

DOWNTON BOWLING CLUB

40 YEARS – THANK YOU TO THE FOUNDERS

At the recent Bowling Club AGM, the meeting was treated to an interesting talk by Bob Dymott, one of the founder members of the Club.

Bob explained that this year the Club is celebrating 40 years since it was established at the Wick Lane site that we play on today. Prior to 1983, people got together to play bowls on a piece of the Junior school playing field. They would meet and set up the boundaries to a 'green' using lengths of guttering and bits of string.



Bowling at the Junior School

Initially it was a case of not really knowing how to play the game, but, as luck would have it, one gentleman in the Village was an established bowls player and administrator – Ralph Bentley. Ralph had been a previous President of The English Bowling Association, so he knew an awful lot about bowling. He became Captain of the Club in 1980 for three seasons. Mr Lunt, of the Downton Tannery, was The President.

These members in the early days, on the odd occasion, enjoyed playing on the Alderbury Bowls Club green, whenever they were kindly invited. In 1982/83 the Club, under the guidance of Ralph Bentley, had an opportunity to build a purpose made bowling Green at what was to become the Brian Whitehead Sports and Social Club, Wick Lane, Downton. At the same time the football club was establishing the upper part of the land. Many of the Bowling Club members helped to erect the original facilities. Bob Dymott himself, and Les Cousins moved a village hall that was being replaced from the Broade Chalk area. This involved transporting the parts of the village hall with a low loader and tractor to Downton. The parts had to be cleaned up and erected. This



The New Green. 1983. Clubhouse under construction.

construction is what you see as the bar area in the Social Club today. As well as Bob and Les, others helped with the roofing including the Galpin boys, Jim and Dave. Vic Bryant, Don and Ron Moody were involved as was Ralph's son-in-law, Mike Hallam. Ralph Bentley would have organised contractors to produce a bowling Green to the required standard; Stubby Sherwood also devoted a lot of time and resources to this project. Downton Bowling Club will never forget Ralph Bentley as his portrait hangs in the Clubhouse and an annual competition is played in his honour. As mentioned previously, he was Captain of the Club from 1980 to 1982, he and many others worked so hard at establishing this Club, but unfortunately, he died without actually playing on the precious Green. Bob Dymott took over as Club Captain and Vic Bryant was the first Greenkeeper.



These players became very successful, a story for another time.

Players at the Club today can only give a big thank you to Ralph and the founder members for what we have today.

Do not forget that the Bowling Club is not sleeping during the winter, we have just had a very successful Race Night, regular Coffee mornings, and short mat bowling indoors. Contact Mike Hallam on 01725 513359.

Note: The Club would appreciate any more anecdotes from folk involved at that time. Contact Alan Waters, 01725 512531.