



## **HISTORY OF THE BRIGHT CROQUET CLUB**

The club started circa 1904 according to a booklet written by Joyce Ridley on the history of croquet in Victoria.

Janie Snell, who was a member of the Croquet Club for quite a few years, and was a serving maid in 1904, remembered the lady of the house playing croquet. This is mentioned in a letter dated 22 August 1979 written by the then Secretary, I Langcake, to Miss Ridley. Ms Langcake also mentions that in 1918 she moved to Bright and remembers seeing the ladies playing croquet. She also stated that in 1923, when she was a student at the local school, the croquet ladies would go to the school and give the senior girls lessons on croquet.

An article in The Argus dated 24 August 1923 states: "A croquet club has been formed at Bright. Mrs H Manning has been elected President and Mrs M Stewart Secretary". We assume that croquet had been played in Bright from 1904 and an official club formed in 1923.

The following articles have also been found in The Argus:

10 February 1925

"The Bright Croquet Club, whose facilities were recently improved, was re-opened on Saturday by Councillor Goldsworth".

12 September 1925

"At the Bright Croquet Club AGM, Mrs I Mann was re-elected as President and Mrs M Mew was elected as Secretary".

1 October 1927

"Mesdames J Manning and M Stewart have been re-elected President and Secretary of the Bright Croquet Club".

17 October 1928

"The Bright Tennis and Croquet Clubs opened the season on Saturday in the presence of a large gathering".

On the 18 February 1958 there was an agreement made between the Bright Croquet Club and the Bright Bowling Club regarding the greens occupied by the Croquet Club. The Agreement granted the Bowling Club use of the greens on the same terms and conditions. The document was signed by Alice Lilian Attridge and Rachel Cleland on behalf of the Bright Croquet Club.

The following photograph shows members of the Bright Croquet Club from the 1950s: (back row from left) Bette Walker, Jo Crooks, Annie Sharp, Amy Lane, Janie Snell, (front row from left) Eileen Dickens, Rachael Cleland, Edith Showers and Lil Attridge.



### **1960**

At the AGM of the club held on 14 October 1960 Mrs Attridge was made a Life member. It was also decided to hold open day on 22 October with the Shire President to open the greens.

### **1961**

On 11 November 1961 the Shire President and his wife Cr and Mrs MacGill opened the lawns.

At the General Meeting on 25 November 1961 Mrs Walker was made a Life Member.

### **1962**

AGM held 17 November 1962. Opening day was the following Saturday.

### **1963**

In 1963 open day was on 2 November. Mr and Mrs Huggins opened the lawns.

At the General Meeting held on 3 October 1963 it was moved and seconded that playing day be moved to Thursday (from Wednesday) to suit players and bowlers. The Croquet Club shared their lawns with the Bowling Club especially over the busy summer months especially

the Christmas New year period. Although the club only had 6 members, tournaments were held throughout the season The Bright Bowling Club assisted with croquet greens.

#### **1964**

At the AGM held on 8 October 1964 the President, Mrs Eileen Dickens, stressed the point that with so few members there wasn't the play that was always had but hoped that members would make more use of the lawns in the coming year. At the General Meeting it was decided to hold Opening Day on the 1st Pennant Saturday in the month of November. The Shire President and his wife was asked to open the lawns. A letter was to be written to Mr Spinks for his work in keeping the lawns so good. It was also decided to hold a Dinner and Picture night on the Friday night before opening day at the hotel.

#### **1965**

It was decided to have Open Day on either 30 October or 20 November, subject to the Myrtleford Show. Shire President and his wife opened the lawns. All members were to attend a working bee at the greens on 16 October.

#### **1966**

Open day to be held either the last week in October or the first Saturday in November. Again the Shire President and his wife opened the lawns.

It is noted that a donation of \$2 was made and a letter of appreciation sent to Mr Spinks who looked after the greens.

It is also noted that the yearly subscription was \$2.

#### **1967**

AGM held on Saturday, 11 November. A minute's silence was observed for the late Mrs Attridge. She was one of the original members and also a Life Member of the club. She was a grand member and worker, teaching many members the fine art of the game.

#### **1968**

AGM held on 28 September. It was decided to have Open Day on the second or third Saturday in November, subject to the Presbyterian Garden Party. The Shire President and his wife opened the lawns. Plates of sandwiches and cakes were provided by members.

It is noted that playing days are Thursday and Saturday, Saturday being the main day. Subscription \$2 and Green fees 10c. It was also decided that the seats needing repairing and painting. The Secretary looked into the matter and got quotes.

Miss Price, a new member was welcomed.

#### **1969**

AGM held on 18 October. It is noted that play began at 2 pm on Saturdays, the main competition day. It was also decided to affiliate with the Victorian Croquet Association. Mr Spinks received \$3 this year for looking after the lawns.

The members also insured the club house against fire and burglary each year.

Open Day to be first or second Saturday in November so as not to coincide with the Presbyterian Party. The Shire President and his wife invited to open the lawns.

The Myrtleford Croquet Club was discussed and it was finally decided to invite the club to the Open Day and then invite them to become members.

A meeting was held on 22 November. A letter had been received from Croquet Victoria accepting the club's affiliation, the cost being \$2.50 and a charge of 50c each member. A cheque and list of all members to be forwarded was sent.

It was decided to insure the club house property for the sum of \$200 or \$150, if premium not too high.

### **1970**

Meeting held on 28 February. There was a discussion about visitors paying green fees. It was moved that a Notice Board be placed in the Club rooms stating that "Visitors please contact the President or Secretary – playing days Thursdays and Saturdays – Fees 20c".

A Special Meeting was held on 14 March regarding a letter received from the Shire Council concerning the Reserve Creek. It was moved that Mrs Dickens, the President, represent the members at the Shire Office on 25 March. The letter was discussed fully and Mrs Dickens was to use her own discretion as to what business the letter entailed.

It was also moved that a letter be written to the Shire concerning tree across the lawns, also to find out the result of meeting held re Bakers Gully Reserve.

Mr Spinks was to be asked to weed around the croquet greens. It was hoped that the bowlers would help with payment of same.

Another meeting was held on 14 May at which Mrs Dickens gave a full report of the meeting held at the Shire. A Committee was formed to deal with the land known as Bakers Gully Reserve. However, nothing seems to have come of this.

Another meeting was held on 19 September. AGM held on 17 October. Letter to be sent to the Shire thanking them for removing the tree which had become dangerous to players

AGM held 17 October. New officer bearers elected. General Meeting then held and it was unanimous that subscription fees of \$2 and green fees of 10c remain the same. Opening Day to be held on 7 November. The Shire President and his wife to open the lawns. Mr Spinks was again presented with \$2 in appreciation of a job well done looking after the greens.

Miss Talbot presented the club with 3 coathangers for a competition. This swelled the bank balance by \$2.20.

A roster for tea at 3:30 pm each Saturday made. It was moved that tea and sugar be bought out of club funds but this motion was lost. Members to supply their own. It was also moved that the new kettle be kept by Mrs Snell after each game.

Another meeting was held on 21 November. It was decided to hold the Open Day on 28 November due to the inclement weather on 7 November. Mrs Snell, Miss Talbot and Mrs Campbell were thanked for their donation of a table and Miss Talbot for 6 teaspoons. It was also decided to make greens fees 20c on Saturdays and 10c on Thursdays.

### **1971**

A special meeting was held on 6 February on account of visiting players. The secretary was to write to the Wodonga Club welcoming her party to play at the Bright Croquet Club on 13<sup>th</sup>. Miss Price and Mrs Campbell to received the visitors at 10 am with a cup of tea. Members to arrive ready to play at 2 pm. It was also moved that two chairs be purchased.

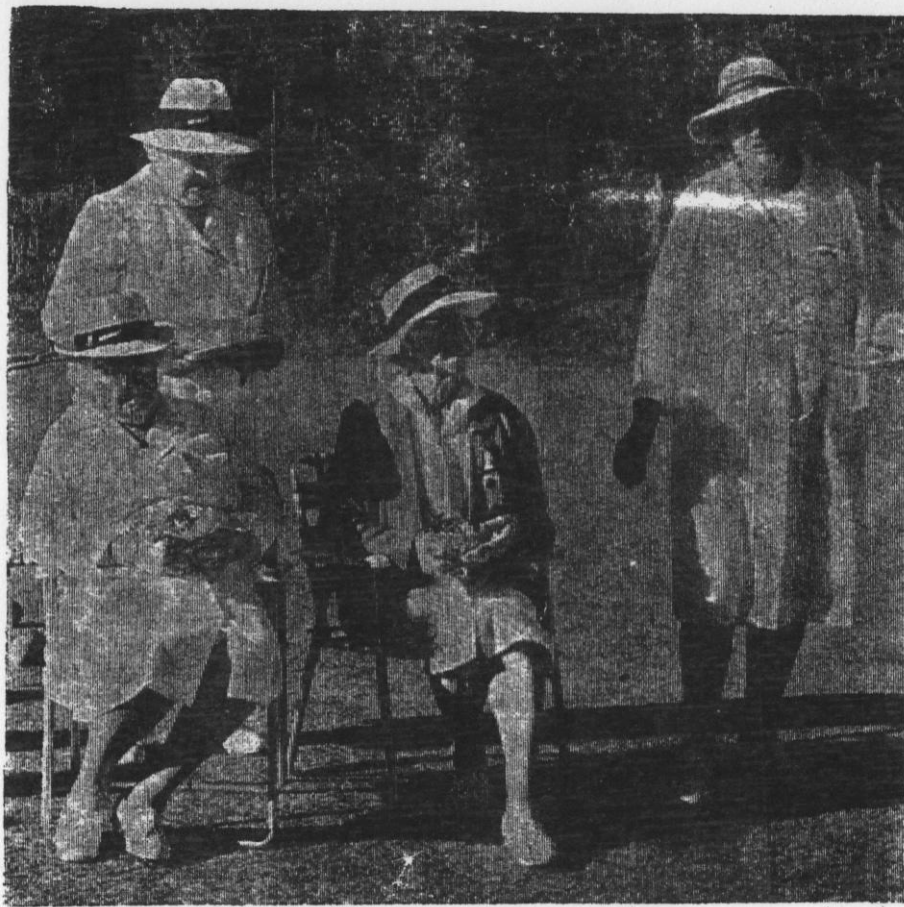
It was moved that the club send affiliation for 8 members

Mrs Dickens offered to give trophy for most improved player at the end of the season. She also suggested the club give visitors Trophies. Trophies won by Mrs Leitch and Miss Talbot.

Each year for opening day invitations were sent to Bright Bowling Club, the Myrtleford Croquet Club and the Tennis Club.

In 1979 the Secretary, I Langcake, advised Miss Ridley that unfortunately the Club had no long term records. This came about as all records were kept at the home of the Secretary, as there was no Club House. The Secretary died and consequently her relations had destroyed all the papers, not realising how important they were.

## Croquet Life Members



May 1979

Seated are Mrs Jane Snell (left) and Mrs Eileen Dickens, both of whom are life members of the Bright Croquet Club. Both of these ladies have given many years of outstanding service to the club and have been honoured with Life Membership. Mrs Snell was also honoured with a Veteran's badge by the Club president Miss Amy Price.

In a letter dated 6 October 1980 to Miss Ridley it is mentioned that croquet was played on the lawn of the Old Bank of Australasia. It is also mentioned that two or three affluent families in the area had their own private croquet lawns, which was towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It also mentions that the Shire Council built a club house and fenced the lawns in 1978. In a newspaper article dated 24 May 1979 Miss A Price "spoke highly of the yeoman service given to the club by Mr F Langcake, who finished off the alterations to the club house by painting the kitchen and interior of the club house, and making an up to the minute serving door which

proved very helpful. She also appreciated the help given by Mr Ron Sibley, the Shire Engineer”.

The article also mentions that practice games were held on Thursdays and “games” day was on Saturday.

The article also mentions that Cr Hamilton had been invited to open the 1977-78 season. He declared the season open and Miss Chambers put the first ball through the hoop.

The ladies during this period were very active in holding raffles and cake stalls to fund the running of the Club. They held social days and tournaments as there were 2 lawns on which to play at the time. The lawns were closed for the winter months and reopened in October. On 2 October 1978 the opening of the Croquet season took place at which the Shire President, Cr Bob Edmondson and his wife attended. When asking the Shire President to open the season the President, Miss Price, said: “Croquet is a science, a study of a lifetime. You may exhaust yourself but never the subject”. Perhaps that is why croquet is a so called ‘minor sport’ because it is very difficult, not only the technique but especially the theory.

The Croquet Club went into recess in 1994 due to a lack of players.

On Friday, 2 October 1998 a meeting was held in the Anglican Church Hall for the purpose of re-activating the club. Those present were: Annette Penny, Dorothy Burgess, Grace Reeves, Betty Sayers, Rose Chapman, Betty Seeley and Jean van der Knijff. Apologies were received from Meta and Herb Schmidtke, Pearl Goodwin and Dorothy Reid.

A new committee was elected as follows:

President:	Betty Seeley
Vice President:	Annette Penny
Secretary:	Jean van der Knijff
Treasurer:	Rose Chapman
Tutor:	Dorothy Burgess

It was agreed to play on Thursday afternoons as Dorothy Burgess would be available to give lessons.

The members had a working bee at the Club House on 8 October 1998. The Secretary wrote to the Alpine Shire in regard to reclaiming the books, bank accounts, keys, etc that they had held since the club went into recess. They were retrieved eventually but not without a great deal of hassle.

In February 1999 11 members attended a meeting – Joyce Lowe, Dorothy Burgess, Betty Seeley, Olwyn and Gordon Ryan, Gwen Steele, Grace Reeves, Elsie French, Jean van der Knijff, Rose Chapman, Pam Riessen. Apology from Fiona Auban. The following members were elected:

1999: Gordon Ryan, President  
Betty Seeley, Vice President  
Joyce Lowe, Secretary  
Olwyn Ryan, Treasurer

2000: Gordon Ryan, President  
Dick Basham, Vice President  
Eileen Irlam, Secretary  
Olwyn Ryan, Treasurer

As far as we know, the Croquet Club has been in existence since 1904 and celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2004 with a float in the Bright Autumn Festival Parade.

In 2010 The Chalet at Mt Buffalo celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and invited the Bright Croquet Club to attend the celebrations and to re-open the croquet court in the grounds of The Chalet for the day. It was a great success with many people trying their hand at croquet.



In 2013 the Club finally, after many years, secured a 5 x 5 x 5 year Lease with the Alpine Shire Council. The Agreement sets out the arrangement between the Council and the Club in respect to the occupation of the Burke Street Road Reserve. The Club was then able to secure a grant to upgrade the fencing around the land. The fencing was completed in 2014.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014, the Club celebrated its 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an open day and a BBQ lunch for invited guests and members. Club members dressed in either period costume or present day uniform. Invited guests included the President of the VCA, Mike Cohn, the Mayor, Peter Roper and the Shire Council CEO, Dave Barry. The news media there were WIN News, North East Media and the Border Mail. The weather was perfect for the occasion.



Bright Croquet Club celebrating its 110<sup>th</sup> birthday October 2014 Pictured in Victorian dress are Hilly Avery-Hart (front) Bev Giraud, Yvonne Gough and Janet Horton (left to right)

In 2015 the club house was re-roofed.

Major works in 2016 included

- installation of electricity
- kitchen renovations
- installation of an automatic watering system
- as well as repainting the inside and outsides of the building.

Grants received from Bendigo Bank, Alpine Shire Council and Vic Health enabled these renovations to be completed

