

FRIDAY MORNING

The history of Friday Morning Bowls

What do Maureen White, John Coles, Lee Hammond and Cynthia McCreanor have in common?

They all coordinated Friday Morning Social Bowls at Tranmere over the years.

Click on to the photo below to read more



Friday Morning Regulars -10 February 2023:

Back row (L to R): Joe Marafioti, Danny D'Onofrio, Frank Dalkos, Paul van Ruth, Terry Bebbington, Guido Innamorati

Middle Row (L to R): Tony Calabrese, Barbara Christiansen

Front Row (L to R): Luigi Cirocco, Jeannine Peacock, Rita Mc Cullick, Irene O'Connor, Cynthia McCreanor, Ray Kirkwood, Peter Parman, Nicky Cirocco.

Friday Morning Bowls at Tranmere

What do Maureen White, John Coles, Lee Hammond and Cynthia McCreanor have in common? They all coordinated Friday Morning Social Bowls at Tranmere over the years.

How It All Began

In his report to the AGM for 1996-97 the General President, Kevin Parkinson, noted that:

“Our membership has shown a steady decline over recent years and we will need to do our best to encourage new (and particularly younger) members. To encourage new members the bowlers have adopted a number of strategies, including Friday morning bowls for non-members who pay a green fee. Many thanks to Maureen White, Max Bell and Kath and Fred Lee for organising this activity.”

Enthusiastically organised by Maureen White, little did they know just how popular these Friday morning affairs would become. From humble beginnings Friday morning bowls has grown in popularity and continued to be enjoyed by many members and visitors alike ever since – an impressive 27 years. Records for the first two years are no longer available, but a continuous record exists from 2 October 1998 onwards. On that day eleven members¹ and two non-members² enjoyed their sociable morning of lawn bowls.

Coordinators

Maureen White continued to organise the mornings from its inception to 29 October 1999.

John Coles then took on the role from 5 November 1999 to 19 December 2008.

Lee Hammond, who shared an interest with John Coles as a historian, assisted him in the later years and took on the role when John could no longer do so.

¹ Judy and Des Butler, David Davison, Brian Barrell, Jim Fowler, Rhonda and John Abrahart, Dee Murch, Maureen White, Reg Ochse and Laila Toolin

² Ralph Jones and Einar Suneson

Lee, who had transferred to the Kensington-Marryatville bowling club³ for pennant bowls, retained restricted membership at Tranmere, and organised Friday morning bowls from 16 January 2009 through to 3 June 2011.

Cynthia McCreanor, who first began Friday morning bowls in 2007, then took on the role of organiser and has done so ever since.

Player Participation

In the early years through to 2001-02 an average of 365 registrants per year participated. The next seven years (2002-03 to 2008-09) saw that number grow to an average of 552 registrants. With the conversion of the greens from grass to synthetic surface, the following five years (2009-10 to 2013-14) saw numbers increase to an average of 688 per year and jump to 978 per year over the next five years (2014-15 to 2018-19). In part, the increase can be attributed to potentially more playing days as the greens no longer needed to be rested in mid-winter as they did each year when they were grass.

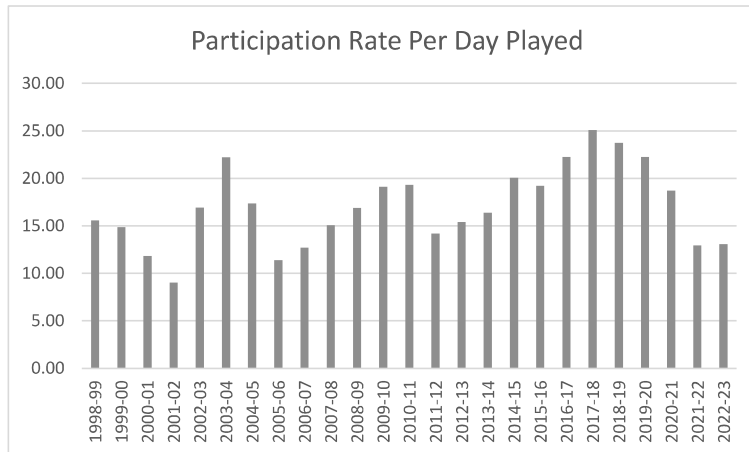
For 2019-20, playing days and hence player numbers were dramatically affected by the government's social distancing protocols aimed at containing the spread and impact of the global corona virus pandemic. All club activities, including Friday morning bowls, were suspended from mid-March 2020 to the end of June 2020.

Gradually the social distancing requirements were relaxed and eventually, in late 2022, lifted altogether. Nevertheless, numbers for the Friday Morning bowls have not returned to their pre-Covid levels. In 2021-22 total registrants of just 517 were the lowest since conversion to synthetic greens, with only a slight recovery to 537 registrants in 2022-23.

Total registration numbers are also dependent on the number of days played, which varies according to the weather as well as the interruption due to Covid restrictions.

The chart below, of average registrations per day over the years, reflects the downturn since the peak in 2017-18.

³ Lee, and husband John Hammond, re-joined Tranmere for the 2012-13 pennant season



A schedule of the number of days played, the number of members and non-members who registered and the proceeds provided to the club from this initiative over the years, is provided at the end of this document.

Fees

Initially, non-members paid \$3 and members \$0.30 in green fees, with everyone making an extra \$0.30 contribution towards chocolates as prizes to the winning bowlers on the day. Over the years, that increased, initially to \$4 for non-members while members paid no green fees, plus an extra \$0.50 contribution from everyone. Since 18 November 2011, a green fee of \$5 for non-members and \$1 for members has been levied, with the cost of chocolates taken out of the proceeds. Restricted members have paid \$1 from 2020 onwards.

From Humble Beginnings

Friday Morning Bowls has well and truly met its objective. Apart from the initial few years, more non-members than members have participated. Some have gone on to become members and play pennant bowls. Others, who have been members and played pennant bowls, have continued with Friday morning bowls after they have retired from pennant bowls. An enthusiastic band of regulars is joined by others who play only occasionally.

They all enjoy the morning's socialisation and bowling competition.

Several future club champions, among them Jackie Barber, John Coppe, Barbara de Conti, John Feddersen, Pam Fullarton, Con Harmer, Malcolm Miller, Dave Roberts, and Rod Squire not only participated in Friday Morning bowls but, for some, that is how their infatuation with lawn bowls began.

Mike Porter Award

In 2021, at the Bowls Section AGM, Cynthia McCreanor was awarded the Mike Porter Outstanding Service Award in recognition of her dedicated service in coordinating Friday Morning Bowls over the previous decade.

Friday Morning Bowls Action (Gallery):



Left: Barbara Christiansen looks on earnestly as Arthur Bailey-Thomas points to the likely shot bowl, with Kevin Dobson, Danny D'Onofrio and Kathlyn Starkie awaiting the declaration (July 2014)

Right: Harold Weidner (centre) signals one down to his skipper while Bill Leaney (left) and Luigi Cirocco (right) look on (July 2014).



Below (L to R): Bill Leaney offers suggestions on the shot to play while Bob Christiansen, Dave Roberts and Rod Fraser contemplate. (June 2016)





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Friday Morning Bowls Summary Over The Years

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	Year	Days	Registrants Members	Registrants Non-Members	Registrants Total	Proceeds	
\$3	1998-99	26	240	165	405	576	M White
	\$4	1999-00	28	148	269	417	J Coles
	2000-01	28	96	235	331	954	L Hammond
	2001-02	34	60	247	307	988	C McCreanor
	2002-03	34	76	500	576	2000	
	2003-04	33	130	604	734	2416	
	2004-05	34	188	402	590	1608	\$3
	2005-06	40	111	344	455	1376	\$4
	2006-07	37	142	328	470	1312	\$5
	2007-08	31	195	272	467	1088	
	2008-09	34	252	322	574	1288	Grass
	2009-10	36	234	455	689	1820	Synthetic
	2010-11	39	254	499	753	1996	
\$5	2011-12	48	171	510	681	2377	
	2012-13	44	262	416	678	2080	
	2013-14	39	232	407	639	2035	
	2014-15	46	334	590	924	2950	
	2015-16	44	291	554	845	2770	
	2016-17	45	395	607	1002	3045	
	2017-18	42	357	696	1053	3666	
	2018-19	45	325	743	1068	3691	
	2019-20	31	294	396	690	2075	
	2020-21	42	289	498	787	2539	
	2021-22	40	212	305	517	1598	
	2022-23	41	211	326	537	1705	

NB: Records for the first two years – 1996-97 and 1997-98 no longer available.