

## THE IRENE BOWLING CLUB

Tradition has it that it that the Irene bowling club started in 1937, and that the Second World War (1939-1945) brought an abrupt halt to its development. It was in the early 1950s that Lou Simmons discovered the disused and neglected bowling green, and with a number of Irene residents, had the reeds removed from the north-west part of the present lower (Village) green. This small group borrowed bowls and played barefoot, and decided they liked the game, and the official opening of the bowling club took place early in 1957.

The first clubhouse was a small unenclosed rondavel, open on all sides, on the northern side of the green. It was very small, but a few metres away there was a magnificent white stinkwood tree, where the bowlers could gather at tea-time and socialize. Sadly, with the regular watering and fertilizing of the green, the tree extended its roots onto the green and despite constructing trenches to divert the roots, the tree had eventually to be removed. The rondavel still stands. It has been enclosed, and serves as a storage space for bowls' equipment.

A more substantial structure, with a thatched roof and enclosed on three sides was erected in 1963 on the south side of the bowling green. It was the indefatigable labours of Bob Hogg that brought this about. At the opening of the "Bob Hogg Shelter" mischievous members "borrowed" a piglet from John van der Byl, and on a play on his name, presented the hog to him. The shelter was subsequently fully enclosed, and in the late 1960s toilet facilities were added, which meant that members no longer had to make the long trek to the main clubhouse.

By 1980 club membership had increased and it became increasingly difficult for everyone to regularly get a game. At the Bowls AGM on 4 September 1980 a formal decision to build a second green was taken. Within two days the magnificent white stinkwood trees in the parking area were being felled, despite vigorous opposition from some quarters of the golfing fraternity, and it was expected that we would have a new bowling green well before Christmas. But in fact it took another 31 months for this to happen. Finance was the main obstacle, the main club was not able to increase its bond neither would it allow the bowls section itself to organize bridging finance, or to apply for a short-term loan.

Don Tager, vice-president of the bowling section, and senior director of the transport/removal company, Daly International, came to the rescue, using his own funds to organize the excavation of the hole, a very astute decision, for with the eyesore of the gaping hole in the

parking lot the club was committed to helping the bowlers. They accepted the proposal of Don to grant special life memberships of R1,000 each to a number of bowlers and to allow this money to be used to pay for the completion of the green. By the time the Daly International green was officially opened on 6 April 1983, the club had 110 members, so it was a timely relief.

For some time the main club had felt the need to build new facilities, which included a clubhouse for the bowlers, and work on the new building started in 2007. By July 2008 the bowlers were ensconced in their new clubhouse, and soon after the old one was demolished so that later one could not even see where it had stood.

Ken Smith