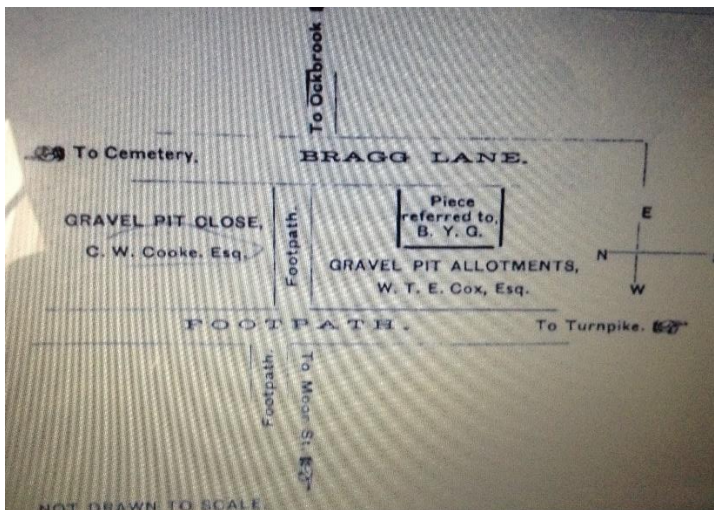


THE HISTORY OF SPONDON BOWLS CLUB

During the autumn of 1920 a number of well-known residents of Spondon interested themselves in the formation of a village Bowls and Tennis Club. In late September 1920 a committee was formed under the Presidency of Mr J H Follows C.B.E. (the General Superintendent of the Midland Railway Co.) and it negotiated with a local landowner, Miss Anne Topham, a long lease on a most desirable site. On 07 May 1921 a bowling green and four tennis courts were opened by Mr Follows, and thanks were recorded to Miss Topham for agreeing to a ten year lease.

We are not absolutely certain about the location of the site but we do know that Miss Topham inherited The Old Farm (30 Church Hill, now 2a Sitwell Street) from her Uncle, Charles William Cooke, when he died in 1906. From the Survey of Spondon Charity Land undertaken in 1895 we know that C.W. Cooke is recorded as owning land off what is now Gravel Pit Lane and it is in this area that a bowling green and tennis courts were existing in 1936. Thanks are due to Anita Hayes of the Spondon Historical Society for providing the plan of the Gravel Pit area shown below.



On 10 May 1921 (Tuesday) the DERBY DAILY TELEGRAPH reported on the opening ceremony:

“SPONDON BOWLS and TENNIS CLUB

The opening ceremony took place Saturday when a large number of members and friends were present – The President (Mr J H Follows C B E) made a cheery speech, in which he enumerated the various steps taken since August 1920, till this climax had been achieved, so that Spondon now possessed one of the best recreation grounds in the district. The grounds are pleasantly situated, and easily accessible from all parts of the village; they bid fair to become a pleasurable resort. The ground at present is in excellent condition, the result of the voluntary work of the members. The crown green for bowls is 40 yards square, and there are four tennis courts at present available, but there is ample space for future courts. The membership is 140, and a large increase is anticipated. The ground has been secured on a ten years' lease on very favourable terms. The property belongs to Miss Topham, to whom thanks have been accorded. The president especially mentioned the excellent work accomplished by Mr J Garnett as clerk of the works and financial adviser. Thanks were given to Mr Elwell for preparing the levels and setting out the grounds, to Mr W Kirkland for supervising the erection of the pavilion and fences, to Mr T L Marshall for the artistic placards announcing the 'Red Letter Day', to Mr T Keeley (Hon Sec) and Miss E M Keeley (Assistant Sec) for their lengthened services, also to the ladies of the committee, Mrs Roddis, Misses M Burton, M Randle, and Keeley, who had worked so strenuously. Tea was provided in the pavilion, the lady caterers clearing a substantial sum for the club. Unfortunately, a torrential rain prevented games of bowls, although sides had been chosen, but the members seemed to be of the optimistic class, cheerfulness being the order of the day.”

The first match of the bowls section of the Spondon Bowls and Tennis Club took place on Saturday 11 June 1921 on the clubs green. The opposition was a team from Borrowash captained by Mr W Brooks. Although the home side sustained a somewhat heavy defeat the match was thoroughly enjoyed. Details:

Spondon		Borrowash
Keeley/ Hambleton	21 – 16	W Brooks/ Hammond
Chawner/ Sykes	14 - 21	Spencer/ Griffin
Turner/ Cotterill	9 – 21	Cooke/ Towle
J Garnett/ H N Elwell	9 - 21	H Rawson/ J Cope
W Kirkland/ J Kingman	15 – 21	Turner/ Wood
Brocklehurst/ Simcock	6 - 21	Skertchley/ Massey
D Martin/ E E Hooley	21 – 20	Kirk/ Austin
TOTAL	95 141	

There was a large attendance at the first Annual General Meeting of the Spondon Bowls and Tennis Club held in the schoolroom on Monday 13 March 1922. An enthusiastic tone prevailed. Mr Marshall (Secretary) presented the annual report, and paid a high tribute to his predecessor, Mr T Keeley, and also to Mr Garnett for his valuable advice. The club has a membership of 172, the tennis members numbering 99. Mr Garnett, the treasurer, in presenting the balance sheet, said that being the first year of the clubs existence, the initial expense had, naturally, been heavy, but owing to the generosity of members there was a balance in hand of £10. The whole of the officers and committee were re-elected.

In February 1926 Spondon Bowls Club was accepted as a member of the South Derbyshire Crown Green Amateur Bowls Association which was open to all clubs south of Buxton (changed to Matlock in March 1926).

An Annual General Meeting was held in the Church of England School on Friday 09 April 1926. With Mr J A Chawner presiding the following officers were elected for the coming season: - Captain; Mr Frank Coleman: Vice-Captain; Mr C Whittingham: Hon Sec; Mr W H Price: Assistant Hon Sec; Mr H Duncan: Committee; Messrs T Auckland, J A Chawner, H E Elwell, G Hambleton and W Kirkland; Selection Committee: Messrs F Coleman, W H Price, J Vickerstaff and C Whittingham.

12 December 1927 - The death was announced of Miss Anne Topham, age 63, of Old Farm, Church Hill, Spondon. Her funeral on 17 December was attended by Mrs Chawner and Mrs William Kirkland. Most of her estate, valued at over £5000 was inherited by her sister, Miss Mary Topham.

At about this time there seems to be the commencement of an association with the British Celanese Sports Club. By 1929 the two clubs are mentioned in a report in the DERBY DAILY TELEGRAPH on 14 October 1929:

“Celanese Sports Club – Prizes Distributed at Dinner

Mrs Soller presented the prizes at the FIRST ANNUAL DINNER of the Celanese Sports Club (Bowls Section) held at the York Hotel, Derby, on Saturday (12 October). Club Championship: Mr W Evans; Runner-up: Mr G Ball; Semi-finalists, Messrs H Hall and W Saunders. Best season’s averages: Mr J Vickerstaff (Chairman of the club), Club Cup: Mr J Shields; and Presidents Cup: Mr W Auckland; these two trophies being won in a joint

Competition with the Spondon club. Club Handicap awards: Mr G Hambledon; Runner-up: Mr C Whittingham; Semi-finalists: Messrs. G Ball and E Myers. Mr W York presided and was supported by Messrs. T H Platts and W N Cutts. The musical programme was given by Messrs. Fenton, W Skerrett and J Walker. “

20 October 1930 (Monday) DERBY DAILY TELEGRAPH

“Celanese Bowls Club

Mrs Soller presents prizes at Annual Dinner

Mr W Yorke, Chief Engineer of British Celanese Ltd., took the chair in the absence of Dr Soller at the Celanese Bowls Club annual dinner at the York Hotel on Saturday evening. Mrs Soller presented the prizes to successful competitors. Mr A W Ball, secretary of the club won the championship and received the ‘Dickie Cup’ and a mounted jack. The gold medal for the highest average went to Mr Reynolds with the splendid score of 313 points out of a possible 336. His average was 19.56 per match. Other prize –winners were: Messrs. Hodgson, Taylor and Broad. Mr Roger Scholes, chairman of the South Derbyshire crown Green Bowls Association, also spoke.”

04 May 1937 (Tuesday) DERBY DAILY TELEGRAPH

“New Courts

Increased Tennis Facilities at Spondon

Spondon Lawn Tennis Club’s courts, Gravel Pit Lane, Spondon, were opened by Mrs G Rutherford, of Park Road, Spondon.

Two new courts have been made on a portion of the ground which was formally the old bowling green.”

This reference to the ‘Old Bowling Green’ indicates that this is probably the site of the original Spondon Bowls and Tennis Club which was opened in 1921.

27 July 1953 (Monday) THE NOTTINGHAM JOURNAL

“Celanese Sports Ground Opened

A 20 acre sports ground was opened on Saturday (25th) at the factory of British Celanese Ltd., Spondon, near Derby. The sports ground has bowling greens, hockey pitches and football and cricket fields, as well as tennis courts and a playground for the children of employees. “

Under the banner of British Celanese it twice hosted the British Crown Green Merit Finals (All England) in 1955 and 1964.

In 1981 it played under the banner of Courtaulds (Spondon) Sports and Social Club, then in 1983, Spondon (Asterdale) Leisure Centre. In 1993, with the help of gifts, grants and loans the members purchased the greens and surrounds from the Asterdale site owners. It then continued to compete as Spondon Bowls Club.

