



CROXLEY GUILD BOWLS CLUB NEWSLETTER APRIL 2026

Together we will Honour the Past, Celebrate the Present, and go confidently into the next 100 years

April 2026 - Our centenary year begins!



Congratulations to Les Harland for being elected as President of the Club and to Avril Harland on being elected as President of Watford and District Ladies Bowls Association. Avril and Les have both been stalwarts of the club over the last 42 years, having joined in 1984 when the membership was 48 and have seen it grow to the thriving community that it is today.



Sue joined the club in 1996 when the ladies wore grey skirts and white tops for roll ups – nothing casual until 2012 when they were allowed to wear trousers and club shirts, previously only worn by the men. How things have changed! Sue has served the club tirelessly over the last 31 years and as our Ladies' Captain encourages and supports us to enjoy the game and participate in the life of the club.



Des also joined the club in the 1995 with two friends, Peter Watson and Jack Bishop. In 2004 he was co-opted onto the committee to help project manage the building of the new club house. Des has served the club in numerous positions over the last 24 years and has been Men's Captain for the last 3 years. He is also a member of the Green Keeping team ensuring that our green is the best it can be.

In honouring the past, we must thank all those who built and developed the club over the last 100 years, especially those who had the foresight in 2006 to build our new clubhouse which we still enjoy today. We are privileged to have excellent facilities in a wonderful setting, thanks to the hard work and dedication of so many people including Avril, Les, Sue and Des to name a few. They are our past, present and future. Thank you.

Our thanks are also due to all those who organised the Short Mat sessions this winter with particular thanks to Marion and the social committee for the excellent events and to Ginette for the great refreshments. The Quizzes, Race Night and the Call my Bluff evenings were well supported, good fun and an excellent way of raising much needed funds for the club.

What's new this month

- A new club flag and logo to commemorate the centenary year
- The clubhouse has been decorated and new carpet laid.
- A new oven has been installed in the kitchen.
- A partition has been created from the men's changing room to create a new changing room/store room.
- The doors to the changing rooms have been newly painted.
- Work on the pergola has begun with new paving underneath.
- New stickers for your bowls!

Thank you to all those who have given so much time to the renovations with particular thanks to Kevin who has masterminded the work in the clubhouse. Special thanks also to Linda Martin whose work on the grant applications has enabled us to build the new pergola.

April 1st Sign up for the special centenary games and events.

Friday 10th April 9.30am

Opening working party to get the Green ready for the season. Bacon Rolls for all the helpers!

Wednesday 15th April 2026

The date of the formation of the club 100 years ago. Please join us to mark the occasion when we open the green for the start of the season. 1.30pm for a 2pm start of play, (weather permitting) followed by afternoon tea. Cost is £5.00 per person and the sign-up sheet is in the club house. Navy trousers/shorts with the new club shirt.

Club competitions

Entry forms to be returned to JP Watson by Friday 18th April – please note that the Finals weekend is 5th/6th September and everyone that enters should be available to play that weekend. The entry fee for each competition is £3.00.

New club competition

The Harland Centenary Cup – Drawn mixed pairs with no Handicap. This cup has been donated by Avril and Les to commemorate the centenary year.

Mon 20th April First Drive evening of the season

Club Open Weekend -25th and 26th April

Please support the club by spreading the word to friends and neighbours and helping to make this weekend a success. We need to increase our membership and encourage new people to join. If you are able to help distribute flyers please let Sue know – all help gratefully received.

Ladies' Roll Ups Tuesday 21st April, Tues 28th April and Tues 5th May - 2.00pm start.

Message from Sue – Ladies’ Captain and Chair of the Centenary Committee

The planning of the Centenary Year has taken a great deal of time but I know it will be a year we can all enjoy and make many happy memories together. In addition to the celebratory games, we have a full season of Watford & District and County Competitions as well as our own club competitions. I feel very privileged to be the ladies’ captain and am extremely proud of you all. I know we will have a wonderful season ahead of us with the ability to achieve great results.

Message from Des – Mens Captain

This year is, of course, our centenary year and I’m very much looking forward to participating in all the celebrations that are being organised and hope everyone will get involved too. We have a very full programme of matches and I do ask you all put your names down on the availability lists. I believe this club is in a very strong position to go into the future

May 2026

Monday 4th May – Bank Holiday Drive 2.30 – club colours

Sunday 10th May – Centenary game v The Royal Household Windsor – because of security at Windsor this game has been pre-selected for players and visitors. Coach leaves the club house at 12.15 – please contact Sue for further information.

Sunday 17th May – Club Gala Shield – see noticeboard for further details

Mon 25th May – Bank Holiday Drive – 2.30 – club colours

Thurs 28th May – hosting Quarter finals of Men’s fours

Details of men’s and ladies district and county games on Fixture Card – supporters welcome at all games.

Centenary events for your diary

Sun 10 th May	Croxley v The Royal Household Windsor	away
Sun 5 th July	Croxley v The Bohemians	away
Sat 25 th July	Croxley v Watford and District Men	home
Wed 5 th August	Croxley v The Chelsea Pensioners	home
Sat 22 nd /Sun 23 rd August	Hosting Watford and District Ladies Final	home
Wed 26 th August	Croxley v Herts County Past Presidents	home
Wed 2 nd September	Croxley v Herts County Team	home
Sat 5 th and Sun 6 th Sept	Finals weekend	
Sat 12 th September	Croxley v Friends of English Bowls	home
Sat 26 th /Sun 27 Sept	End of Season Celebration	
Mon 5 th to Fri 9 th Oct	Potters Hopton trip	
Sat 21 st November	Centenary Dinner and Presentation evening	

What's changed in the last 40 years

Les and Avril Harland

Avril and I joined Croxley Guild Bowl Club in 1984, together with Roy Toppin, Alan Mitchell, and Tim and Maxine Bowdrey, bringing the total membership to 48. Facilities were sparse – they included a wooden pavilion, in which the ladies changed and made tea! Opposite was an asbestos cladded men's changing room and a corrugated bus shelter used as a men's toilet.

Apart from the existing wall, three sides of the green were hedges. A cinder path surrounded the green which was cut by the Guild staff twice a week. Watering was provided by a boom watering arrangement which had to be manually moved across the grass.

The influx of new blood and enthusiasm together with the handing over of the Guild of Sport to the council for £1.00, moved the responsibilities and upkeep of the facilities to the bowls club members.

Fundraising began in earnest and financial loans from Reg Tomkins, one of our newer members, enabled the club to improve the facilities. The improvements began with a toilet block and septic tank as the nearest drain was on The Green. Ladies no longer had to trek to the Guild Clubhouse to use the toilet facilities!

The next project was to build the men's and ladies' changing rooms and a greenkeeper's store. The cinder path was replaced with paving slabs but we were only able to complete this work as Les won the Bovingdon Winter League and the prize money was £100, which was enough to buy 40 more slabs to finish the path at the far end of rinks 4,5 and 6 – then called Bovingdon Boulevard.

The hedge bordering the tennis club was removed and replaced with the fence as they needed an extra 2 foot of space for improvements.

The last major venture was the replacement of the old clubhouse in 2006. We needed to raise £35,000 to purchase and erect the building. All the work was done by the members, from demolition to the electrics and everything in between. Reg Tompkin and Gil Clarke installed the toilets, Les Harland and Jack Bishop the electrics, Tim Bowdrey and Alan Mitchell the plumbing, Ian McLachlan the kitchen, Derek Walton laid the carpet and many other members cleaned, painted and donated equipment for the kitchen. We purchased tables and chairs second hand for £120. Throughout all this work we were sustained by cups of tea, coffee, bacon rolls and homemade cakes by our ladies.

The club continues to improve and flourish under the endless stream of new members and enthusiasm. Our welcoming open-door attitude to all who wish to join our family is known throughout the district. As we reach our 100th year, we remember members past and present who have made the club what it is today.