

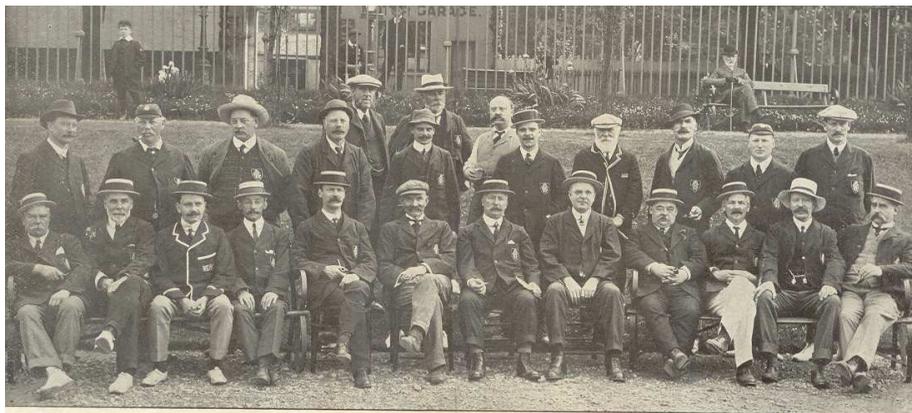
The roots of our County actually started in **1906** with the formation of The Reading and District Bowling Association, where eligibility was based upon Clubs being within a 20 mile radius of Reading.

The Association consisted of eight Clubs, Newbury, Bracknell, Desborough, Hurst, Huntley and Palmers, West End, Mortimer and Reading.

The entrance fee was 10s.6d (*52.5p*) and subscriptions no more than 10s.6d. The rules of the London and Southern Counties Bowls Association formed the basis of their own rules, with minor amendments in subsequent years.

On the 27th January 1910, it was proposed that the name be changed to “Berks. County Bowling Association” and this proposal was later carried in a motion at a subsequent meeting held on 14th March **1910**, with the recommendation that they also contact the E.B.A.

Colours were to be – **“green and red stripes and monogram for pocket badge to be in gold, with a line around the pocket”**. The badge would also incorporate the Stag and Oak, which appeared in the regimental colours of the Royal Berkshire Militia.



BERKSHIRE TEAM.

The first County match against Gloucestershire took place at the Winter Gardens rink on June 6th 1910, and featured above is the team who were:-
Leaver, F Attenbrow, Anderton, T Street, W Johnson, W P Lasham, W Hyde, F Pitcher, W Davies, G Panter, T Lawrence, T Ward, J Blazey, J Foster, F Butler, H Childs, J Webber, J H Baylis, R Jones, H Meabey, G Eighteen, H Wright, T Waldron & F Lindar

Later in September 1910, a match with Bedfordshire took place at West End Club.

In the first annual report to the Association held on the 11th March **1911** held at the Bull Hotel in Reading it was reported as follows:-

" Dear Sir,

In submitting the report for the past year I am pleased to state the Competitions were all well contested.

The Silver Challenge Cup was this year won by the representative team of the Factory Club, who beat the holders, Reading, by 33 to 30 points.

This makes the 4th time the Factory has won it.

The winners will also be presented with a prize.

In the Single Handed Competition Mr. H Hawes (Hurst Club) and F Pitcher (Maidenhead Thicket) were left in the final and after a very keen game, Mr.Hawes won by 21 to 18 points.

The winner will receive a prize kindly presented by the President (Mr.T.Street) and the runner-up a prize given by the Association.

The Association is to be congratulated on winning all the County matches they played last season. The first one played was at Cheltenham on 6th June, against Gloucestershire, the result being Berkshire 118 Gloucestershire 108.

The return match was played on the Reading Green 8th August, Gloucestershire this time only losing by 3 points; Berkshire 124, Gloucestershire 121.

The next match was with Oxfordshire, played on the West End Green; here again another keen and close game, the scores being: Berkshire 106, Oxon 102.

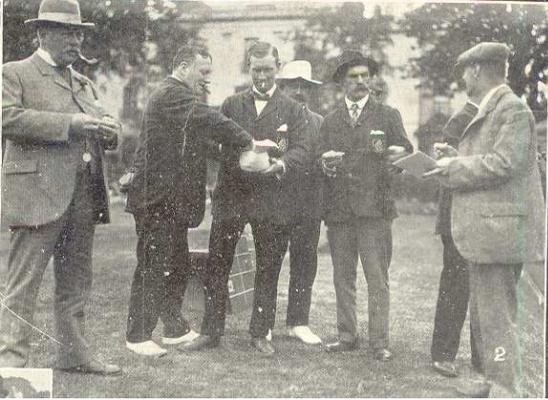
The competing clubs were Reading, Mortimer, Hurst, Bracknell, Desborough, Maidenhead Thicket, Sutton's, Reading West End, Reading Biscuit Factory.

Yours faithfully

JOHN FOSTER
Hon Sec. "

Clearly we got off to a good start with our County fixtures, which have grown significantly in numbers since then, as we now have 19 Inter County Matches, plus 4 Associations we play on an annual basis.

In **1912** the after match meal against Gloucestershire was hosted at the well known and fashionable Skindles Hotel in Maidenhead, where Lord Desborough and Lord Astor were invited guests.



1913 –
The drawing of rinks used to be with the use of a bowler hat for each side.
Picture of County playing Gloucestershire & drawing their rinks.

1913 was also the year in which the first of “Bannerette Styled Games” took place, as Newbury invited the County to bring a team to the Club, but alas lost 49:65. Bannerette Games now form an integral part of our bowling year and help to provide all bowlers with a chance to play elsewhere. After 3 years of County Matches, it was decided to create a selection committee to choose the players for matches, and this consisted of The Captain, Vice Captain and three other representatives from different clubs. Needless to say there were the usual questions asked “*Why did not you choose a player from my club?*” and moans about the teams selected, perhaps some things never change!

As we moved forward to **1914**, when we were at war, the minds of bowlers turned to raising money for the benefit of charities and the war effort. A smoking concert was held and raised £32.12s.6d, which was handed over to the Royal Berks.Regiment for their Tobacco Pipe and Cigarette fund for the troops fighting on the front. Similar acts of generosity continued throughout the County and its Clubs.



***1927** – the year in which Tom Tickle of Park Institute Club became the first player to win the E.B.A. Singles Championship for Berkshire, although we had a runner-up in 1909 & 1922.*

In July **1928** Berkshire was privileged to entertain the New Zealand Bowlers at Aldermaston, and here is a picture of the Tourists performing the traditional Maori dance to their hosts and opponents at Aldermaston Court. (*Berkshire won the match 131:95*)



By **1929** there were 22 Clubs now affiliated, so for the purposes of competitions, the County was split into zones as follows:

Newbury & District	4 clubs
Abingdon	4 clubs
Reading	8 clubs
Maidenhead	6 clubs

Zone winners would then go forward and play on a neutral green.

By **1931** the ever vexing question of uniform was with us again, and we now had – a green blazer, white flannels, brown shoes, white felt hat with County hat band, and the official stockists were Mr. Butler of King Street Reading.

Also in this year the idea of having a Benevolent Fund was raised, which became a reality three years later. It was agreed that the identity of the beneficiaries would remain confidential to the Fund's Officers, and that same tradition is upheld today, with many bowlers benefiting from various forms of financial assistance.

The Annual Accounts for the Fund showed that in **1934** there were already Grants being made to six cases, and the total funds then were £134.10s.0d. Herbert Farley was our first Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, followed by

Ted Shuttle, who in turn was succeeded by Wally Kersley. Wally was described by Mr Campbell-Dykes *“as one of the most indefatigable workers I know for the cause.”*

Since then we are indebted to the number of Committee Members, who have given so much time and energy to furthering the cause of the Benevolent Fund.

Berkshire was a leader in this field, for in **1936** the EBA acknowledged that we were in the forefront with our Benevolent Fund set-up.

1934 saw the first tour by the County being arranged under the name of “The Berkshire Tourists”. They played Torquay, Madeira (Exmouth), Barnstaple, City of Exeter, Torbay Country, and Sir Francis Drake clubs. Of these, 5 were won, whilst the game against Torbay Country Club only 15 ends were played owing to rain, the Tourists at that stage being behind.

“The Tour proved to be very successful from every point of view and the 31 players who made up the party appeared to enjoy every minute of it. Hopes were freely expressed at the termination of the Tour that one of a similar nature would be arranged during the next season” (it was reported in the AGM minutes of 1934.)

Indeed the President’s Tours have continued ever since, with the 2010 Tour scheduled to return to Devon, where it all started.

Also in 1934 the criteria for the awarding of a County Badge to players became an item of discussion at the AGM, where the motion was *“that a player would receive his badge after playing 6 County Matches”*, but this was once again emphatically rejected by a vote of 55:17.

1935 was the year in which our first flag was purchased, and this was donated by Mr.T Campbell-Dykes, who was the President at the time. The flying of the flag at County Matches has become an integral part of every match we now play, even with the Under 25’s.

In the same year The Keyser Cup was won by Hungerford, from an original entry of 24 clubs. Once again charity was foremost in the bowlers’ minds, for the surplus of £12.12s.0d was handed over to Royal Berks. Hospital – Sportsmen Fund.

In **1940** “The Bob Thackray Cup” was presented for competitions, with a view to raising funds for Red Cross work in the War, where the magnificent sum of £375 was raised. The Trophy is still in use today for the

winners of the Triples in our County Competitions. What a proud history that Trophy has.

Further fund-raising in **1942** took place by virtue of the fact that all players who won War Savings Certificates and Stamps returned them, and the proceeds went again to the Red Cross.

Following the end of the War, the production of The Year Book was resumed in **1946**, after a lapse of 6 years. With the County now back in full swing, it was also decided to appoint the first Press Officer in 1947, and Mr. Wallie Kersley of Maiden Erlegh was the first to hold this important post.

By the time of our Golden Anniversary in **1960**, membership had reached 45 clubs with 2132 members. At that point in time Caversham was the largest with 110 members.

During the first 50 years, the County had only two Honorary Secretaries, who were-John Foster 1910-1929 and J F Thomas 1930-1959, and you have to admire so much devotion to duty.

The year before, the country was suffering from petrol rationing, which had an adverse impact on travel and competitions, but gladly by our Golden Anniversary, things were back to normal.

1960 was also the year in which the County finally agreed to the appointment of a Junior Deputy President and a Senior Deputy President, for this idea had previously been rejected in 1947.

Mr. W Murray of Prospect Park became the first Senior, and Mr R Wood of Windsor & Eton the first Junior.

Changes were coming thick and fast, for we now see our first typed reports in The Minute Book, making it easier to read past reports, especially where some styles of hand-writing were not easy on the eye!

Membership continued on its upward trend, for in **1961** there were now 49 Clubs affiliated, and bowls was attracting a great deal of interest both across the County and the Country. In the same year we had 1904 competition entries, again reflecting the competitive nature of our sport and our players.

After some 32 years of wearing green blazers, it was decided we would change to dark navy blue for County players with the badge being a stag in gold, on red background. The awarding of a Middleton Cup Flash to go on our blazers was agreed after 3 qualifying games had been played, and has remained the same since then.

Up until **1972** The Annual Dinner Dance and Prize giving, had mainly been held at various hotels in the Reading area, with the Great Western Hotel being the last. When they were unable to accept us anymore, the venue changed to the Berkshire Masonic Centre at Sindlesham, for the first time and remains there to this day.

The first County Coach, Mr. M N Neville, was appointed, and he attended a coaching session at Worthing in the April of **1974** as part of his training. Since then the role of the County Coach has become well established, and now provides us with a formalised cohesive training programme, for all those wishing to aspire to the role of being a Coach.

Also in April 1974 following the Local Government Act 1972, we had the northern part of the County become a part of Oxfordshire, with Faringdon, Abingdon, Shrivenham, Wantage and hinterland becoming part of the Vale of The White Horse District, and Didcot and Wallingford going to form part of the South Oxfordshire district. In return Berkshire obtained the towns of Slough and Eton and part of the former Eton Rural District from Buckinghamshire. The original Local Government White Paper would have transferred Henley-on-Thames from Oxfordshire to Berkshire: this proposal did not make it into the Bill as introduced.

From the bowling perspective we retained the Clubs of Faringdon, Abingdon, Shrivenham, Wantage, Didcot and Wallingford, but Slough remained within Bucks. There was not a Club in Eton, but Windsor and Eton Club looks after the needs of bowlers in that vicinity.

Two years after a Coach was appointed The Umpires Association was formed and within 3 years we had 5 qualified umpires operating within the County.

1982 was to be the year of great celebration on the bowling green, as our players were successful in **Winning the Middleton Cup** for the first time, having only reached the final back in 1922. It also coincided with Berkshire winning The Home Counties League by the narrowest of margins in the final match against Oxford by half a point. Players from both teams enjoyed a celebration with their wives / partners at Thatcham Bowls Club with the lads from The Middleton Cup Squad receiving their trophy on the 4th of December 1982 at The Connaught Rooms, where tickets were the princely sum of £12.50.



(A list of all the players is shown in The Honours Section of this book).

The County Handbook by **1986** was at last making a small profit, as adverts now formed an important part of the income stream, which combined with the fact that all competitors in County Competitions were now required to

purchase a book, helped to overcome a long-running problem of losing money on its publication.



1991 was the year in which we saw a talented young bowler make his first appearance as a Junior Internationalist, and of course I refer to Robert Newman, who has consistently represented the County at a very high level ever since, a truly inspirational player in all disciplines on the green.

With an increasing number of younger bowlers, the County created an Under 35's Squad in the **early 1990's**, which played adjacent Counties on a competitive match basis. The Home Counties League was approached with the idea of forming a league for this age range, but it was initially rejected.

However, as these matches continued to be played with other Counties, they took more interest in them, and discussions between various Counties and themselves, produced The Under 25's League, with Ken Nash becoming the first Team Manager.

Ken remained in this role for some 8 years, and he was followed by Barry Dillon, who have between them, produced a fine squad of bowlers, many of whom have gone on to be Middleton Cup players.

Having a dedicated Team Manager and a very competitive league under the umbrella of The Home Counties, has paid handsome dividends in the creation and nurturing of the younger bowler, such as Robert Newman.

By **1998** the world of bowls was making some radical changes, well some people thought so, as coloured bowls were now allowed at all levels of play. Their appeal was generally to the younger element of bowlers and when you are watching an Under 25's game, it is now very difficult to spot a traditional black or brown bowl.

1999 was the year in which Her Majesty The Queen gave us permission to include “The Royal County” wording in our County title, and thus we became The Royal County of Berkshire Bowling Association, which we are immensely proud of. That name is scheduled to be carried forward into our Unified County with the ladies of Berkshire.

With the ever-increasing use of the Internet, it was recognised that we would need to have our own web site and the Domain Name of www.bowls-berkshire.com was established in **2001**.

Our web site now provides a valuable communication tool between both the County and its members. Within the last few years the ladies have been linked into the web site and they too enjoy the benefits.

In 2007 we were very privileged to play at The Royal Household Bowling Club with Her Majesty The Queen in attendance. The match recognised the unique situation of The Presidents of the Indoor and Outdoor County Associations coming from the same Club in the same year.



**To commemorate the occasion a special badge was struck for all the participating players.
A proud day indeed for Ken Blackall and Marshall Smith
Presidents of :-
The R.C.B.B.A. & B.C.I.B.A. respectively**

As we near the end of our first 100 years, our County goes into the next 100 years as a Unified County, under the name of The Royal County of Berkshire Bowling Association. A lot of work over the past 2/3 years has been carried out by The Unification Steering Committee, which will give us all a different second Centenary in 2110.

In 1958 Godfrey R Bolsover compiled the “Who’s Who and Encyclopaedia of Bowls”, which ran to 1298 pages, and must have been a definitive book on bowls throughout the bowling world at that point in time.

On page xxi he included an article written by Francis Burton J.P. Past President of Sileby B.C. Leicestershire who wrote the following:

“Bowls is an “old soldier” of sport. It will never die. It will not even fade away. Its fascinating history as a game played by kings and knaves to a “mixed bag” of diverse rules over many centuries is abundant proof of its appeal to every generation.

Today the game is organised through Associations of Clubs, Nationally and Internationally. Except for small minorities and minor details, all bowlers everywhere play to common rules. The pattern is set and it is unlikely that we shall see any important constitutional changes or alterations to rules in the future. “

When you reflect on these words, I think you will find it hard to disagree with much of what he said some 50 years ago. As we go into our 100th Year, I think we can look forward with confidence as to the future of the game, for with some of the very talented young players we have, Berkshire will continue to pick up National Honours and represent us well against other Counties and Countries.

The following pages include contributions from every Club currently affiliated to The R.C.B.B.A., where their stories reflect their past, showing how each of them have contributed to making our County one to be proud of.

We also have memories of Clubs that have been part of our past, but sadly no longer exist for whatever reason, but their contribution to what we are today should never be underestimated.

The competitive nature within us all, has over the years spawned a number of leagues, some linked geographically to certain parts of the County, others covering different needs based on size, and again I found it interesting to learn more about them and the valuable contribution they all make to the outdoor bowling calendar of each Club, in different parts of Berkshire.

I hope you enjoy the celebrations we have planned in **2010** and will support President Barry Dillon and his Officers in this most important year.

