

HAMILTON CROQUET CLUB

According to reports taken from the 'Hamilton Spectator', a meeting was held on 6 December 1909 in the Mayor's Room for all interested in forming a croquet club. About forty ladies attended and Mr W Melville represented the Council. Mr Melville explained the regulations under which they could use the new recreation ground. It was decided to form a club and a committee was appointed with Mrs Clark as President and Miss Rippon as Secretary. Two courts were established opposite Alexandra College. The club was formally opened by the Mayor Cr James Young on Friday 24 December 1909. Over one hundred attended and the club already had a membership over fifty. Tennis and Cricket were also played at the oval.

The first Tournament was held on 10 March 1910 with four courts in capital order and over eighty entries. The Tournament was for Ladies Doubles Open won by Misses McKellar and MacFarlane of Warrnambool Club and Ladies Doubles Hamilton Club won by Mrs Lord and Miss Minnie Laidlaw. The Secretary Miss Rippon was presented with a watch in a silver case by the members for her successful running of the tournament.

There were seventy-two full members of the Hamilton Croquet Club the first season with membership fee of 10 shillings of which 5 shillings went to the Council for upkeep of the grounds.

The second Tournament was scheduled for March 1911, heavy rain caused postponement of some day's play.

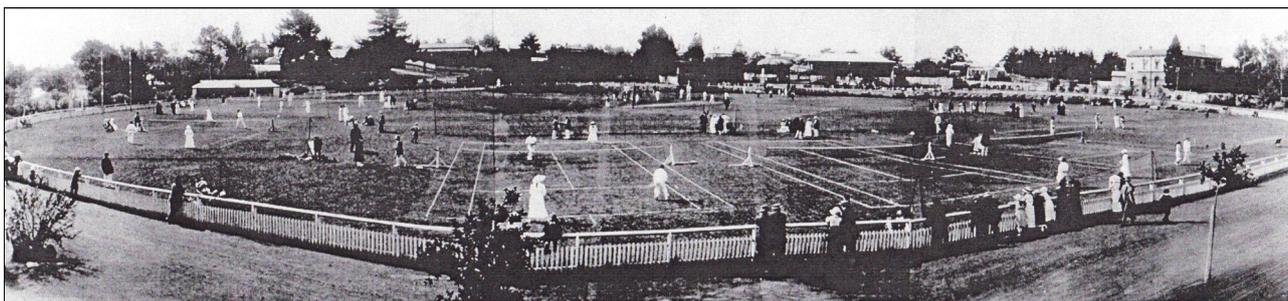
The first Inter-Club event was held on 23 March 1911 between Port Fairy and Hamilton Croquet Clubs. The visitors were met at the Railway Station and conveyed to the grounds for morning tea. Port Fairy won the day. The closing day - 29 April 1911 - was devoted to Golf Croquet.

Membership grew to seventy-five in the second year.

The Warrnambool Club visited Hamilton on 16 November 1911 and on 1 December 1911 Hamilton returned the visit going by train. The members were taken to the greens in a pony carriage. They had only one green, two private greens were used as well.

On 4 April 1912 four Hamilton Croquet Club members began a tour and played matches against two Ballarat Clubs and then on to Melbourne and played at six different clubs.

At the Annual General Meeting in November 1914 it was decided to affiliate with the proposed Victorian Croquet Association.



1915: Hamilton Croquet Club members sharing the Melville Oval in Hamilton with tennis players. Hoops can be seen on the far right hand .

In 1915 a special flag day was held by the Croquet and Tennis clubs to raise funds for the Belgians suffering in the war. In April 1915 a team went to Portland to play in a two day event on their greens in the gardens.

By 1918-1919 membership had dropped to thirty-six. In 1921 the Portland visitors motored through, arriving 11.00 am and left at 5.30 pm. Hamilton won the day.

In 1924 Mr Palmer donated a silver cup for club teams of two players. This was played for at the start of the Tournament and teams came from Brighton, Portland, Warracknabeal and North Portland. Brighton won this event for three years. On opening days there were usually one hundred and fifty to two hundred present to watch and for afternoon tea.

By 1926-27 there were problems with the ground not being available Saturdays or holidays and rising costs. Hamilton decided to look for another venue. At the June Annual General Meeting in the Town Hall they decided to set up courts on ground owned by Mr Palmer. Mrs Palmer was President and Mr Palmer was to donate some of the land, however before the opening he donated not only the ground plus sheds and seats. All the members took debentures to raise funds and these were redeemed by 1932. Mr A J Leahy donated his services of surveying and levelling - in mud and slush, with horses bogged in the mud. Mr L M Hughan finished levelling and planted the seed. Mr W J Wilson provided the plumbing services as a donation. The new grounds were opened 4 February 1928 and the first Tournament held on 31 March on excellent greens.



1928: The Ven. Archdeacon Harris, Former Vicar of Hamilton, addresses the crowd at the opening of the Hamilton Croquet Club greens on 4 February 1928.



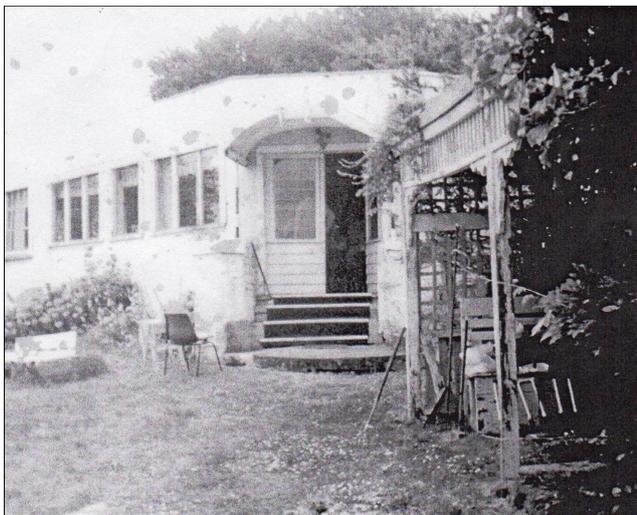
1928: The crowd at the opening of the Hamilton Croquet Club greens on 4 February 1928.

Club colours were blue and gold with subscriptions of £1.10.

Mr Palmer donated a second cup which was won by Penshurst and it was returned to the club a few years ago. The President's Chair was presented by Mr J W Loats in 1931 in memory of his late wife.

Mr Palmer died in 1934.

The club has been playing Pennant with the South Western District Croquet Association since the 50's and other social inter-club days.



1988: Hamilton Clubhouse just prior to demolition.



1989: New Clubhouse.

In 1988 it was decided to build a new clubhouse with the help of a Council loan as the old clubhouse was no longer usable. The new clubhouse was opened in 1989 and all outstanding loans were fully paid off. The installation of four large water tanks will help our lawns through any future dry season.

On Thursday 3 December 2009 Hamilton Croquet Club celebrated their 100 years with a wonderful day of play and celebration. Many of the members were in period costume and there was also a display of Vintage transport that brought a great atmosphere to the day. President Lesley Hobbs welcomed all and introduced VCA State President Val Brown who gave a short address. The cake was cut by our three most senior members then all enjoyed a wonderful afternoon tea. We had members from all the clubs in the SWCA which added to the day of fun and games.



2009: Hamilton Croquet Club 100 year celebrations. Members in period costume among the large crowd gathered to celebrate the occasion.

The above history is possible due to the history archive maintained meticulously by club historian Nancy Smoker.



The above photos detail the effort that went into making the 100 year celebrations such a great success.



2009: Doris Lanyon, Moira Whyte and Olive Kitchen cutting the celebratory cake.



2009: Life members, Doris Lanyon and Moira Whyte unveiling the new Life Members Board.

Our membership did decline but with the introduction of Aussie Croquet and twilight 'Come & Try' it has increased again to about thirty.

We have a very enthusiastic club, enjoying Aussie, Ricochet and Association Croquet and we look forward to a great future.