

## **SUSSEX COUNTY BOWLS - WOMENS SECTION**

### **HISTORY OF THE SUSSEX COUNTY WOMEN'S BOWLING ASSOCIATION**

Kemp Town B.C., Brighton, founded in 1905 in Queens Park Brighton, (now sadly defunct) was one of the oldest clubs in Sussex, and in 1909, invited other clubs from around the County to a one-day tournament. The Draw for the tournament took place in Brighton, at which John Carter of the Kemp Town Club, explained that the main reason for the tournament was to gather Sussex clubs together with the aim of forming a County Association. Three months later, in October 1909, Sussex County Bowling Association was formed, with John Carter becoming the first Chairman.

In 1926, Mrs Clara Johns and her husband walked on to the green at the Redoubt Bowling Club on Eastbourne seafront to try their hand at bowls, which they had watched with interest from their home opposite. They soon became established players, although the few ladies who played were not popular with the men, who considered that they should have prior claim to the limited space available. The women therefore organised matches amongst themselves, soon gaining in numbers and strength of play, and became keen to organise their own competitions and tournaments, which led, eventually to the formation of Sussex County Women's Bowling Association in 1931, under the Chairmanship of Mrs Clara Johns (who donated the Johns Trophy).

Also, early in 1931, the women bowlers of Eastbourne, with Mrs Johns elected to the Chair, agreed to try to create national interest in the formation of a National body, and later that year, in amalgamation with the women of Essex, Leicestershire and Somerset, the English Women's Bowling Association was born.

In 2007, Bowls England was inaugurated from the amalgamation of both genders at National level. The men and women of Sussex remained separate until discussions started after the Sussex men's Centenary in 2009, with eventual unification as Sussex County Bowls, with 122 clubs, in January 2013, with the two genders remaining separate, but under the umbrella of a Joint Management Committee.

Compiled by Kathy Flood.