

A Club House is the beating heart of a Bowls Club. Whilst the magic happens on the green, it is from the Club House that the warm welcome of friendship and companionship emanates. Generations of bowlers will have passed through a Club House and their achievements are often displayed around the walls, marking the history of a club.



The Club House of Ibstock Bowls Club is no different to this.

Whilst being a small wooden pavilion, typical of very old village Club Houses, it still packs in a bar, a kitchen area and a seating area in which to have tea, hold meetings or enjoy an after match pint. Whilst it does not enjoy the luxury of a large brick Club Houses, as enjoyed by some of the 'richer' clubs in the county, our Club House does exude a charm that is difficult to match.

Most local clubs were formed at the beginning of the 20th century, when lawn bowls was a booming sport. Consequently many bowls clubs are approaching their centenary, as we will be in 2029. At this time, land was relatively cheap and many bowls clubs were able to purchase land for themselves, or under the auspices of a local council.

The Welfare site, where the Bowls Club was founded, was purchased by the Parish Council with grant money provided by the Coal Board by virtue of the Mining Industry Act of 1920. Once the land had been purchased, the Welfare building itself was built a few years later in 1927, and subsequently the Bowls Club, founded shortly after in 1929, using the facilities of the Welfare Club, without having a specifically allocated area for a club house.

Over the next 50 or so years, the sport flourished and clubs began to build their reserves. Those clubs who had the vision to purchase their own land were able to 'cash in' by selling parcels of their land or they benefitted through local benefactors, and they were able to replace their traditional wooden club house, by now ageing, with more substantial brick built club houses.

Fast forward to the 'late 1980s', and the Bowls Club recognised that whilst it provided excellent hospitality through meals prepared using the Welfare facilities, the club lacked a base from which to operate. Up to this point, the club had operated by using what is now the ladies changing room, as a meeting place. A new base was desperately needed.

Consequently a wooden pavilion, previously used by the cricket club, was identified as a suitable base. The wooden pavilion was transported from the bottom of the Welfare site, by club members, to its current standing and reassembled as our new, or rather second-hand, Club House. Over the next ten years, the Club House was converted from a wooden shell to a welcoming Club House, using materials that were begged or borrowed (but not stolen!) and using the carpeting, painting or electrician's skills of its members, supplemented by a willingness to get stuck in from all members.



By the late nineties, the club had moved with the times and was admitting lady members. It realised that a ladies changing room was needed, as well as a separate men's changing room. It was decided to purchase a wooden building that could be sited next to the club house, for the purpose of a men's changing room, thereby releasing the ladies changing room for their sole use.

Again the skills and willingness of its members were called upon to build a foundation for the men's changing room, to the same level as the clubhouse. Then a new wooden structure was purchased and assembled, interior boards were affixed, benches installed and decorated – a changing room was born! Externally the two buildings were clad as one, so as to hide the fact that it was in fact two buildings and not one.

With the closure of the Welfare building in the early 2000s, the ability to provide meals was lost, although it has to be said that the appetite (excuse the pun!) for a meal was being lost amongst the bowling fraternity. However, the ability to offer some form of hospitality, in addition to a light tea, was felt to be a missing part of our welcome. Besides the opportunity to make some much needed funds, through a bar, was being lost.

In 2023, the club applied for a bar licence and, through the economical use of space and ongoing effort to constantly shift stock to a 'safe place', a bar area was born and the missing hospitality to our guests could be provided.

The bar was a great success but it was agreed that a permanent, secure arrangement, that was less labour intensive, was needed. It was decided that the wall dividing the old club house and the men's changing room could be removed, and six feet wide area of the men's changing room could be 'pinched' to create a new kitchen area and release the bar area for its sole use.

The club's skills were called upon once more, and at the beginning of 2024, the new club kitchen and bar areas were born. Externally the roof area between the two buildings was made 'as one' to help with protection from the elements.

This brings us nicely to the point where we are now at. The cladding of the club house and men's changing room, despite years of tender love and care, it now shows signs of distress. The underlying club house is estimated at approaching 60 years of age, the accompanying men's changing room and external cladding, which was done at the same time, is estimated at approximately 35 years of age.



The club has decided it needs to re-clad the rear of the building, to protect the building for a longer life. The problem was that the club did not have sufficient funds to do this. There are a number of charitable organisations that will provide funding for deserving projects, although there is a vastly greater number of deserving causes applying to those funds.

Nevertheless, the club submitted an application to a fund provided through Flutter UKI's Cash4Clubs programme, delivered in partnership with Sported*. This grant has provided the finances to buy the materials necessary to re-clad the rear of the club house/changing room, whilst taking the opportunity to insulate building at the same time.

Invariably we will be calling upon the skills of its members once more, as well as general unskilled help in provide physical help. This also includes the help of ladies, should they wish to provide tea and coffee, whilst the men sweat!

The work is not thought to require a long stretch of work, and the desire is to limit the impact on the club's bowling, as it will be done during the season alongside matches. It is not thought that it will prevent the changing room and club house being used. However the desire is to complete the work in as short a period as possible.

So look out...we will be calling on your skills and even if you class yourself as unskilled there will be a role for you!

* The Bowls Club acknowledges the invaluable help that Flutter UKI are providing through their Cash4Clubs programme, delivered in partnership with Sported, without which this work would not have been possible.