

SOUTH OAKLEIGH BOWLING CLUB HISTORY

To understand the history of South Oakleigh bowling club you have to understand how Melbourne was in 1954, just nine years after World War 2 had finished. It was a time of relief and the beginning of suburban settlement in outer Melbourne, houses and schools were springing up in areas that had been market gardens and plant nurseries, which were still a big part of life, the local Oakleigh cemetery would close just six years later in 1960. Her majesty Queen Elizabeth would visit Melbourne in 1954 to be greeted by a million people lining the streets from Essendon airport to the city, the nearby Chadstone shopping centre would not open until 1960, not in its current monolithic form but still for the time considered a modern wonder, and of course television was not yet available and six o'clock closing of hotels still existed and in 1965 Jean Shrimpton wore a mini to the Cup.

So it was at this time that a group of men and women would propose that the area needed another bowling club as the nearby Oakleigh Bowling Club had full membership and a waiting list to join. It was decided that North rd. South Oakleigh would be the site.

The story that has evolved has taken a lot longer than anticipated as finding the history has been difficult and records kept after 1990 are rather murky.

Some of the history has been lost over time, so this endeavour is to try and capture as much of the rich history of the South Oakleigh bowling club as we can, to pass onto new members who will hopefully continue recording its past and future.

This is the story of the hard work, perseverance and battles that the founding members of South Oakleigh bowling club faced in order for the future members to enjoy.

The early years 1952 to 1970

THE CLUBHOUSE

The South Oakleigh Bowling club (hereafter referred to as SOBC) was formed at a meeting held at Oakleigh Town Hall on 2/12/1952. Permission was received from Oakleigh Council to occupy the present site and work on the greens was commenced on November 1953 at which time the club was affiliated with Royal Victorian Bowls Association (hereafter referred to as the RVBA)

Two grass greens were sown in March 1954 (important to note both grass greens)

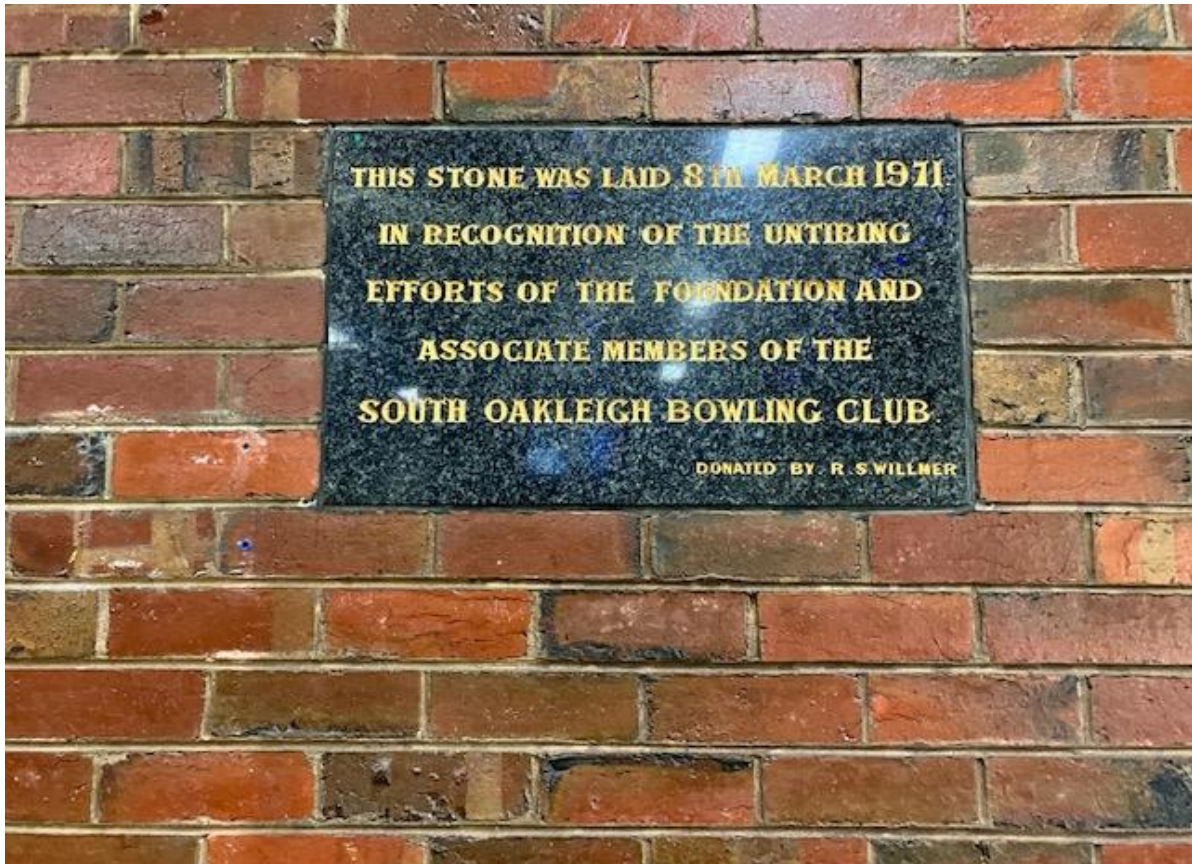
At this time membership stood at 132 men and 45 women. A ladies' club was formed within the SOBC in January 1953.

The first section of the present clubhouse was commenced in August 1954 and officially opened in June 1955; the greens having been opened in September 1954.

A new wing was opened at the eastern end, in November 1960 for the use of the Associates (the ladies)

Membership fees were set at 8 pounds in 1954 the equivalent of \$300 today, so as you can see the club fees have not kept pace with inflation.

Another wing was added at the western end of the club in March 1971



BOWLING

Two sides were initially entered into the RVBA pennant season for 1954/55 and the number of sides steadily rose to 8 men's sides and 5 affiliated sides, along with six indoor bowling teams and two-night teams, this was a big club and it remained that way through until the 80s (A list of achievements of the club and champions will be an addendum to this paper)

At present we have 2 sides which is a drastic decline but typical of all lawn bowls clubs in the area.

SITE OF THE CLUB

If ever there was a case of a club being an asset to two-night the community and to the municipality in which it was born then this surely applies to SOBC.

From a swampy, undeveloped wasteland in 1952 the club has been developed into an asset of which all members past and present should be proud. This has only been achieved in a large part due to the substantial work of members over a long journey, who have volunteered and willingly assisted when called upon and continues in 2023.

An example (and there are too many to mention) being in April 1974 when 45 members on Easter Tuesday (yes, we used to get a public holiday for Easter Tuesday) removed the surfaces of both greens in one day for re soiling and grassing in one day to improve their playing quality. Both greens were ready for play on August 31.

The two greens at the time were named Hunt and Linton in memory of our foundation president and secretary both of who were members of the Oakleigh City council and of the management of SOBC for many years. (For more on Fred Linton go to this site

https://issuu.com/ngivictoria/docs/groundswell_aug20_final_mr/s/10896613

In addition, the club had a smaller green of two rinks that was used for beginners and for use on special days by members and visitors (yes beginners had to learn how to bowl on the two-rink green before being allowed on the normal greens)

CLUB ACTIVITIES OVER THE YEARS

During this period the club had a Committee of Management and a number of sub committees due to the sheer size of the club.

The sub committees were responsible for

Match committee

Selection and charge of all pennant games and games played on public holidays, with the exception of two tournaments that were played at Easter and Autumn which were controlled by special committees, such were the importance of these events to the club.

Electric light committee

Two sides were entered in the 70s, in the early 70s Clayton Bowls club which did not have lights, played at SOBC. Electric light or night pennant remains a constant of the club to this day (the 2023 season and beyond)

Wednesday bowls committee

There was a Wednesday bowls committee running games on a Wednesday for the men and lady members, again such was the popularity of bowls.

Sunday bowls committee

Again, another subcommittee ran Sunday mixed bowls from October to April, these games were well patronized by bowlers from other clubs.

Indoor bowls

SOBC were instrumental in the establishment of the Victorian indoor biased bowls Association and entertained up to 96 indoor bowlers, indoor bowls was extremely popular during this period, unfortunately indoor bowls has now ceased and is only played in retirement villages, some of which bought their mats off SOBC

Associates

At this period the club had over 100 lady members with their own office bearers, own competitions and had 5 teams entered in the VLBA such was their and the club's strength, they conducted a Masters Triples which had players from regional areas entering due to the prestige of the event. Neighbouring clubs enjoyed monthly mixed events from up to 20 different clubs. The Associates were a very important part of the club.

Social committee

The social committee were an integral part of the club, because as you may be aware this was a different time, progressive dinners and visits to friends' houses for card nights and game nights were abundant. Regular Saturday night dances were held and supper nights, theatre nights and musical nights were held. In the 70s the club acquired a liquor licence to allow the consumption of alcohol in the club (Although the suspicion is this already happened)

ON THE GREENS

The first side to be promoted to Division 1 in the 1966/67 season (there was no premier league)



CLUB CHAMPIONS

MENS

1954/55 R.B WALKER	1963/64 A.R FISHER
1955/56 DR V. PODGER	1964/65 H. HOWIE
1956/57 R.B WALKER	1965/66 A.R FISHER
1957/58 R. B WALKER	1966/67 W. ELLIOT
1958/59 A. WOODROW	1967/68 A.R FISHER
1959/60 DR V PODGER	1968/69 A. MURPHY
1960/61 F. CLANCY	1969/70 A. MURPHY
1961/62 A. KINNEAR	
1962/63 V. MOLINEUX	

ASSOCIATES

1954/55 E. JONES	1963/64 L. VAUX
1955/56 L. VAUX	1964/65 S. COOK
1956/57 D. SCHULTZE	1965/66 L. VAUX
1957/58 D. SCHULTZE	1966/67 V. GRANGER
1958/59 E. HILL	1967/68 R. HOWIE
1959/60 L. VAUX	1968/69 L. VAUX
1960/61 L. VAUX	1969/70 R. JONES
1961/62 L. BURGESS	
1962/63 O. HOLLOWAY	

During this time Lillian Vaux 6-time winner of the Associates Club Championship singles (went on to win 8 times) won the Champion of Champions title in 1960/61 and the State singles championship in 1969/70, quite the achievement.

Summary of the time from 1952 to 1970

The foundation members had really put in the hard yards for the club to be what it remains today. Working bees were spectacular successes and the backbone of what we have today, little has changed in the clubhouse, photos of the time show just how much work was done.

An interesting note is the addresses of the nearly 200 bowling members are 95% residing in South Oakleigh, Huntingdale or Oakleigh, at present its probably 5%. This is more than likely down to two reasons, price of housing in the area and the era of belonging to a club when no other entertainment was around to distract residents.

The middle years 1970 to 1990

Australia was about to go through a lot of social change during this period

Australian troop were withdrawn from Vietnam from 1970 to 1973, Neville Bonner is the first Aboriginal person in federal parliament when he becomes senator for Queensland in 1972.

The Australian Labor party is elected to power for the first time in 23 years with the slogan 'Its time'

Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin in 1975

In Victoria a significant change to licencing laws meant that hotels no longer had to close at 6 o'clock, with trading hours to extend to 10 o'clock

McDonalds open their first Victorian restaurant in Glen Waverley 1973

The bar opens in the eastern wing at SOBC in 1975

While Australia progressed to a more modern society, bowling clubs, SOBC included continued on as they had been since being established in Australia, but hotel trading hours impacted on a lot of clubs with them now being able to open to 10 the locals could now go out to pubs instead of clubs.

AUTUMN LEAVES TOURNAMENT

The club has run a very successful tournament over many years called various names, believed to originally be called **The Golden Autumn Leaves tournament** now simplified to **Autumn Leaves** the tournament was originally run over two weekends due to the numbers that played. It has been won by some terrific teams over the years, unfortunately the tournament which appears to have started in 1968 has recorded winners on a trophy (donated by Fred Linton in 1972) only up until 1996. The tournament will be re branded the **Jim Jeena Autumn Leaves tournament** in honour of club stalwart Jim Keena and a new honour board or trophy will be put in place to record future winners.

ON THE GREENS

1970 saw SOBC enter 7 men's teams and it continued that way until the 1975/6 season when it rose to 8 sides of sixteen, that's 108 bowlers plus roamers or bankers.

The Associates had 5 to 6 teams over the period, just over 200 bowlers combined, which shows us just how strong the club was during this period.

One of the Club singles champions during this period was Don Morris from 1975 to 1979 four in a row which is still unprecedented, he was obviously somewhat of a star winning the Victorian state singles in 1977/78 and the Australian singles championship in the same year, a picture of him adorns the clubroom walls with dart in hand. (Worth noting that the Australian championship is 31 up) Interestingly nothing is mentioned of Don again in the club records, but there was a D. Morris who won the state championship single in 1980 for Brighton Bowls club, logic would have it, that it was SOBC's Don Morris again.

SOBC won numerous pennants during this period.

Life continued on for the club with working bees, social events and bowls keeping everyone happy (Not everyone is ever happy at a bowls club, but peace existed)

CLUB CHAMPIONS

1970/71 E. TAYLOR	1980/81 R. BREGAZZI
1971/72 W. CLARKE	1981/82 E. TAYLOR
1972/73 N. CUNNINGHAM	1982/83 W. CLARKE
1973/74 N. CUNNINGHAM	1983/84 W. CLARKE
1974/75 F. LINTON	1984/85 K. NICHOLAS
1975/76 D. MORRIS	1985/86 R. BREGAZZI
1976/77 D. MORRIS	1986/87 A. MURPHY
1977/78 D. MORRIS	1987/88 K. TURNER
1978/79 D. MORRIS	1988/89 W. CLARKE
1979/80 W. CLARKE	1989/1990 K. SMITH

ASSOCIATES

1970/71 L. VAUX	1980/81 E. HOLDEN
1971/72 L. VAUX	1981/82 B. GUNN
1972/73 R. CROMB	1982/83 K. POWER
1973/74 G. MURPHY	1983/84 B. GUNN
1974/75 V. WALLER	1984/85 G. MURPHY
1975/76 L. VAUX	1985/86 M. BYRDEN
1976/77 G. MURPHY	1986/87 A. MEULEMAM
1977/78 C. POWER	1987/88 B. GUNN
1978/79 V. WALLER	1988/89 B. GUNN
1979/80 G. MURPHY	1989/1990 M. BYRDEN

1990 to 2000

Paul Keating declares Australia a banana republic, Sydney harbour tunnel opens. Vintage Crop becomes the first non-Australian horse to win the Melbourne Cup, Queensland wins its first Sheffield shield, Fitzroy merges with the Brisbane bears, Tony Lockett equals the record for most goals in the AFL/VFL and Jesse Martin of Melbourne becomes the youngest person to sail around the world unassisted.

This period through to the present is one of the hardest to gather history as a lot of what happened was not recorded as it previously was.

ON THE GREENS

During this period the number of bowlers started to decline at all clubs , in part with a prediction from one of the founding member in a complaint about the rise in rental in the 1950s to the council about the lease going up from 7 pounds to 50 pounds, at the time they complained that the club was now in competition from clubs springing up in the area, at East Bentleigh , Chadstone , Springvale , Murrumbeena Park , Bennettswood and Keysborough and the local club that had been in existence since the 1900s Oakleigh (whose numbers were also in decline during this period) . While true to a point, most of the members of the club were locals from South Oakleigh.

The list of club champions for the men and women started to change, reflecting the change of players in the club, but the next decade would see a tsunami of change due to a number of factors that played out.

During this period both greens were replaced with synthetic greens, some of the first in the state.

MENS CHAMPIONS

1990/91 L. BAILEY

1996/97 G. HERBERT

1991/92 WF. CLARKE

1997/98 J. JENKINS

1992/93 N. CUNNINGHAM

1998/99 N. BURGE

1993/94 L. BAILEY

1999/00 G. HERBERT

1994/95 L. BAILEY

1995/96 W. CLARKE

ASSOCIATES

1990/91 M. BATCHELOR	1996/97 M. TAYLOR
1991/92 M. TAYLOR (nee Batchelor)	1997/98 M. TAYLOR
1992/93 M. TAYLOR	1998/99 L. DODSON
1993/94 M. TAYLOR	1999/00 M. IVERACH
1994/95 M. TAYLOR	
1995/96 M. TAYLOR	

8 Championships in a row to Margaret Taylor, she must have been a great bowler

The minutes of a meeting reported that the president had discussions with the Oakleigh Bowls club about the future of the two bowls club and a possible merger, interesting that 27 years on this is still a discussion.

2000 TO THE PRESENT 2023

The case of Emily South Discrimination on the basis of gender

Emily South had been a member of the St. Kilda Bowling Club for approximately seven (7) years and wanted to play at the highest level of competition. This was the Saturday afternoon competition, a men's competition that ran under the auspices of the Royal Victoria Bowls Association (RVBA). Her own club deemed her to be of sufficient standard to play but because she was female, the RVBA refused to register her. When MS South took her case to the Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the RVBA defended their stance by using the "strength, stamina and physique" exception which applies in discrimination legislation. In other words, the RVBA tried to imply that MS South did not have sufficient strength, stamina and physique to play in the men's competition. However, at the tribunal hearing, this defense by the RVBA was rejected on the grounds that strength, stamina and physique was not significant in Lawn Bowls. The RVBA were ordered to amend its rules so as to not prohibit women. 2000 Season (Copied from an online source, Online Learning for Sports Management)

This ruling changed the sport irrevocably, so Saturday afternoons were no longer the exclusive domain of the male bowlers and conversely Tuesdays were no longer going to be the exclusive domain the female bowlers.

At this time male bowlers were returning from games without commencing play if the opposition had a female player and later as men began to join the Tuesday competition, the women were leaving the game, not wanting to play against men.

Today this seems ridiculous, but such was the history of lawn bowls this was how it was.

During this period South Oakleigh Club (not to be confused with SOBC) burnt down, the men from SOC split their social time between SOBC and Clayton BC, the women joined the SOBC women on the green. This was a great time financially for the club, with extra bar income, but the minutes of the time reveal friction between who could do what at the club regarding SOC and SOBC.

This was the beginning of the end for the Associates, by 2003 they had disappeared but a few survived to help out at the club.

CHANGES A PLENTY

The club became a more modern club befitting the times, starting at the west end of the club, the driveway was asphalted, a BBQ was installed in the club grounds and a large shade cloth put in place. The old green tin shed that was an eyesore, but practical, was demolished, which in turn meant that a new driveway leading to the new cool room that was installed at the same time could be accessed directly. A bin enclosure was installed and a new split system air conditioning was put in to replace the evaporative which is still in place

An outdoor kitchen (called Jacks shed after past president Jack Davis, who had a large hand in building it) was put in place for the clubs many barefoot bowler visitors.

The deck was made wider by volunteers over one day and a cover put over the new BBQ area.

The hall and bar were overhauled and new plasterboard put in place, new televisions were put in place.

At the eastern end a new shed was put in to house all the equipment that had been taken out of the old green shed and in a reversal of trends the old synthetic green was replaced with tift dwarf grass green.

The lease to the car park at the east end was handed back to the council for maintenance and has subsequently been asphalted. Solar panels were put on the roof to significantly reduce electricity consumption and the ladies' toilets were renovated including putting power in, which unbelievably didn't occur until the 21st century. In 2017 the club adopted a club song to the theme of the North Melbourne football club, thanks to a persuasive Club champion in Carl Fitsimmons

CLUB THEME SONG

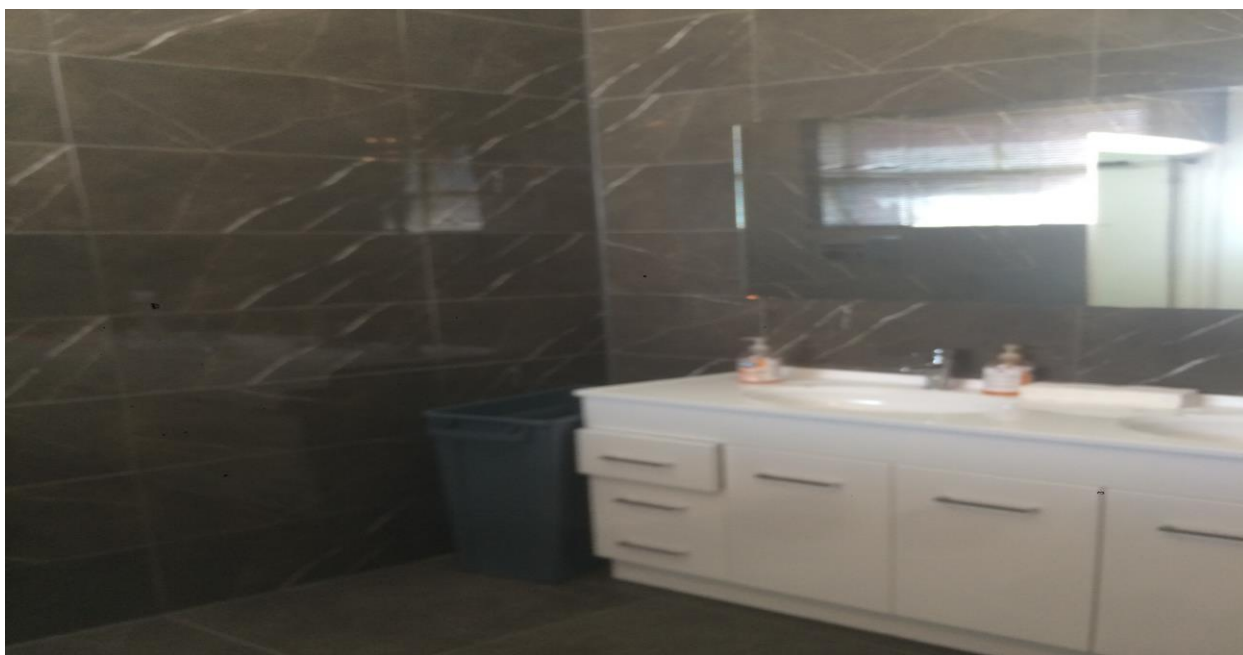
**Hearts to Hearts and hands to hands
Beneath the purple and gold we stand,
We shout, God bless our native land,
South Oakleigh, South Oakleigh**

**Out we come, out we come, out we come to play,
Just for recreation's sake, to pass the time away,
Lots of fun, heaps of fun, enjoy yourself today,
South Oakleigh boys/girls are hard to beat when they come out to play.**

**So, join in the chorus, and sing it one and all,
Join in the chorus, South Oakleighs on the ball,
Good old South Oakleigh they're champions you'll agree,
South Oakleigh is the team that plays to win for you and me.**

RENOVATIONS CARRIED OUT ON THE WOMENS TOILETS TO MODERNISE THEM





CLUB CHAMPIONS 2000 TO 2023

2000/01 R. MILLER

2001/02 G. PARKER

2002/03 B. WALKER

2003/04 G. PHILLPOTTS

2004/05 G. KING

2005/06 C. AGIUS

2006/07 G. KING

2007/08 G. KING

2008/09 T. KENNEDY

2009/10 P. CHAPMAN

2010/11 T. KENNEDY

2011/12 C. FITZSIMMONS

2012/13 A. SIMS

2013/14 A. SIMS

2014/15 M. WHITTY

2015/16 A. PULLIN

2016/17 P. MURPHY

2017/18 N. SMITH

2018/19 I. RICHARDSON

2019/20 S. TAYLOR

2020/21 R. BYWATERS

2021/22 N. SMITH

ASSOCIATES CLUB CHAMPIONS

2000/01 L. DODSON

2001/02 E. HOUSE

2002/03 DISCONTINUED

ON THE GREENS

The club rose from Division 4 to Division 2 for a number of years and then with an influx of players rose to Division 1 , unfortunately the year the club got to division one it had seven games washed out or heated out , all of them home games, interestingly the one game the club won while in Division 1 was against the eventual team , that would go on to win through to premier league, after relegation and playing in finals it was relegated to division 3 where the club won the divisional flag to return to division 2. Unfortunately, there are few of the players left from that side and the club has slipped down to division 4, with a group of enthusiastic new players the club should rise back to its rightful place

FANTASTIC PLASTIC

In 2004 the club entered into an agreement with three other clubs SOC, Hampton and Hampton RSL after four bowlers in Jim Keena from SOBC, Ron Mallett from SOC, Kevin Mallet from Hampton RSL and Ray Westcott from Hampton put their heads together and came up with the concept. It was very simple, three games of seven ends followed by a sausage sizzle. One game was played at each club over the winter period , usually with a lot of early morning drinking, SOBC have won the event 9 times up until 2018 , then COVID hit and the event went into recess, sadly the big four members , who started the event have all now passed away (Jim was the last) but the event continues albeit with some changes , SOC folded and Coatesville replaced them, for a season it was 12 a side as two of the clubs struggled for numbers, this season it has reverted back to 16 a side and is now 8 ends and the simple sausage sizzle has become a BBQ lunch. Hopefully this event can continue on for many years.

OFF THE GREENS

The club currently and has for some years hosted the Ladies Oakleigh Probus club for a peppercorn agreement as part of giving back to the community. We also provide a centre every day for the OC Connections group, providing a place for them to explore activities and care that would otherwise not be available to them. The club also supports the local girl guides, and are sponsors to the Oakleigh Amateur Football Club and cricket club located at Scammell Reserve

SUMMARY

That's the story of the club (from the information available) hopefully the clubs around for years to come for the community to appreciate, there's still lots of work to go , nobody can predict what the future holds for this club situated still on North Rd South Oakleigh, a new community centre is being built on the corner of Guest Rd and North Rd, hopefully while the current members are still active, we can get a dome built over the synthetic green to increase membership , maybe an amalgamation , with a nearby club to consolidate our position, and a new modern facade on the current building to complement the more modern look of the community centre.

HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED READING THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTH OAKLEIGH BOWLS CLUB

