen complete with two sinks, a stove and cooking facilities. There was a large room for teas, meetings and social activities. Also there was a storage room large enough for pushers, scoreboards, mats, rink markers and other essential bowling equipment. The pavilion was situated next to a bowling green with six rinks.

The members asked the Club Committee to negotiate with the Thurmaston Parish Council for the use of the facilities of both the green and the pavilion at Elizabeth Park.

During the period 1977/80 the club had recruited up to 33 members but a few also left to play elsewhere.

In 1980 the Thurmaston Parish Council charged the bowls club £10 per Sunday and £50 per season for Wednesday evening club nights. There was some discussion about the state of the green for playing matches and competitions so the green was re-seeded under the supervision of a technical officer. It was made ready for playing on during 1981.

During 1982 the number of members had started to increase fairly rapidly and it was suggested that the membership be limited to about 50 with a priority being given to Thurmaston residents. This was to ensure that members would have a chance of being selected to play in matches. There were 12 fixtures in that year matches with 6 won and 6 lost. The club also had its own club competitions. Matches were also being arranged to be played at Skegness and Cromer.

Members asked the Club Secretary to write to the Parish Council to allow the club to pay a flat rate for the un-restricted use of the green -

In March 1983 the Club was advised that a £50 deposit would be required at the beginning of the season to be held against any damage caused to the Pavilion and/or Fittings. The green fees to be paid to the Parish Council were £400 + £10 for the hire of the Memorial Hall for the club's Annual General Meeting.

There were 52 members paying fees were £11 per year. During the season the Club had 17 fixtures in the Leicestershire area. They won 4, drawn 1, and lost 12, not the best results really. However they also arranged matches further afield, they played 3 ladies rinks and 3 men's 4 rinks with the Cromer District English Bowling Association and 6 mixed rinks at Suffield Park Bowls Club. This made it a fairly good season.

The 1985 season was also kept busy with 42 fixtures of which 3 had to be cancelled. This time Thurmaston won 19 matches. which was an improvement on the previous season. Other games were also played at Skegness, Cromer and Banningham. The games that were played on tour were competitive but always with good fun and the members got well watered and fed.

Banningham also travelled to Thurmaston to play return matches and the club used the facilities of the Conservative Club for dinners and drinks.

In 1986 there were 50 members playing 32 fixtures. They won 18, lost 13, drawn 1.

In 1987 the green fees were raised to £590 and the E.B.A fees of £36.75. The membership fee was £14 and the membership fell to 42. Out of 35 fixtures played the club won 19 and lost 16 matches. The next year 1988 recruited new players and the membership went up again to 56 members. There were 35 fixtures of which the club won 14 matches but lost 21, however it was good experience for the new members and they enjoyed the games.

Once again the green fees were raised and went up to £625.00 also the E.B.A fees to £38.00. The membership fees were raised from £14.00 to £15.00.

At the Special Bowling Olympics in August 1989, Thurmaston Bowls Club members loaned their bowls to the competitors. Members helped out by officiating as Scorers, Markers and Umpires. They gave lapel and pocket badges as well as £250 to help sponsor the players.

The 1994 year was an enjoyable one. In May the Club had the honour to play it's first fixture with the Royal Windsor Household. The men went to play the game and the ladies visited Windsor to spend the men's money. It was a great day in spite of a heavy rainfall and ducks actually swimming on the green. However the match was abandoned with Thurmaston winning by one shot. Thurmaston was invited to visit them again in the near future.

It was in the following year 1995 when the Thurmaston Bowls Club was invited to play the Royal Windsor Household again and Thurmaston won. Thurmaston's Captain was very pleased be to presented with a Tankard in honour of the Thurmaston team beating the Royal Household's Captain's Team.

During that season apart from 18 games being won and 16 lost, 8 games were cancelled mainly due the games being Saturday matches and members not being available to play. At this period the Club had a membership of 35 consisting of 20 men and 15 ladies. At a Committee Meeting held on the 18 July 1996 it was agreed that due to the shortage of players all Saturday Matches would be cancelled.

The club also tried 'Crown Green' bowls at Sheffield. 'Crown Green' bowls is played on a green where the surface of the green slopes upwards rising to a central crown between 6 and 14 inches higher than the edges. The surface tends to be irregular, unlike the level surface of the rink green.

Although Thurmaston unfortunately lost, it was good experience and good fun and the club members made many new friends.

During this period moves from the pavilion to a new Community Centre were being discussed.

In 1997 the Council raised green fees from £1425 to £2000, an increase of £200. This was based on having 40 members.

The membership had started to fall and in 1999 the club had insufficient male members to take part in the gent's competitions.

The year 2000 was the Bowls Club 20 Anniversary. At the Pre Season meeting in March questions were asked why so many members were leaving the club. It was considered that the facilities were to blame. Members pointed out that when the club used to meet in the "little hut" there was a feel good factor about the place but moving into the new building had ruined all that. It was felt that fees were too high for the facilities that were available for the bowling club.

The green fees had reached £2449.00. The income from the membership fees was only £1754.00. The balance was made up with the income from Sunday teas and raffles and other club social activities.

At the A.G.M. the treasurer reported that the club had has enough fees to carry Thurmaston Bowls Club for another two years but will need to do more fund raising.

In spite of the small membership and illnesses it was a good season with 15 local matches being played. 2 were won and 13 lost but only by a small margin.

Apart from bad weather the Cromer tour went well. Of the 4 matches played 2 were won, 1 lost and one cancelled due to bad weather.

