

## History of the Avondale Bowling Club

Established 1912

The Avondale Bowling Club opened in 1912 at 1807 Great North Rd, Avondale. The chief organisers were John Potter, Chairman of the Avondale Road Board; Alec Darrow, Headmaster of the local school; Joe Allely, local Chemist; and Bob Nesbitt, who owned the property on which the greens were formed.

The land was purchased for £375 and was initially a one and a quarter acre section with a 70ft frontage to Great North Road. A full sized bowling green, three croquet lawns and two tennis courts were formed. Gordon Firth directed the work of erecting the original clubhouse which was erected using the free labour of enthusiasts.

Charlie Pooley and Harry Kneebone were very active in initially enrolling a total of 43 members. By 1913 this had grown to about 120 members.

The records for 1912 to 1916 were sparse but show that the Club was active. The first President was J. Potter with Frederick Bluck as Secretary. Inter-club games were played with Ellerslie, Mt Albert, Asylum (later Oakley), Waitemata, Papatoetoe and Carlton.

Right from the start, the Bowling Club was the Landlord of the Croquet and Tennis Clubs. The clubhouse was home to the Avondale Men's Bowling Club, Avondale Women's Bowling Club, Avondale Indoor Bowling Club and Avondale Croquet Club.

In 1935, more property was purchased to provide additional tennis courts. The Executive at that time included W. Cairn, President; W. Betts, Secretary and J. Fearon, Treasurer. The Cairn and Fearon Cups, which were contested at the Club right up until the 1995-96 season, were named after these people as a reminder of their service to the Club.

1943 saw more property bought and a new green laid down. Mercury Bay weed was planted and a bore put down to provide water for the greens. The pavilion was altered and the Women's Bowling Club opened. At this point the men bowlers were responsible for providing areas for themselves, the Croquet Club, the Women's Bowling Club and the Tennis Club which had five courts. A move was made to purchase more property to provide another tennis court. However, it was decided to terminate the lease of the Tennis Club which vacated in 1948.

With the popularity of lawn bowls growing and sometime before opening day of 1954, the clubhouse was again upgraded to a two-storey structure.

1962 was Golden Jubilee Year and plans were made to upgrade the Club further.

Remodelling of the greens took place in 1964 under President Eric Stewart, and in 1965 £12,000 was borrowed to build a new clubhouse, soil shed and lockers. For a number of years the club greens enjoyed a very good name under then greenkeeper, Arthur Prouse.

The Club celebrated its 75th Jubilee during the 1987-88 season. Over time the Great North Road address ceased to be used and the address effectively changed to 15 Highbury St, where there had always been an access way to the club.

In 1990 the front of the clubhouse was extended and gaming machines were introduced soon after. The following year the Croquet Club closed and this was followed by the Indoor Bowling Club in 1998. Then in 1997 the bottom bowling green was converted into a car park with other surrounding land being sold for housing.

The clubhouse was extended further in 2004 due to changes to New Zealand smoking laws in 2004. This included the addition of a covered deck that had a commanding view of the main green. The following year the deck was extended to almost the full width of the clubhouse and this is the configuration that the clubhouse is in to this day. In 2008 the proud 65 year existence of the Avondale Women's Bowling Club ended when the Men's and Women's clubs amalgamated.

The records for 1912 to 1916 were sparse but show that the Club was active. The first President was J. Porter with Frederick Buck as Secretary. Inter-club games were played with Ellerslie, Mt Albert, Asylum (later Oakley), Waitohia, Farnborough and Carlton. Right from the start the Bowling Club was the landlord of the Croquet and Tennis Clubs. The clubhouse was home to the Avondale Men's Bowling Club, Avondale Women's Bowling Club, Avondale Indoor Bowling Club and Avondale Croquet Club. In 1935, more property was purchased to provide additional tennis courts. The Executive at that time included W. Carr, President, W. Burt, Secretary and J. Pearson, Treasurer. The Carrs and Pearson Club, which were contacted at the Club right up until the 1955-56 season, were named after these people as a reminder of their services to the Club. 1943 saw more property bought and a new green laid down. Murray Bay weed was plotted and a bore put down to provide water for the green. The pavilion was altered and the Women's Bowling Club opened. At this point the men bowlers were responsible for providing areas for themselves, the Croquet Club, the Women's Bowling Club and the Tennis Club which had five courts. A move was made to purchase more property to provide another tennis court. However, it was decided to terminate the lease of the Tennis Club which vacated in 1944. With the popularity of lawn bowls growing and soon after before opening day of 1954, the clubhouse was again upgraded to a two-story structure. 1952 was Golden Jubilee Year and plans were made to upgrade the Club further. Remodelling of the green took place in 1954 under President Eric Shewell and in 1955 \$12,000 was borrowed to build a new clubhouse, roll shed and lockers. For a number of years the club green enjoyed a very good time under the greenkeeper, Arthur Prouse. The Club celebrated its 75th Jubilee during the 1987-88 season. Over time the Great North Road address ceased to be used and the address eventually changed to 15 Highway 21 where there had always been an access way to the club.

## SPORT

About 1902 the Avondale Jockey Club undertook the first major upgrading of the course. The grandstands were moved from the Wingate Street to the Ash Street side. Tussock and gorse in the centre of the course were cleared, allowing spectators a clear view of the whole track. In 1913 additional land was purchased, including part of the Bollard's property near the corner of Ash Street and Rosebank Road.

In early 1925 as part of a re-organization of horse racing in Auckland, the Avondale club was threatened with closure. On February 18th of that year the Avondale Borough Council wrote to the Minister of Internal Affairs protesting about the possible cancellation of the club's licence

*"as the Avondale racecourse provides a magnificent playing ground for all forms of sport without cost either to the Borough Council or to the public." (184)*

Avondale also had its own trotting track. It was on a large block of land between Rosebank and Patiki Roads and was used just for training. The first owner was a Mr Bell. Later it was operated by Tommy Rowe. His horses were very successful. An important Auckland Trotting Club trophy is named in his honour.

In the early part of the twentieth century a tennis club was operating on land where the Ash Street by-pass now joins Great North Road. The club had two asphalt courts. In 1912 the Avondale Bowling Club was established at the rear. In the same year a croquet club was formed. Its green

was close to Highbury Street. Water for the greens was drawn from a bore near Victor Street - it was fed by an underground stream coming from the gully between Henry and Walsall Streets. A nearby holding pond was renowned for the frogs which gathered there. In the early days all green maintenance was done by hand. The roller, which

AVONDALE  
1900-1959



was about a metre and a half in diameter, was filled with water to give it weight and then dragged back and forth over the grass by club stalwarts.

The first Avondale Bowling Club pavilion was a single - storey building. It was later replaced by one of two storeys. The upstairs floor was on occasions used for local functions including

**The new grandstand and lawn, Avondale Jockey Club.**

*(N.Z Graphic April 26th, 1902. Auckland Public Library Neg A12490)*

*The Challenge of the Wham - A History of Avondale  
Avondale History Group 1994*

Avondale Bowling, Croquet and Tennis Clubs.

The Committees of the above Clubs request the pleasure of the attendance of *Mr. M. E. Bright* at the

INAUGURAL OPENING

of the Lawns on Saturday, November 8th, 1913.

John Potter, President Avondale B.C.

R.S.V.P. Please present this Invitation at Entrance.



Opening Day - November 8th, 1913



Former site of Avondale Croquet Club  
over the southern boundary fence of the B.C.  
Western



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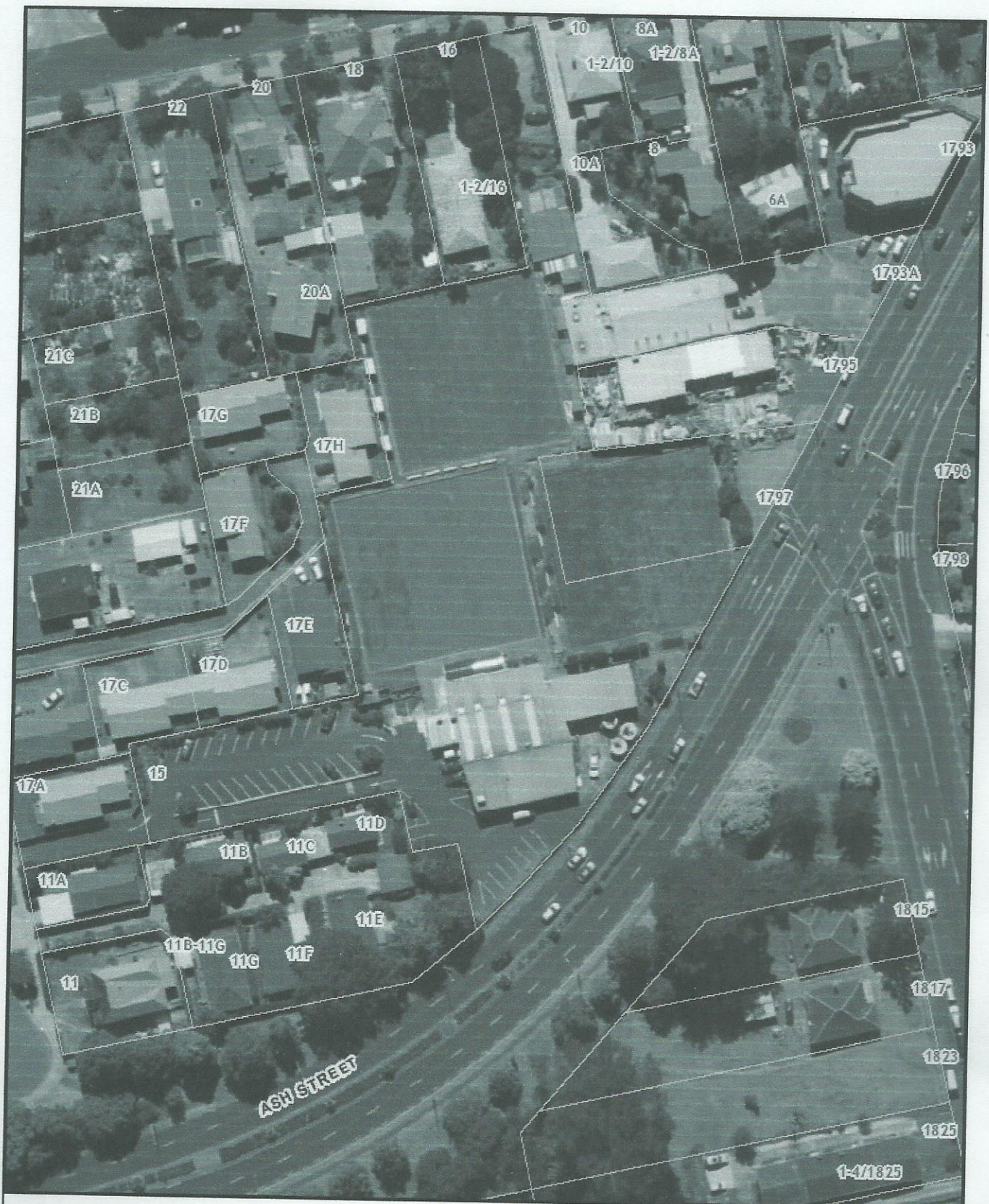
## Avondale CC 1940



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## Avondale BC 2010



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