

The History of the North Eastern District Croquet Association

On 15th October 1960 at 2.30pm, a Meeting, was convened by members of the Wangaratta Club at their Club House regarding the formation of an Association of Croquet Clubs in the north-eastern district of Victoria. Letters were sent to the many surrounding clubs that had been in existence for decades, seeking interest and inviting them to send delegates. This resulted in attendees from Albury, Bright, Corowa, Greenfields, Wangaratta and Yarrowonga Croquet clubs as well as the President of VCA, Mrs Nelson and her associate, Mrs Lilly. At this Meeting, a motion was carried that the North Eastern District Croquet Association be formed, and the following pro-term positions were elected: President – Mrs C. Smith (Wangaratta); Secretary/Treasurer – Miss Lean (Yarrowonga).

On 5th November 1960, at the inaugural Annual General Meeting, of the North Eastern District Croquet Association, the election of office bearers was held: President– Mrs French (Wangaratta); and Secretary/Treasurer – Miss Lean (Yarrowonga). Note: The original Minute Book does not mention a Vice President, but other records mention that Mrs English (Greenfields) was elected.

Whilst not represented at the Inaugural Meeting, the Myrtleford Croquet Club is first mentioned in 1961 and the Chiltern Croquet Club in September 1962.

An Association Croquet Pennant for 'B' and 'C' grade teams from the six Clubs of Greenfield Park, Albury, Yarrowonga, Wangaratta, Corowa and Wodonga was conducted over five months beginning 6 November 1961 where players brought a picnic lunch and the hostess branch was to provide afternoon tea, 'not elaborate - to be sandwiches, scones and plain cakes', soon followed by the Champion of Champions Tournament held at Yarrowonga on 30 April 1962. Pennants, Tournaments and Champion of Champions events continued annually for many years.

At the second Annual General Meeting, held at Corowa on Saturday 8 September 1962 the Minutes noted that the standard of play in the NEDCA to be as good as anywhere else in Australia. Handicap Meetings were regularly held to review and adjust where necessary the handicaps of all members of the Association.

By 1966 NEDCA was represented in the 'A', 'B' and 'C' divisions of the Regional Championships NEDCA representatives who travelled to Melbourne to compete in the 'A' Nelson be given \$10.00 to help with expenses. The Pennant winners for 1967 were 'A' Wangaratta, 'B' and 'C' grades Albury. It was now noticeable that the number of new members in the 'C' grade were declining and more encouragement must be given.

The Tournament Committee met in October 1967 to discuss the upcoming Regionals to be held at courts at Albury, Greenfield Park and Wodonga, (rosters, catering, gatekeeping etc) on 23 and 24 April 1968, it was decided to have the dinner at Albury (seating capacity 110) at a cost of \$2.74 for a four-course meal. The Mayor and Mayoress of Albury to be invited to the dinner and the Mayor to be approached to open the Tournament on the Tuesday at 8.15am.



NEDCA Pennant 'A' Grade Nora Pearsall, Vera English, Gwen Narbut and Jessie Phillip 1972

At the 1972 General Meeting, it was moved that NEDCA nominate Mrs French of Wangaratta as being eligible to play with the MacRobertson Shield events during the Australian Tour in England in 1974.

In 1973 the Bright Croquet Club was nominated by Wangaratta for affiliation with NEDCA. At the July

1974, General Meeting, the President of Wodonga Croquet Club regretted that owing to so few members they would not be affiliating with NEDCA but would carry on as a social Croquet Club.

The location of the Annual General Meetings was moved from the Corowa Bowling Club to the Wangaratta Croquet Club in 1978.

In 1979 the 'C' grade Pennant was dropped and the two delegates from the Beechworth Croquet Club who attended the January 1979 NEDCA Meeting, were congratulated on having their lawns ready for the upcoming season.

The new Cobram Club is first mentioned in 1980.

At the 1984 Annual General Meeting, the member levy was raised to 50c and congratulations were extended to Mr Frank Dodd (first mention of a male) on his win at Country Week. Clubs could not field enough players for a Pennant Competition but social days held instead.

On 8 January 1985 Mrs Ivy Cairnduff (Wangaratta) was nominated as a Life Member of NEDCA having been President for four terms. Miss E Dawe (Corowa) was also nominated for Life Membership having attended fifty-eight out of sixty Meetings as well as being a foundation member, a Delegate for twenty-four years and President seven times (she went on to serve as President for another term). Both had been Vice-President several times and managed NEDCA Championships.

On 14 May 1985 Mrs Madge Cuthbert (Albury) Mrs Jess Phillips (Greenfield Park) and Mrs Gladys Ferguson (Yarrowonga) were also awarded NEDCA Life Membership

In 1985 the Secretary of the day, Miss Connie Chambers received correspondence that the Yarrowonga Croquet Club would cease to be in operation as from 17 July 1985, due to high maintenance costs and being unable to recruit new members to the Club. Soon after the Croquet section of the Yarrowonga and Border Golf Club was officially opened on 15 September 1985.

About this time there was also much discussion on 3 hours games versus 2 hours games. Wangaratta and Yarrowonga were among the first Clubs to incorporate, and NEDCA was seeking information whether the Regional Association should become incorporated.

At the AGM on 20 May 1986, it was voted that "there be no more than five Life Members at any one time." There is no explanation as to why this decision was made at the time.

Regional Championships were due to held in the North Eastern District in 1986 and it was decided 'that they be staged in Albury'.

At the 17 January 1989 Meeting, the following motion changed the governance structure of NEDCA. 'Received on a motion by H Elleray, seconded Frank Dodd 'that the office of President and Secretary of NEDCA rotate every two years between the Clubs in the Association, each affiliated Club to take their turn'. All Clubs except Cobram accepted the motion. Gladys Walters of Wangaratta became the first President under this format and the NEDCA Clubs were to take their turn in reverse alphabetical order. Greenfield Park Croquet Club closed in 1989.

The VCA Delegate in his Report to the 1991 Annual General Meeting, noted the proposal to computerise the handicap system, the beginning of the end of the regular Handicap Meetings held by NEDCA to reset players handicaps.

At the November 1993 Meeting, it was noted that Benalla had not yet affiliated with NEDCA but had held an excellent opening day.

At the February 1994 Meeting, correspondence noted that Bright would not close but remain as a social Club, not affiliated with NEDCA. Benalla was now affiliated with NEDCA. Beechworth provided the Executive positions for 1994/1995.

The August 1994 General Meeting, noted that the Winter Competition could not be held due to lack of players. This was becoming a recurrent theme.

Albury provided the personnel to fill the Executive positions 1996/1997. Clubs were now beginning to grapple with the terms of insurance policies and the need for guidelines for new members and whether non-affiliated croquet players could enter Tournaments etc.

At the August 1995 Meeting, Correspondence Inwards included a request from Euroa Croquet Club to affiliate with NEDCA. The need for more referees was becoming apparent.

At the November 1995 Meeting, it was noted that the NEDCA Constitution was in need of an update.

At the February 1996 General Meeting, it was recorded that the Myrtleford Croquet Club had been accepted as an affiliated Club with VCA and they were to be invited to join NEDCA. A circulated discussion paper criticised the restriction on Social Days and Tournaments placed upon Clubs by NEDCA, as many Clubs felt they should be allowed to hold additional events to generate income.

NEDCA were applying to host Country Week in 1998 as there were excellent facilities at Benalla.

Both Euroa and Wangaratta Croquet Clubs held 90th Celebrations in 1996

At the November 1996 General Meeting, Joyce Brookes moved and M Hughes seconded 'that NEDCA hold three meetings each year rather than the four currently scheduled. These meetings to be held in February, May and August. This motion was carried.

At the February 1997 Meeting, it was noted that VCA had now extended insurance cover for players aged 75 to 85 years. This begs the question what the situation was previously ie was nobody over 75 years covered by insurance?

A Special General Meeting, was held at Wangaratta 13 May 1997 where it was explained that a Manager and a Referee-in-Charge would have to be appointed before Benalla Croquet Club could be granted permission to hold Country Week in 1998. Shirley Hallinan was appointed Manager and Mrs Phil Hill of Shepparton was appointed Referee-in-Charge. Two letters were then read to the meeting. The first from Yarrawonga/Border stating that their Club had voted against Benalla being granted Country Week at the last NEDCA Meeting, and wished to reiterate the vote against the proposal. The second letter was from the Cobram Croquet Club stating that this Meeting, (?) should be held at the next NEDCA Meeting, on 27 May and be put on the Agenda. They also stated that the VCA had informed Cobram Club that the VCA will meet on 6 June so there was no need for this Meeting, on 13 May 1997. Lastly that NEDCA is ALL Clubs, who have the right to discussion and decision. A vote was taken and sixteen voted for Benalla Croquet Club to hold Country Week with six against.

At the Annual General Meeting, held two weeks after the above mentioned Special General Meeting, Yarrawonga Border Croquet Club tabled a letter stating that they felt it would be better for the Benalla Croquet Club to take office (rather than themselves, thus overturning the reverse alphabetical order roster system set in place in 1989) due to the fact that this Club had been granted Country Week for 1998. Benalla were in agreement. At the General Meeting, immediately following this Annual General Meeting, Benalla tabled correspondence that twenty courts at the Benalla Lawn Tennis Club were available for Country Week 9 - 13 February 1998, and Benalla were given total catering rights for Country Week and a welcoming BBQ was to be held on the Sunday evening but Channel 9 'Wide World of Sports' would not provide TV coverage. At this Meeting, NEDCA affiliation fees were increased to \$1.00 per person.

Clubs were now actively seeking new members via letter drops and local newspaper promotion.

At the 1998 Annual General Meeting, the Position of Secretary and Treasurer were separated and no Assistant Secretary would be appointed to bring the Executive Position structure in line with the Model Rules in view of NEDCA's impending Incorporation.

At the May 1998 General Meeting, it was noted that the 1999 Regionals were to be held at Ballarat but the 2000 Regionals would be held in the North Eastern District. At this Meeting, the following motions was passed. 'We discontinue the Champion of Champions Event and adopt a NEDCA Championship Event for the purpose of selection of representatives for the Regionals'.

Also at this Meeting, NEDCA moved towards incorporation whilst still grappling with insurance issues and a Golf Croquet Association "has been formed" (no other information was given). The original Certificate of Incorporation was framed and (currently still) hangs on the wall of the Senior Citizens Club Rooms at Beechworth. There was also discussion at this Meeting, that it was difficult to nominate Life Members who had given many years service as the Executive Positions change every two years. Betty Mason moved and Joyce Brooks seconded 'that no future members be nominated for Life Membership' This motion was carried. In addition, Glad Thompson moved and John Syphers 'that no players going to Melbourne to play in the Handicap or Level Championships be subsidised by NEDCA'. This motion was also carried.

At the November 1998 General Meeting, correspondence was received advising of the closure of the Myrtleford Croquet Club.

At a Special General Meeting, held at Wangaratta in February 1999 the cost of running the NEDCA Championships was questioned as fewer entries received meant there was insufficient funds to cover costs and Yarrowonga, whose turn it was to fill NEDCA Executive Positions next, suggested that they should investigate whether they could stage the 2000 Regionals rather than Benalla. At the Special General Meeting, held a fortnight later - on the 2 March 1999, both Yarrowonga and Benalla indicated that they could not accommodate the Regionals so they were scheduled for 3 - 7 April 2000 at the Wodonga Tennis Centre.

At the May 1999 General Meeting, it was passed that \$1.00 out of the entry fee of \$10.00 to all NEDCA events be donated to the host Club as green fees.

At the May 2000 Annual General Meeting, it was noted that Wodonga Croquet Club would affiliate with NEDCA.

At the August 2000 General Meeting, it was recorded that 'smooth soled shoes are too dangerous on wet courts so rippled soles are now allowed'.

At the January 2001 General Meeting, the following was noted:

The NEDCA Annual General Meeting, to be held at Wangaratta on Tuesday 22 May 2001 at 10.00 am and nobody wanted to take over the Chair. All the excuses in the world came forward and fortunately Beechworth will take over the running of the NEDCA for the next two years. "After their time, a schedule is now arranged and each Club has to take its turn. No excuses!!"

It was Cobram's turn, then Wangaratta, but Beechworth duly took over, out of sequence for 2001/03.

At the May 2001 General Meeting, which followed the Annual General Meeting, Peg Presneill objected to the fact that it would be unfair to Benalla to follow alphabetically since they had just completed their turn prior to Yarrowonga. The sequence is therefore to be Beechworth, Bright, Cobram, Euroa, Wangaratta, Wodonga, Yarrowonga, Albury, Beechworth, Benalla and so forth. Clubs are expected to note this order and be prepared to accept their responsibility in turn.

At this Meeting, also congratulations were forwarded to Wodonga Club on the excellent effort in conducting their recent tournament with over sixty entries and played on sixteen courts.

At the October 2001 General Meeting, the matter of Etiquette was raised, referring to time wasting and bad language on the court. Referees present advised the time rules of 45 seconds for singles and 60 seconds for doubles. It was pointed out that Clubs should try to educate their players on the etiquette of the game.

The President's Report to the May 2003 Annual General Meeting, included the plea that all Clubs running social days to consider including a section for our increasing number of GOLF CROQUET players and the Minutes noted that the next Australian Championships would be held at Wodonga and the tennis Courts at Albury between the end of March and beginning of April 2004. The Tournament was expected to last some eighteen days

At the November 2003 Special General Meeting, Rene Bailey advised that the Cobram Croquet Club had moved to the Cobram Tennis Club and now had two 'A' sized lawns. Glad Thompson pointed out that Golf Croquet was gaining in popularity but was not represented at NEDCA Meetings.

At the February 2004 Special General Meeting, Ray Irlam (President) clarified who was entitled to vote at our Meetings. Each of the nine Clubs had two Delegates but only one was entitled to vote. The Constitution did not make it clear which particular Delegate was entitled to vote but in the event of any dispute, Ray would assume that the Delegate with the longer serving membership of that Club would take this role unless or until notified otherwise by the Club Secretary.

The President's Report to the May 2004 Annual General Meeting, noted that Association Croquet is not dead or dying when eighty eight players took part in the inaugural opening day to mark the amalgamation of Cobram Croquet and Tennis Clubs.

At the February 2005 Special General Meeting, it was recorded that a 'Come-and-Try' croquet day had been held at the Milawa Bowls Club. No further information is recorded.

The President's Report to the May 2005 Annual General Meeting, noted that the NEDCA Championships were conducted in December in the worst weather conditions imaginable - thunder and lightning for three days!

At the August 2006 General Meeting, Tassie Pappas reported on his 6 June 2006 visit to Corowa. The RSL Club has two bowling rinks standing vacant and a decision on their future will be made by the RSL Management late November. Croquet is now on the list for consideration.

At the November 2006 General Meeting, it was recorded that the Euroa and Wangaratta Clubs celebrated their Centenaries during October 2006 and that the Tassie Pappas and Rene Bailey had spent 1 1/2 days sifting through forty-six years of NEDCA documents. The criterion used in whether to keep or dispense with documents was 'would this document be of value to an historian?'

At this same Meeting, Euroa Delegates announced their inability to undertake their two-year turn of Regional Management commencing 27 May 2007.

At the February 2007 General Meeting, Euroa again announced their inability to fulfil their rostered responsibility to the NEDCA and the Ballarat Region made the following request: 'That due to the severity of the current drought across Central Victoria, the hosting rotation be altered so as to allow the North East to conduct the Regionals in 2008 and Ballarat to conduct the Regionals in 2009.' This was agreed to.

At the same Meeting, it was proposed that a 50-year history of NEDCA Croquet be printed.

At the May 2007 Annual General Meeting, Beechworth put forward the following motion that any Club that fails to take its due turn in providing the President and Secretary of NEDCA will be required to do so in the following term. If it again fails to take its turn, a disciplinary tribunal could take the following action, a warning, a fine, suspension or expulsion. This motion was carried. Wangaratta assumed the Management Team duties at this Meeting. The Euroa Croquet Club subsequently affiliated with the Goulburn Valley Croquet Association.

A wonderful write up of the 2008 (44th) Victorian Country Regional Championships held at Wodonga beginning 13 April was printed in the.....?

The Wodonga Club filled the Management Team for the 2009/2011 term.

At the May 2009 General Meeting, Tassie Pappas stated that he had been studying the old Minutes of NEDCA and said that there was no colour in the Minutes and therefore he would not like to write a history. No colour indeed!!

At the August 2009 General Meeting, it was resolved to establish a Golf Croquet Championship and a bunch of flowers be forwarded to Miss Edna Dawe (first President of NEDCA and Life Member) who would be turning 100 years shortly.

Golf Croquet Championships were held at Wodonga on 27 October 2009 with twenty-four players participating but no entries in the 0 - 5 Division.

NEDCA celebrated its 50th Birthday on 10 October 2010 with a function at Wangaratta Croquet Club, the venue where the first NEDCA Meeting, was held.

During 2011 NEDCA assisted in the establishment of a Croquet Club at Mansfield. Mansfield did not affiliate with NEDCA. Yarrawonga commenced their two-year term providing personnel to fill Executive Positions. A greater emphasis was being placed on training more referees.

Albury followed Yarrawonga and provided the personnel to fill the Executive Positions. The NEDCA Constitution was again updated during this 2013/2015 period, a bus trip to Cairnlea to celebrate the VCA Centenary and great progress made towards the re-establishment of a Croquet Club at the Corowa Civic Bowling Club.

The number of Club members playing Association Croquet is decreasing with some Clubs having no active Association players. The popularity of Golf Croquet and the increasing numbers playing Golf

rather than Association Croquet has contributed to the economic viability of many of the NEDCA Clubs. Most Clubs within the NEDCA Region have stable or increasing membership.