



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SUTTON AND DISTRICT BOWLING ASSOCIATION

Please Note : The following is an abridged and updated version of Chapter 3 of 'It's All Bowls from Hoe to Sutton' originally written by Denis Austin in November 2002 with relevant extracts from 'Mellows Park Bowls Club – from Birth to Maturity' by W.J. Cole. These extracts are in *italics*.

The Sutton and District Bowling Association (S&DBA) Association was founded in 1949. The rule regarding eligibility stated that the Association should consist of clubs who are affiliated to Surrey BA and whose greens comply with EBA regulations. Furthermore, the member clubs headquarters must be located within the districts of Banstead, Carshalton, Epsom, Ewell, Morden and Coombe, Sutton and Cheam, Wallington, Walton and Tadworth, and Worcester Park.

1949

For a few weeks now Mr E Parfitt of Rose Hill BC, Mr S Sheard of the same club and I had been meeting privately to discuss an idea we had to form an association around Sutton District. We each had chats with other local bowlers to test reactions to the idea. These appeared to be favourable so we arranged a meeting at the Angel Hotel, Rose Hill, and notified local clubs. The Committee (Mellows Park) elected B Goodson and myself (W J Cole) to attend the meeting and report back.

The London Borough of Sutton was not founded until 1965, therefore all the places named were districts in their own right. Sutton had been created an Urban District in 1894. Cheam, a parish of Epsom Rural District, was added in 1928 thereby creating Sutton & Cheam UDC. Worcester Park had been a village on the edge of Cheam Common and was part of Sutton and Cheam. It was some years before the rule about eligibility was changed to those clubs whose headquarters were within seven miles of Sutton Station.

1950

The best way to start of the New Year is to clear up left-overs from the old year and Mellows Park began by holding a continuation of the adjourned AGM. Ground work had been done and the Sutton and District BA was founded. It was noted that owing to the situation of our green being so near to Croydon Borough boundary, that if the Club wished to affiliate to an Association locally, here was an opportunity and we became one of the "Founder" clubs. This Association covers an area 5 miles radius of the Cock Hotel, Sutton. Their initial match was played at Mellows Park.

1951

This year one of our members was elected Vice President of S&DBA for 1952, the member was myself (W J Cole) and I appreciate very much this honour to my club.

1952

At S&DBA AGM I was elected as their President for 1953. On behalf of my club, Mellows Park, I thank the Association for this honour to the Club.

Denis writes that he does not know which clubs were founder members but the first President came from Rose Hill. The earliest records found are for 1956 when there were 16 member clubs. Worcester Park at the time had a membership of 26. There were two clubs smaller than Worcester Park each with 25 members, namely Sutton & District Water Company who were founded in 1930 and had a three rink green in Gander Green Lane, and Sutton & Cheam NALGO founded in 1950 and based in Cheam Recreational Ground. The Water Co dropped out in 1965, and NALGO in 1960. Regrettably, both Cheam Village and W.J. Cole's own club, Mellows Park, were closed by Sutton Council in 2011.

The big guns in those days were Ewell with 98 members, Cheam Village, and Cuddington each with 95, and Banstead Neville, which was founded in 1935 and claims to be a founder member, had 90. Sutton founded in 1928 was then in Ventnor Road but unlike the smaller clubs they dropped out in 1966 and remained out until 1984 since then have been a very strong member of the Association.

Over the years the following clubs were affiliated but have now sadly ceased to exist: Banstead Hospital, Berrylands, Epsom Brotherhood, London Transport Merton, News of the World, Springfield Hospital and the Thirty Club. (A current affiliated member, Supreme, founded in 1980, plays on Berrylands old green in New Malden).

Over the years there have been some interesting fixtures with visiting Associations many of them at Banstead Hospital. London Parks visited there in 1956 then again in 1960-2-3 and 1966. London Welsh also appeared on the scene in 1956 at Banstead Hospital but we did not see them again until 1990.

1954

At S&DBA Annual Dinner, Mrs H Baker replied to the toast, "Ladies and guests" and took the opportunity to suggest formation of a Ladies Association. I take the blame for getting Mrs Baker to make this reply and implanting the idea. Now what of the future, the seed is sown, will it grow?

Another fixture, which since 1997 has been played at Wallington on a home and away basis is against Sutton & District Ladies BA. This fixture started in 1960 and the first game was at Banstead Hospital with the next at Springfield Hospital. In the 1950's and 1960's most mental hospitals had good sports facilities and until 1996 these matches appeared in our fixture cards as Presidents Matches after which they became a regular fixture. Although the Ladies BA was founded in 1955 it was classed as an ordinary fixture until 1998 then it was changed to a "Badge Game".

S&DBA first visited Bromley by coach in August 1956 to play four rinks against Beckenham and Bromley BA. A coach was also used to play the Metropolitan Police at Imber Court. In 1960 there were fourteen President or Bannerette (Executive) matches on local greens and seventeen Badge matches, twelve of which including Beckenham, Chiswick, Hayes and Ruislip, were by coach. In 1964 there were ten local matches and twenty-three other matches of which fourteen, including Beckenham, Beckenham Hill, and Sydenham, were by coach. In 2001 there were only six coach trips for twenty-three matches. In 2012 there are only fourteen outdoor matches, of these, seven are badge matches and include only two coach trips. In addition, the Jim Dutch Memorial Fun Day is held at Wallington.

1956

Mellows Park won the Yonwin Cup for the first time. This is a 3 rink competition, played for annually under S&DBA. For interest I record the final was played at Sutton Common against Rose Hill.

Mrs Baker was elected president of Sutton Ladies BA for 1957, good luck Jane and a happy year in office

Old records show that S&DBA had held a Trophy Presentation Dinner each year since its foundation. In the early years the functions were held at the Worcester Park Hotel then there was long period at Bourne Hall, Ewell. It is believed that in 1996 that the Annual Dinner was moved to Sutton United Football Club and remained there until 2002. Our 2003 Dinner was at Cheam Sports Club, Peaches Close. Since then we have held the Dinner and Dance Presentations at various venues including Glenmore House in Tolworth. Since 2011 we hold the presentation dinner at Sutton BC.

Tours have not fared so well. By 1998, our forty-ninth year we had only managed forty-four. Then of all years to miss we did not tour in Jubilee Year. The 1995 centre was Northampton but most of the others have been to coastal areas. In 2000, Newquay was our base. Cornwall is divided into five geographical divisions and we played all five plus a Cornwall County V. Presidents Association that drew its members from virtually all its county teams. 2002 also saw an interesting venue in the Devon market town of Axminster. The green, set among verdant sheep covered hills with a majestic oak tree shading one corner turned out to be the absolute antithesis of its rural surroundings – it was synthetic. We did have one winning rink but the rest of us should have been swept under the carpet !

Recent tours have been to Sidmouth, Saundersfoot, Hereford and Leamington. There were no tours in 2011 and 2012. The 2012 tour will to Eastbourne.

Contributed by Peter Pankhurst, Past President.