

## The History of Kohimarama Bowling Club Inc.

[ formerly Mission Bay Women's Bowling Club]

*In November 1949 a group of women from Mission Bay met to discuss the forming of a women's bowling club to be called Tamaki Women's Bowling Club. When a sufficient number of women confirmed their interest, a delegation approached the Auckland Council with a request for a suitable piece of land. The first written application was in April 1950 and after 4 years of stalemate as to location or financial assistance, the group folded.*

Meanwhile a group of women in Glendowie were also working on a parallel plan to form a women's bowling club in the Churchill Park Reserve. After fund raising and meetings, approaches to Council continued to be stymied by the Parks and Reserves Committee whose response was that there was no designated land for a women's bowling green in the Eastern Suburbs, and again the effort faltered.

In 1956 a new committee, the proposed Mission Bay Women's Bowling Club, was formed for a fresh attempt at securing land. Auckland Council offered Aotea Reserve on the corners of Aotea St and Nihill Cres Mission Bay but after extensive investigations throughout 1957, it was deemed unsuitable for conversion to a bowling club.

In 1958 the committee approached the Council after hearing that the Council was negotiating with the Melanesia Trust to purchase land between Baddley and Speight Rds which now comprises Madills Farm Reserve, Melanesia Reserve and surrounds. The Committee was successful in securing the club's present location on Melanesia Reserve, the land to be shared with Kohimarama Tennis Club, and so the Mission Bay Women's Bowling Club became established in Kohimarama ... creating decades of confusion for visiting bowlers!

The 1958 season opened with no greens or pavilion so several of the 42 other Women's Bowling Clubs in Auckland and Auckland Men's Bowling Club, invited members to use their facilities until the greens were ready. In the meantime, the Melanesia Trust allowed the club to commence work on the greens even though the land transfer was incomplete. The land was purchased for £11,200.

November 7<sup>th</sup> 1959, 10 years after the first meeting, President Mrs D [Dod] Robinson welcomed visitors to "a joyous occasion" for the 185 members [of which 107 were 1<sup>st</sup> year players]. The two greens were laid and the Pavilion was ready for the official opening. The greens cost £1,000, the green banks and surrounds £2,700 and a deposit of £2,500 for the Pavilion was made to Mr Waite the builder, who promised to build the Pavilion in a month and he did. *Where is this man today?.... he can build my home any time!*

The 1960 Accounts show that Mr Waite was still £4000 so it took some time for the club to pay off the debt. A massive amount of voluntary effort went into preparation of the grounds and greens.



In 1965 the Greenkeeper's house was built financed by a loan from a club member and over the ensuing years the garage and tool shed were constructed.

There is considerable correspondence in the Auckland Council Archives between the Club and Council regarding the accessways from Melanesia and Speight Roads to the club carpark. Large potholes were a danger to both pedestrians and cars, lighting was poor especially for evening Indoor Bowls players and the carpark flooded when it rained. It was not until 1980 that the entrance and driveway were drained, channelled and sealed.

In 1982 the Pavilion was extended to the north [behind the stage] to provide room for a storeroom, offices, more lockers and toilets.

Many visitors to KBC will be aware of the clubroom stage. It had stage lighting, side and backdrop curtains and was used regularly by members to put on light entertainment shows.

Indoor Bowls was also well supported.

A 1962 report states there were over 200 members and games were played 3 times a week with open tournaments twice a month.

Official guests on annual Opening Days have included Sir Dove Myer Robinson and Sir Robert Muldoon [below], local MPs Bob Tizard and Clem Simich and in 1975 Robert Muldoon who held his election victory party at the clubrooms a few months later. Winston Peters MP attended the Club's first Gold Card Tournament in 2012.





Opening Day 1983 – Celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for the Club

In 1988, Auckland hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> Women's World Bowls Championship with 23 countries comprising teams of 6 players to compete in Singles, Pairs, Triples and Fours. England won the overall points Trophy.

In the official event book, Mission Bay Women's Bowling Club, who hosted the Irish team, is described as *"a 15 minute trip from the CBD, has 275 full playing members - the biggest membership of Auckland Women's Bowling clubs and has 2 cotula greens with attractive surrounds"*.

The Club's most notable players have been Sally Shaw and Phyl Garret both being Auckland Centre Gold Star holders, Sally having won 8 and Phyl 9 centre titles.

The greens were well regarded and the envy of many clubs and were originally the work of Barry Edwards who was greenkeeper from 1972-1980. It was Barry who introduced the cotula maniatoto greens.

In the early 1990s when Auckland suffered a severe water shortage, the bowling club had a water bore drilled but the water obtained was too high in salt and unsuitable for watering the greens.

In 1998 the 2 grass greens were converted to artificial surfaces.

Throughout the late 1990s and 2000s, it became clear that both Men's and Women's Bowling Clubs were losing members culminating in the merging of many clubs to become mixed.

In 2004 a plan to remove the centre windows and replace them with French doors out onto a deck at a cost of \$35,000 was defeated by 45 to 32 votes. Members were worried about spending the money.

Twice the motion that Men be allowed to be Full Members was brought to the AGM and twice defeated, before being successful on its third tabling at the 2013 AGM. This prompted a name change which didn't include "Women's" so a new Constitution was developed and the Kohimarama Bowling Club was inaugurated in 2013.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the tenacious women who persevered in establishing Mission Bay Women's Bowling Club and created the wonderful facilities we enjoy today.

The Club currently has 75 members across all its categories with a 60/40 female/male split across its full membership.

The club has benefited from a recent resurgence in bowls at the Club with 54% of our full members being juniors [i.e., less than five years bowling experience].

Due to its sound financial position, the Club has embarked on a significant refurbishment plan to attract new membership.

The Club continues to receive strong community support and is focused on creating new, innovative and exciting events for its members.

It's great to see the surprise on the faces of new visitors when they step through the gate into our "hidden gem" grounds, created with a lot of hard work by the early members and assisted by their families.

We thank our predecessors for providing a facility that has brought much enjoyment, social interaction and competition over the years which we strive to continue through our Club Vision .....

***To be the friendliest, most innovative, inclusive and supportive bowling Club in Auckland***



Then... 1983



**...and now 2022**

*Submitted by Jill Compton, with thanks to Rosemary Goldie - KBC Life Member; Alan Jenkinson - KBC Member; Vicky McCulloch Senior Archivist (Outreach) Auckland Council Archives and the scrapbook compiled by past member Joan Siddall.*