

Greenlees Park Bowling Club History

Greenlees Park Men's Bowling Club was formed in 1950 and the Ladies Club started in 1956.

The original club house was burnt down on 28 July 1957 and the new club house was completed in 1960.

In 1961 the new third green was completed.

In 1963 a new constitution was approved allowing 250 full members and a new category of restricted membership which precludes them playing on Saturdays if there was no room on the three greens, also restricted members couldn't play in pennant games or club championships.

In 1964 the club employed Rod Riley as the new greenkeeper where he remained for the next thirty six years. The greens kept improving under his guidance with many interstate games played at the club in the 1970's and 1980's, also, many State Finals were played at this time. Our Patron Keith Free marked one State Singles Final. The club was rewarded in 1975 by holding the Australian Championships. The club also hosted the Champion of Champions Singles and Pairs, in 1977, and the quarter finals, semi finals and finals of all the State Championships. Rod Riley received an O.A.M in 1992 for greenkeeping ability and for the development of Greenlees Park Couch Grass (which is the grass used in most of the bowling green's around Sydney and up and down the coast).

In 1966 there were five teams entered in the pennants and with sixteen players a side, this amounted to eighty players plus reserves. The grades entered were No's. 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

In 1968 the top grade won through to the two's and the following year to the one's, where they remained up until today (2010) except for four years: 1971 – 1972 and 1979 – 1980. They also have had teams in various other grades from since the inception of the club.

The Right Hon. William McMahon Invitation Fours was first run in 1969 and continued each year up to 1979, with top players coming from all around NSW and interstate. The trophy was donated by the Right Honourable William McMahon, Federal Treasurer at that time, with one hundred teams entering the first year, and up to one hundred and sixty teams playing some years. It was changed to the Greenlees Park Open Invitation Fours in 1980 and ran to 1982. Lunch was prepared and served by the Greenlees Park Ladies Auxiliary for both events.

In 1970 Keith Free introduced a bi-annual match between the Newcastle Jockey Club B.C and G.P.B.C. for a shield he donated. It continued until 1982 but was suspended owing to the inability of the Jockey Club to obtain sufficient players for the visit. The Keith Free Invitation Pairs was run from 1999 – 2003. Prize money was \$10,000 and attracted some of our States and Interstates top bowlers. Keith was awarded an O.A.M. in 2002 for his contribution to the Racing Industry and the Community.

In 1989 the Board decided to pay three top bowlers (Ron Ison; Allan Wellham and Sid Hendley) to play for the Club to generally promote bowls and bring to the fore the ability our bowlers possessed. This eventually proved to be very successful. Grade 1 won the Zone and played in the State Finals from 1996 – 2001 and again in 2005. This success flowed through to the lower grades winning the Zone and playing in the State Finals in: 1996 No.4; 1999 No.2; 2001 No.4; 2002 No.7; 2008 No.3; and 2009 No.6. Previously No.5 won the Metropolitan in 1969 and in 2006 won the B grade mid week zone pennants.

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The Ladies Club won their District Pennants in: 1992 No.3; 2002 No.4 and 2005 No.4.

In 1998 the team of John Fitzgerald, Phil McAulay, Alan Burton and Phil Pratt won fourteen games straight to win the Australian Champion of Champions Fours. Firstly, they had to win the Western Suburbs District Championship, then play the winner of the Eastern Suburbs District to win the Zone 11 Championship and qualify for the NSW State Fours Championships. Zone 11 comprises all the bowling clubs in the Eastern and Western Suburbs.

The State Championships were played at St Johns Park Bowling Club from the 2 October to the 4 October 1998. There are sixteen zones in the State. In the first game they played a team from Woolgoolga winning 28 - 19, next Wollongong 19 - 15, then the semi final against Grandviews whose skipper Alan Baker, has played for Australia winning 32 - 14, and the final against Merrylands whose skipper Charlie Hayes has also played for Australia and third Gil Steinhardt a NSW representative winning 28 - 15 in a match they were never headed. The winning team received \$8,000 and Runner - up \$4,000.

The winners of each State played in the Australian Champion of Champions at Dudley Park Bowling Club at Mandurah, W.A. from the 16 to the 17 November 1998. The first game they beat ACT 19 - 18, the second was against Victoria winning 32 - 13, the third they beat Queensland 27 - 14. In the final they beat Western Australia 25 - 14 who were skippered by Steve Srhoy who has also played for Australia. The team was well supported by members who flew over to watch the games.

At a function on the 25 November 1998, the Royal NSW Bowling Association declared Phil Pratt Bowler of the Year.

The following year the team won the district but lost in the zone final. In 2001 the team got back together and won the District and Zone but lost in the State Final to the team from Birrong Bowling Club.

In 2000 Neville Day, our bowls coach (who has played for the State and Australia on numerous occasions) was awarded the Australian Sports Medal.

In 2002 the club played one year in the NSW Premier League which was made up of some of the strongest clubs in the State. The competition has sixteen teams with some clubs fielding players from interstate.

Over the years G.P. bowlers, both ladies and men have won numerous District and Zone Championships and many open tournaments which are featured on our Honour Boards.

Yearly events have been held over the years against the Retired Gasworks Employees; the Health Commission; the Printers and Allied Trades; Sydney Markets; the National Coursing B.C; No.36 District Masonic Association; the NSW Public Works Combination; the Shire Clerks and Engineers; the Electricity Commission and a bi - annual game against Bargo Bowling Club. Currently there are two annual events; G.P. v City Tattersalls B.C. and the golf bowls day against Massey Park Golf Club.