

# NEWSLETTER

*A review of the past month, a preview of the coming month and more*

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**Merry Christmas  
to All Our Readers**

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## Is Bowling in Decline?

Are we seeing the decline of our sport? Should we be worried about the number of greens that have been closed over the years? Members have been adding up the number of greens ending their useful lives and the numbers are worrying. So far 52 greens have been identified as being closed over the last 50 years or so. Has that number been matched by new greens appearing? Well maybe that is an exercise still to do but the general feeling is that there are less greens in the area than used to be the case. But has that been balanced out by clubs having more teams in more leagues, again another exercise that needs doing before any sensible conclusion could be reached.

An article in this issue lists the 52 now extinct greens and encourages members to recall playing on them and to share those memories with us. It goes on to point out that there are now just 53 greens in the Huddersfield area suggesting that interest has waned. However if you look at the number of teams playing in competitions in the area then that suggests an increase in numbers and interest and there are certainly more leagues in existence, including our own, than was the case 50 years ago and that can only happen with the increased interest and involvement of local bowlers. Read on.

## My Bowling Life

In this issue we start a new series of articles about members of our League. Each month we intend telling the story of an individual who has contributed in different ways to the success of the Veteran's League. It is not just about the top bowlers, or maybe not always about bowlers at all, as we tell the bowling and personal life stories of people who have contributed to local bowling history in many forms.

We start the series with Lindley Bowling Club stalwart Bill Blackburn looking back over his bowling life which extends back over 78 years. Coming from a family of bowlers Bill talks about his first memory of bowling at eight years of age on a strip of grass alongside the Linthwaite Hall green, going on to align his history of moving clubs with milestones in his personal life.

## 52 Redundant Greens

Over the past month on the HDVBA website bowlers have been talking about local greens that have become redundant. The list, started by Bill Blackburn, has now grown to 52 which has to be a worry considering that there are now just 53 greens in competitive use in the area.

Chris Squires, Alan Fawcett, Bob Swan, Alan Hobson and Neil Hinchliffe have added to these memories along with a long list compiled by Peter Muff in an old article in The Examiner. There is no timeline on these closures but the following list represents the combined effort of several local bowlers but is still being added to.

Redundant Greens (with year of closure in brackets):

Armitage Bridge	Leeds Road Playing Fields
Bath Hotel at Lockwood	Lepton Church Institute
Berry Brow Labour Club	Lindley WMC
Birkby Liberal Club (Brook Motors)	Linthwaite Methodist
Black Bull at Mirfield	Lockwood & Salford Liberal Club
Bradley Mills	Longley Tennis Club
Bradley Woodman	Longroyd Bridge Institute
Brook Motors at Brockholes (2006)	Longwood Mechanics Hall
Canalside Back Green (2017)	Marsh
Canker Lane	Milnsbridge County
Castle Hill (1938)	Newsome WMC (2016)
Cowcliffe Cons	Paddock Cricket Club (2nd green)
Croppers Arms at Marsh	Primrose Hill WMC
Dalton Liberal Club	Rastrick (one green)
DB Sports (Moorend)	Rawthorpe WMC
DB Tractors (Meltham Hall)	Salendine Nook Red Triangle Club
Emley Football Club	Sheepridge & Deighton Liberal Club
Fartown Liberal Club	Smithriding (Linthwaite)
Fartown WMC	St Lukes Hospital
Fernside Estate, Almondbury	Storthes Hall
Golcar Conservative Club	Taylor Hill WMC
Hillhouse & Birkby	Thornton Lodge WMC
Honley Liberal Club	Three Owls at Kirkburton
Hope Bank Pleasure Ground	Turnbridge WMC
Huddersfield C&AC (two greens)	Upper Royal George
Kings Arms Moldgreen	Woodfield Park (Police ground).

It would be good to add some more years of closure to make this a more complete record or if you can add any more known greens that are now extinct then please get in touch. Similarly anyone who can recall these greens and may have even played on them then why not share that memory with us. Which club were you playing for and which competition were you playing in?

Although Bill Blackburn set the ball rolling on this one he is adamant that bowling is just as popular now as it was 50 years ago and quotes the number of teams playing in the Huddersfield League in 1950 as being 80 in total, whereas today there are 93 teams in the competition. Case proven.

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## **Club Reps Corner**

First a reminder to any club considering entering a new team for the 2018 season that the deadline for new entries is Monday 8 January. The same date is the last date for notifying the League of any team withdrawals as well. New team applications should be forwarded to the League Secretary along with a list of committed bowlers to allow the League to place any new team in the most appropriate Section for the coming season.

A few clubs have heeded the request to supply the first names of their registered bowlers so that they can be added to the Bowlsnet system. Those that haven't could they do so during the close season to allow the system to be updated during this quiet time. Thank you.

Another reminder about the bowler transfer process. Any transfer has to be completed by Sunday 1 April 2018 to enable that bowler to play for their new club in the coming season. A transfer request has to be made in writing (email is fine) to the League Secretary naming the bowler, their current club and BCGBA Number.

The League Secretary will then contact the other club to make sure that there is no reason why the transfer shouldn't go ahead (if they owed their former club money then the transfer would be held back until that is resolved) and as a courtesy to inform the club that they are losing that bowler. Once the transfer is complete the player details are updated on Bowlsnet to show their registration is with their new club.

The provisional list of Starred Bowlers for all our teams has been issued and is available on the HDVBA website. Any club concerned about the players selected for the coming season can seek explanation on why they have been added by contacting the League Secretary. If you wish to appeal against any selection please put that in writing (email is fine) to the League Secretary with the basis of your objection and offering a named alternative.

Starred Bowlers are only allowed to play for that club's A team and cannot turn out in either the 10-man or 6-man Leagues for any club. The final listing will be placed before the Management Committee in March for ratification once all the transfers and bowler registrations are further advanced.

We are still looking to add another four people to the League's Management Committee. Anyone can put their own name forward. Details of what is involved in the role have now been added to the HDVBA website. Come and Join Us!

## **HDVBA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Monday 19 February 2018**

## November Transfers

Just two completed bowler transfers over the past month to add to the four that went through in October and those two are listed below.

DATE	NAME	FROM	TO
03/11/2017	Barrie Fielding	Golcar Lib	Thorpe Green
20/11/2017	Robert Beaumont	Waterloo	Ravensknowle Park

That makes six transfers that have been completed in total since the end of last season along with a number of new bowler registrations added as well.

A new online Transfer Market service has opened on the HDVBA website allowing clubs to attract new members and bowlers to seek new clubs. Any individual looking for a new challenge can offer their services via the Market and clubs can promote the benefits of signing for them when looking for new recruits. It is all designed to help marry bowlers with clubs to ease the problem of fielding full teams that some teams continue to find difficult.

## Inter-District/Hickson Trophy

The 2018 Inter-District season begins on Friday 4 May when our representative team take on Wakefield in the opening round of fixtures. The remaining fixture dates have been released but we still await the complete set of fixtures for the full season. The one-day Hickson Trophy KO competition will be held in Castleford this year and that will be staged on Friday 13 July. We will meet the hosts in the first round as we hope to go one better than last year when getting beat in the final by Bradford for the second consecutive year.

## New Team for 2018?

Lots of rumours about teams coming in or dropping out of the League but no formal notices have been received to date on either front. Talks are ongoing with two clubs about entering new teams for 2018 whilst it seems possible that we will be losing two as well but nothing confirmed to date.

## [www.hdvba.co.uk](http://www.hdvba.co.uk)

Some 2017 facts about our HDVBA website:

- 82,242 visitors in the first 10 months of year;
- record of 431 visitors in one day (25 July);
- 135 pages of facts, views, news and history;
- news added in 283 days out of first 302 days;
- daily average of 269 visitors to date this year

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### **JANUARY NEWSLETTER**

If you have registered to receive the monthly HDVBA Newsletter then the January 2018 issue will be arriving in your email inbox by

**SATURDAY 30 DECEMBER**  
and will include  
**'My Bowling Life'**  
featuring **BOB SWAN**

*Reserve your copy by  
registering at  
[www.hdvba.co.uk](http://www.hdvba.co.uk)*

## My Bowling Life **BILL BLACKBURN**



I first picked up a set of bowls when I was about eight years old. At that time my mother, father, brothers Trevor and David lived up Linfit Lane immediately behind Linthwaite Hall WMC.

At the side of the bowling green there was a stretch of grass about 20 yards long but wider at one end than the other. Trevor and I spent quite a lot of our leisure time there, no such thing as a junior bowls league at that time and going on the 'big green' was forbidden.

Having left school at 14 to take up an apprenticeship at Wheatley, Dyson & Sons in Huddersfield as a compositor (typesetter) I was a working man before I got the opportunity to bowl regularly in a team. Eventually, aged 16 I got my chance in the Binns Cup team and after a few games was promoted to the Littlewood Cup side.

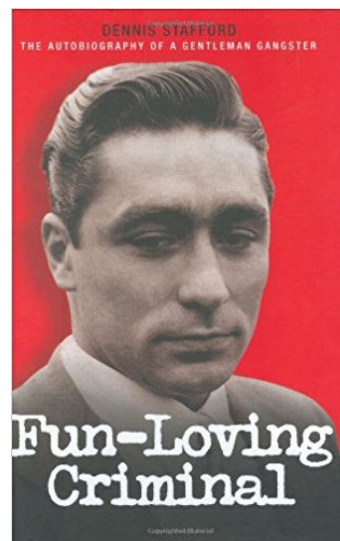
I remember that game as though it was yesterday. We were playing Bradley Mills at Thorpe Green and I won comfortably. The opposing team captain came up to me and congratulated me saying 'I am glad you won because the bloke you beat came to us from Bradley & Colne saying he needed to play first team bowls and wouldn't play for the second team.'

I eventually got a regular spot in the first team but then had to leave to spend two years doing my National Service in Germany between 1951 and 1953. I went to Germany in December 1951 to work in the stores department of RAOC and later became corporal weapon training and drill instructor.

While in charge of the guardroom two weeks before I was due to be demobbed a private was brought in to stay over-night in the cells before a court marshal. He was one of my mates in our barrack room. Procedure was to remove boot laces, tie, if he had one, braces and belt. When he asked what I was doing I informed him it was to prevent him committing suicide. His reply was 'don't be daft. I have too much to look forward to.'

In 1958 while reading the Sunday paper I said to my wife 'There is a picture of a mate of mine from army days on front cover.' It was Dennis Stafford, the bloke I had in cells in Germany, he had escaped from Dartmoor and was on the run. He was later captured in Port of Spain in Trinidad.

It later transpired that he was a criminal of the highest calibre. A film was made of his life starring Michael Caine called 'Get Carter.' After serving time in Armley Jail and Wakefield Prison, from where he got married, an autobiography of his life was printed called 'Fun-Loving Criminal.' I have a copy and he certainly had something to look forward to.



After coming out of the army I had short spells at Greens of Slaithwaite and Alfred Jubbs on St John's Road before joining Examiner in 1962 in their commercial printing section.

The Examiner then acquired the businesses of Regent Printers and Frisby Sons & Whipple in Leeds and Alfred Jubbs, Wheatley Dysons, Smith Hodgson of Brighouse and Lewis Hodgson of Milnsbridge. I was appointed general manager of the Leeds operation and later became an executive director. I remained at The Examiner until retirement in 1992.

In 1954 I got married to long time girl-friend Enid and in 1956 started a family which eventually grew to four girls and a boy.

In winter I played football for Linthwaite Athletic and Slaithwaite United for about 15 years but had to give up at aged about 32. The reason was with a young family and mortgage I couldn't afford to get injured.

Over a bowling career that has lasted 70 years there has been one or two memorable occasions. My biggest individual success was winning the Pudsey Littlemoor floodlit event about 25 years ago.

After getting through the qualifying rounds I turned up for final to find the bookmaker had me rank outsider, so I didn't bother with a bet. My first-round opponent didn't turn up. Second round against county player Nigel Roper, I won comfortably. Semi-final was against another county player, David Armitage of Flying Horse. Came through that after long game only to meet favourite Mick Robinson of Morton House in final. At 11.00 came off green as winner.

In 1954 I reached final of Colne Valley Merit at Linthwaite C&BC, got soundly beaten by favourite Vic Sugden but came away with a pair of cufflinks. No money prizes then as bowling was classed as strictly amateur. Later, winners were to receive vouchers to spend at the Co-op.

Reached final staged of Huddersfield Merit on three occasions but never got beyond semi-finals.

I think it was 1978 that Linthwaite Hall staged the final of the Working Men's Merit when I got a call to see if our ladies could provide 20 sit down teas. I said "Yes, would that be 16 bowlers and four officials?" The reply was "Nowt for bowlers but tea for 20 officials." On that day CIU officials arrived from all over Yorkshire wearing their chains of office.

I was president at Linthwaite Hall from 1975 to 1980 and was also greenkeeper there for a number of years and also held a similar position at Marsh United and Marsh Liberal Club.

Going further back I was a member of Linthwaite Hall team which won the Henry Taylor Cup in 1959. The final was at Dewsbury and Saville against Horsforth Con and we hadn't had any rain for six weeks, the greens were flying.

I still have the report which was printed in the Examiner. Paragraph involving me read as follows: 'Horsforth were able to claim a first four lead of 74-70, but the margin at this stage would have been considerably greater had it not been for the fighting qualities of Linthwaite Hall's W Blackburn who was opposed to the Horsforth captain H Hone and was in arrears to tune of 4-13. But so remarkable was Blackburn's late recovery that in five ends he had got to within a point of his opponent's score and after conceding another point Blackburn took complete command and went

on to win the game with four pairs and a single, to finish an easy winner 21-14.'

In 1976 I won the Summer Festival Merit held in Greenhead Park out of about 500 entries. The winner got the princely sum of £20 and had the pleasure of having tea with the Mayor of Huddersfield in the marquee. This was a summer long event as part of the 'Holidays at Home' series of activities. Preliminary rounds were played on both greens twice a week 15 up. The final coincided with the flower show and firework display. Games for the final were 21-up and I beat Ken Sykes 21-16 in final.

Looking through some old records of my fathers I saw that in 1918 the Huddersfield Merit attracted an entry of 595 bowlers, that was when you had to reach your venue by bus, a bit different from today.

About 40 years ago I was with my wife Enid at a ladies bowling competition at Rastrick, the snooker table was covered with prizes, umbrellas, cut glass vases, tea sets, powder compacts etc. when one of the bowlers remarked "Why can't lady bowlers have money like men?"

The following year I approached a friend of mine who had a supermarket in Slaithwaite about sponsoring a ladies' event. He provided a silver trophy and called it the Kathleen M Ingham Memorial Trophy after his late wife. That year we had 64 entries from Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire and it proved a huge success and ran for many years.

I organised a similar event for men at Marsh United. I had transferred there from Linthwaite Hall after leaving Slaithwaite to live in Marsh. Total prize money was £500, entry fee was £5 and it was over-subscribed. That competition is still running with a prize pot of £2000.

In 2006 I went to live in Lindley after the death of my wife and was invited to join Lindley Bowling Club by the late Geoff Warner. He said they were trying to raise a team to play in Brighouse Veterans League and would I be interested in playing for them. They already had a team in Huddersfield 6-man league. Ten years on and the club has now 17 teams in various leagues.

It was while having a chat to Ken Atkinson that we came up with the idea of running a £1000 competition at Lindley BC. The green was one of the top venues in Huddersfield and was under-utilised. After convincing the committee that it couldn't lose money Ken and I sponsored the first

£1000 competition, it now attracts 64 bowlers from far and wide with £2000 prize money.

About 25 years ago Chris Squires, the late Paul Marshall and I were discussing how fortunate we were to be able to play and enjoy our wonderful game of bowls. From that discussion we decided to raise money for charity by organising and taking part in various bowls related activities. The Guide Dogs for the Blind were the first benefactors. Since then over £10,000 has been raised.

In 1980 I became a committee member of the Huddersfield Bowling Association and later a selector on the Yorkshire committee, I also was competition secretary for four years. I played for the Huddersfield veterans in the Yorkshire Inter-district league and was on the Veterans Committee for a number of years including being Competition Secretary for three years from 2006.

My bowling career has been interrupted by a number of health issues over the years. In 1999 I had a hip replacement; 2000 operation for bowel cancer followed by an operation for liver cancer in 2002 and then in 2008 had a second hip replacement.

In 2007 while serving as competition secretary of the veteran's association I along with Tommy Dunford produced the first yearly handbook.

One of the biggest changes since I started bowling was the introduction of the standard jack in Yorkshire. Up until then all bowlers had two woods and a jack. You didn't show which peg you went when delivering the jack but if your opponent asked you, you weren't obliged to tell them, but you couldn't lie to them. Some of the more crafty bowlers used to tamper with jacks which confused opponents more than usual.

It was at a later date that Yorkshire CGBA decided to fall in line with all other counties and adopt the standard jack.

My wife, Enid used to write a weekly column for the Examiner about everyday events of a mother living in the Colne Valley. This came about after she submitted an article to the Colne Valley Guardian. In her effort to remain incognito it was agreed that she would write under another name and, following a family summit, Kay Bennett was born. Ironically her first printed article was about Crown Green Bowling and this is reproduced at the end of this article.

Enid continued to write her weekly column until 1981 when she was knocked down when crossing

the road on her way home from work at the library. It was touch and go for a while as she lay in a coma at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary having suffered amongst other things a fractured skull. Eventually she was allowed home but subsequent tests showed she had lost her sense of smell and taste, a bit upsetting when your other main hobbies are baking and cooking!

After some months she attempted to return to her writing but her powers of concentration and wicked sense of humour had deserted her and she decided to call it a day. However, she regained her strength and for the next 20 years or so she spent most of her time helping to bring up twelve grandchildren, (which also restored her sense of humour) with each one holding a special place in her heart.

Enid died after a very short illness from cancer in 2004. Her last two weeks were spent at home where she was nursed by the McMillan Nurses. Her obituary was printed in the Examiner and it came out that she was Kay Bennett.

It was then I decided to go to Examiner and get photocopies of all her writings (it took about four weeks).

I then sat down at my computer and set them up in book form (380 pages) found a printer and had 250 copies printed along with photographs in 2005. The book had the same title as her weekly column, 'The Thoughts of a Colne Valley Mother'. I sold them at £10 a copy and after costs handed over £1,000 to the McMillan Nurses.

As I am winding down my career after 70 years I have taken a great interest in coaching three of my grandchildren and they are doing me proud. George, 20 is a regular member of the Lindley BC 'A' teams in the Huddersfield League and Elland League as well as the Works League and his 16-year-old twin brothers Finlay and Lewis captained the Elland 'C' team and have played in both the 'A' team and 'B' team on Saturday as well as for Marsh Liberal club in the Junior League.

I still enjoy my bowling but have decided to call it a day as far as competitive bowling is concerned due to recurring arthritis in hip and ankle but you will still see me prowling around the greens of Huddersfield giving encouragement to my grandchildren and their team mates.

**Bill Blackburn**

Next Month

**My Bowling Life: BOB SWAN of Cowcliffe B.C.**

## The Thoughts of a Colne Valley Mother

*This is a copy of the first article written by Enid Blackburn in the Colne Valley Guardian in 1973 which led to her having her own weekly series printed in The Huddersfield Examiner bearing the above title from 1973 to 1981.*

In spring a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of love. But what about the middle aged man? What are his thoughts turning to?

What's all this muttering and mumbling on the street corners and in the fish and chip shops? About thumb pegs and funny marks. You've guessed it, the bowling bag brigade are coming out of hibernation once more.

Bad backs, which have kept sufferers confined to armchairs all winter, are cured like magic! The sprained wrist too weak to lift the coal bucket is now in need of exercise, love.

Husbands are fondly emptying the newly spring-cleaned cupboards in search of their woods. The ones discarded last year as rubbish! Grown men are cooing like doves as they polish their oil-covered bowls with the wife's best duster.

Weak, frail-bodied males, with hardly the strength to lift a pint to their lips are now preparing for battle with their opponents and the elements on the bowling greens of Yorkshire.

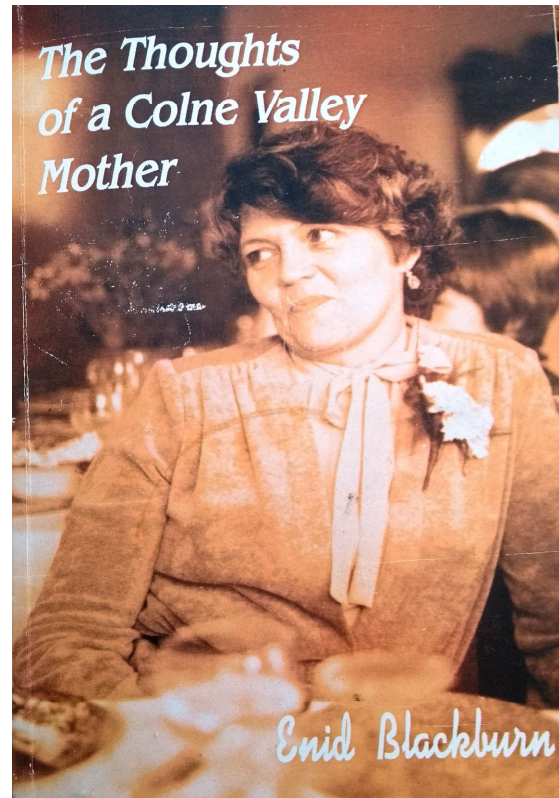
The long, the short and the corpulent are to be seen prancing prettily across the greens as they accompany their bowls into the gutter.

Faithful wives whose normal conversation with hubby is wipe your feet! are now shouting kindly with tears in their eyes, gerrum up lad!

Tight-lipped women sit framing the greens, knitting needles clicking and the picnic bag bulging. If it rains each one, quick as a conjuror, transforms her mate into an Icelandic fisherman, with waterproof cap, leggings and jacket.

To the inexperienced viewer it may look a simple game of rolling bowls up and down the grass. But it takes years of practice.

First there is the delivery. One foot on the tiny mat, which is quite invisible to the more developed figure, knees bent, back foot raised,



then hold this position so the other chap can't follow the road. It's not easy.

Then the special walk across the green, one leg dragging or twisted behind the other. Some lean back as far as possible after delivering the wood in the hope it will slow its progress down, some perform something similar to a tango, stamping the feet in the hope the wood will run further.

What an excellent team spirit there is amongst the lads! Eager volunteers are helping the greenkeeper whiten the boards and cutting and rolling the green while wives are wading through the back lawn searching for their washing!

It's remarkable how they stick together on away matches. I couldn't come home any sooner pet, we had to stop and support George, he was the last man on, you know.

But at sunset when cricketers have downed their cocoa and said their prayers, dedicated bowlers can still be seen, supporting each other gallantly as they stagger under the floodlights of the more affluent clubs. Revealing such intimate confessions as I like mine or you've a good length, Joe.

Did Sir Francis Drake realise what he had started when he kept the Spanish fleet waiting? I wonder.