

NORTH SHORE CROQUET CLUB

A Journey Through Time

Prepared by Charlotte Millar for NS City Heritage Festival Event, Sept. 2010

Where possible original sources have been researched (Material held at Devonport Museum) in particular the Club's 'Minute Book' dated 1917-32. At other times the Club's oral history has been the source. Previously published articles displayed do contain inconsistencies and have not been relied upon where an alternate source has been available. Even when referring to the original Minute book, ascertaining the 'Year' has been difficult as this piece of information most often was omitted!

Dating back to **1895** wives and daughters of Devonport Men's Bowling Club played croquet on their lawns in Cambridge Terrace on allocated days and times.

In **1905** the women formed their own club, named Devonport Bowling Green Croquet Club, continuing to play on the men's bowling club greens. (*This was a women's club, early records show that men were permitted to play – but not on 'club days'.*)

In **1921** a rule was affirmed that women, who were members of the above-mentioned club at the time of their husbands' deaths, could still continue their membership

Throughout the **latter part of 1920s and early 30s** - presumably as membership of the Bowling Club grew - pressure began to mount on the women to find grounds of their own; some land in Cheltenham Road was judged to be "*too small*" and other land offered by a Mr Fraser was "*too expensive*". (minuted 27 Jan 1930)

Approaches were then made to the Devonport Borough Council to acquire land in Wairoa Road adjacent to the then Takapuna Racing Club grounds. May 25th (1931) Annual Meeting

"The secretary was directed to write to the Borough Council asking when it would be convenient to receive a deputation from the Croquet Club."

Lots of fundraising efforts were undertaken; including donations, a bridge afternoon “..... *a bridge afternoon in the Milne & Choyce Reception Hall on August 14th (1931)* to augment the new lawn fund” and a gymkhana are some mentioned.

10 July (1931) Minutes of meeting of the Devonport Bowling Croquet Club record that a letter from the Devonport Bowling Club had been received “..... offering a donation of 100 pounds providing the Club were prepared to vacate the present lawns at the end of the next playing season”. (And) “It was decided to accept this offer and thank the Bowling Club.....”

Further, it was recorded: “....that the Club proceed in the matter of obtaining four new full-sized lawns in Narrow Neck.”

(One could surmise that this ‘encouragement’ from the Bowling Club, plus availability of the land and a building, was enough to clinch the deal!)

At the committee meeting on 31 July (1931), “It was moved and seconded that the Rules for **North Shore Croquet Club** as read be adopted. It was further resolved that the club be an Incorporated Society and the matter was left in the hands of Mrs White.”

(This is the only mention of the name change in the records readily accessible.)

Minutes of meeting held in Bowling Club Pavilion at close of Card





Members of the Devonport Croquet Club playing on the Devonport Bowling Club green in 1906.

Devonport has its croquet 80 years on

Croquet is defined in the dictionary as "a game played on lawn, with two wooden balls that are driven through hoops with mallets".

Its origins, like so many games, have been lost with the passing of time but it is known to have been played in England and Ireland in the mid-1800s and the controlling body of the sport throughout the world, the London-based Croquet Association, was founded in 1897.

In 1914 the basic rules and tactics of the game, as played today, were evolved and since then competitive croquet has spread throughout the world.

But Garden Party Croquet with its wide hoops and rules to suit the convenience of each player was a great favourite with the genteel families of the Victorian and Edwardian eras and it was these people who brought the game to New Zealand, a reminder of "home".

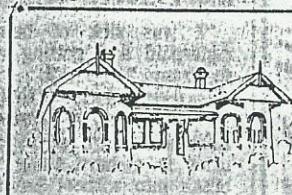
A croquet lawn was always laid in the grounds of the colonial mansions, and the wealthy families of the North Shore, particularly at Devonport, were no exception.

However, "garden party" croquet was not popular with all players, many of whom wanted a more competitive game with universal rules.

In 1895 the Devonport Bowling Club was formed the third oldest club in Auckland and the male members of this club, although primarily interested in lawn bowls, also played croquet.

Their wives and families were also keen to play and in 1897 it was suggested that the men's winter bowls green be used in the summer months as a croquet lawn.

The fledgling bowls club agreed to the proposal and



Beginnings

by Paul Titchener

playing croquet by members and their families became so popular that in 1905 a separate club, the Devonport Croquet Club, was formed within the auspices of the Devonport Bowling Club.

However as men's lawn bowls became more popular and the membership of the Devonport Club increased, the croquet lawns were required during the summer months as bowling greens.

The development created problems and the bowling club was forced to ask the members of the croquet club, mainly women, to seek new playing lawns elsewhere.

Players from the Stanley Bay area decided to approach the Devonport Borough Council for a section of land in the newly reclaimed Stanley Bay Park. This park was developed from a reclaimed inlet of Ngataringa Bay, when the dredged mud from the extensions to the naval base was pumped across the road leading to Stanley Point in the year between 1921 and 1923.

In 1924 the croquet lawn for the Stanley Bay Club was laid and a most attractive little clubhouse was constructed.

This club flourished until the late 1950s when, with dwindling membership, the club was wound up. The clubhouse was demolished, although its concrete base remains, and the lawn is now part of a practice cricket pitch.

In 1930 the bowling club formally asked the Devonport Croquet Club to vacate its lawn, and the club, des-

perate for a new venue, approached the Devonport Borough Council for a suitable area of land to lay new lawns.

The council co-operated by making available a section of Alison Park, bordering Wairoa Rd, near the entrance to the clubhouse and stand of the Takapuna Jockey Club, which at this time was experiencing financial difficulties, which culminated in its demise in 1934.

Although the croquet club was grateful for the council's help, much work was needed to get the land suitable for playing croquet. Drains were laid, the labour being provided by council and topsoil was brought in to provide a suitable seed bed.

The area was levelled and sown and in February 1932, the new croquet lawns of the renamed Devonport Croquet Club, now proudly called the North Shore Croquet Club (Inc) was opened.

The pavilion was formerly a workman's cottage which had stood on the adjoining racecourse until it was moved to the croquet lawn. This pavilion has always been well maintained and has become an attractive asset to the area.

The opening membership was 45 and over the years has fluctuated between 40 and 60. In spite of small membership the club always employed a fulltime lawkeeper and gardener who was often assisted by enthusiastic club members.

As a result the club grounds, through the 1930s and 1940s, were admired by the local residents. However

the 1950s saw a decline in membership numbers brought about by natural attrition and competition from other sports, particularly golf.

A croquet club had been formed at Takapuna and many members who lived in the North Devonport and South Takapuna areas resigned from the Devonport Club and joined the new club, because it was more convenient to get public transport to the new organisation.

This drop in membership forced the club to return part of the land given by the council, because of the cost of maintenance.

However, in spite of these difficulties the North Shore Croquet Club remained active and the membership through the 1960s gradually increased until in 1970, the land returned to the council was requested by the club to once more be made available. The council agreed and in 1971 two new croquet lawns were laid to accommodate the new membership.

Through the 1970s the club improved its facilities by piping and covering the large open drain which ran along the road boundary, planting the adjacent areas in suitable vegetation and fencing the property with a wooden fence to provide shelter for the players.

Today the fine old club, which celebrates its 80th anniversary this year, has a steady membership of about 50 active members and provides a most desirable amenity for the croquet players of the southern North Shore area.



RECEPTION TO THE VISITING ENGLISH CROQUET PLAYERS WHEN THEY PLAYED THEIR FIRST GAME AT DEVONPORT YESTERDAY.
Left: A snapshot at the reception. The members of the English team are on the right. Mr. A. Harris, M.P. for Waitemata, and the Mayor of Devonport, Mr. Ernest Aldridge, are also shown. Right: Lieutenant-Colonel Du Pre, of the English team, playing a shot.

PAPERSPAST

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Kāinga o Papers Past

Kupu Whakataki

Rapu

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Kupu Whakataki

Rapu

Ti

Papers Past > Auckland Star > 23 Whiringa-ā-nuku 1900 > Page 3 > MEETI

Papers Past > Auckland Star > 22 Whiringa-ā-nuku 1902 > Page 3 > LAWN TENN

MEETINGS, ENTERTAINMENTS, ETC.

Auckland Star, Rōrahi XXXI, Putanga 152, 23 Whiringa-ā-nuk

▶ Mō tēnei niupepa

▶ Tiro i te tuhinga kupu ā-rorohiko

LAWN TENNIS.

Auckland Star, Rōrahi XXXIII, Putanga 251, 22 Whiringa-ā-nuk

▶ Mō tēnei niupepa

▶ Tiro i te tuhinga kupu ā-rorohiko

MEETINGS, ENTERTAINMENTS, ETC.

DEVONPORT LAWN TENNIS CLUB

The annual general meeting of the above Club was held last evening in the Borough Council Chambers, Devonport. There was a good attendance of members, F. E. Mason being voted to the chair. The secretary and treasurer (Mr C. H. Young) read the committee's report and balance-sheet, which showed the financial position of the Club to be very much sounder than it has ever been. The income of the Club for the past twelve months showed a balance over expenditure of £10 10/6, which, coupled with a profit of £24 1/7 derived from a series of winter socials, has reduced the outstanding indebtedness of the Club from £49 10/8 to £14 18/7. A special vote of thanks was accorded to the committee appointed to carry out the socials. Notice of motion was given that, at a general meeting of the Club, to be held on the lawn on Friday, November 9, the name of the Club should be changed from Devonport Lawn Tennis Club to Devonport Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, and also, that members' subscriptions for either tennis or croquet should be fixed at the following rates:—Gentlemen 25/-, ladies 15/-, honorary membership 10/-. The following officers were unanimously elected for the ensuing year:—President, J. C. Macky; vice-presidents, J. Bolland, M.H.R., A. Alison, Rich. Duder, P. H. Mason, W. Philcox, W. Skeates, A.

LAWN TENNIS

DEVONPORT LAWN TENNIS AND CROQUET CLUB

The Devonport Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club held their annual general meeting in the Borough Council Chambers last night. There was a fair attendance, and in the absence of the president Mr F. E. Mason was voted to the chair. The report and balance-sheet, which were adopted, showed that the club was never in a better position. The profits from the ordinary income, amounting to about £15, augmented by a balance of £11 3/- raised from socials during the winter by the ladies' committee, enabled the committee to wipe off all outstanding liabilities and carry forward a credit balance of £7 11/-. The membership for the season was a record for the club, comprising 64 playing tennis members and 10 croquet members. The following officers were unanimously elected for the ensuing season:—President, Mr T. B. Howarth; vice-presidents, Messrs E. W. Alison, A. Alison, Rich. Duder, Ford, W. Philcox, W. Skeates, A. Harvey, Benjamin, P. H. Mason, J. C. Macky, J. B. Gould, and Dr. Laing; secretary, Mr R. H. Burke; assistant secretary, Mr T. Redman; treasurer, Mr F. Howarth; auditor, Mr F. E. Mason; ground superintendent, Mr G. H. C. Best; handicappers, Messrs A. Bartley and C. H. Young; delegates to L.T.A., Messrs Burke and Redman; committee, Messrs T. B. Howarth, G. H. C. Best, F. Howarth, J. Redman, and the secretary; ladies' committee, Mrs Ford, Mrs Fitzherbert, Misses Tanton, V. Bell, and Prime. It was unanimously decided to

PAPERSPAST

[Papers Past Home](#)[Introduction](#)[Search](#)[Browse](#)[Papers Past](#) > [Auckland Star](#) > 4 November 1901 > Page 2 > DEVONPORT LAWN TENNIS CLUB.

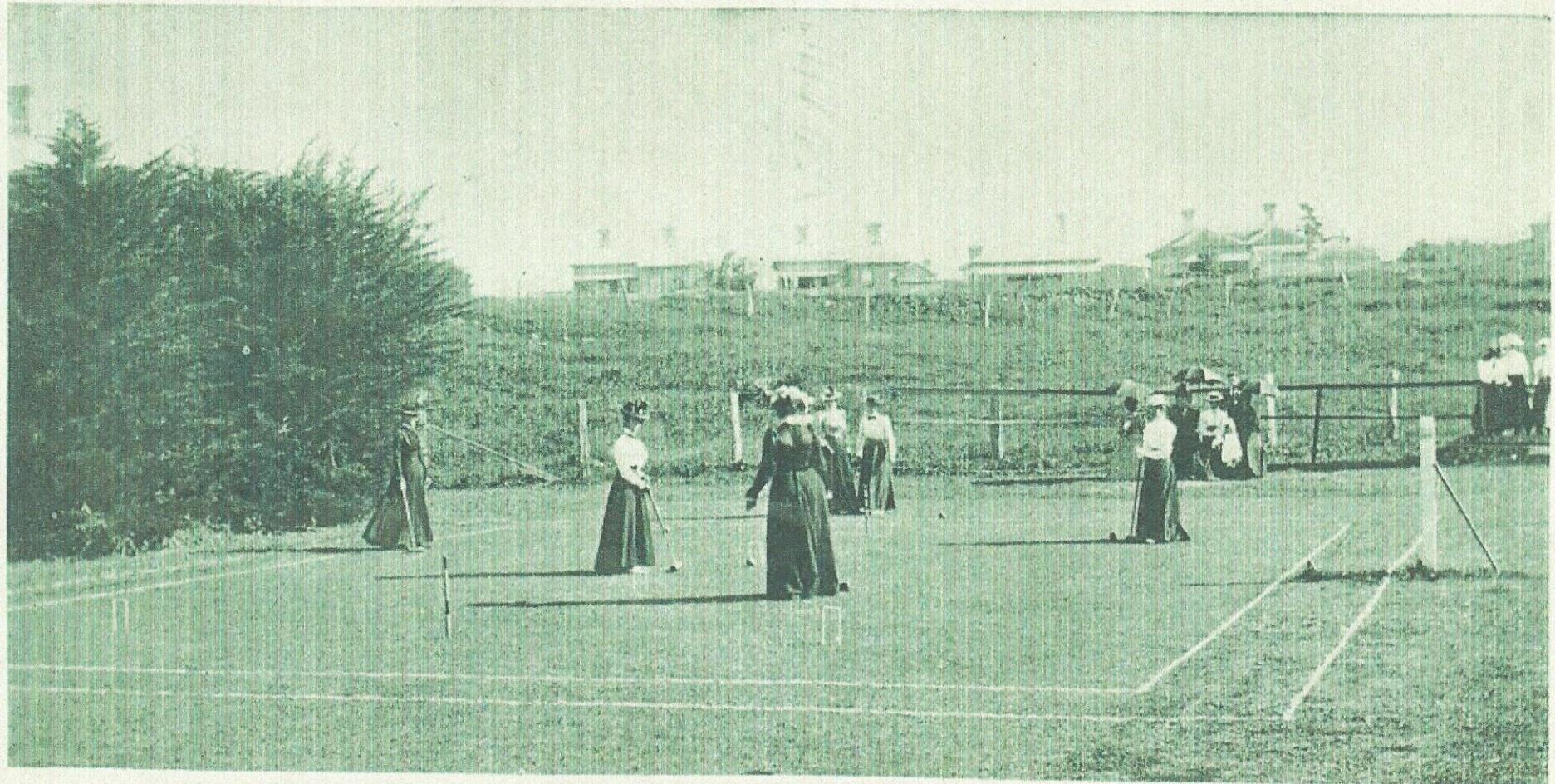
DEVONPORT LAWN TENNIS CLUB.

Auckland Star, Volume XXXII, Issue 253, 4 November 1901, Page 2

[About this newspaper](#)[View computer-generated text](#)

DEVONPORT LAWN TENNIS CLUB

Notwithstanding the high wind and somewhat doubtful weather a large number of members and visitors were present on Saturday at the opening of the tennis and croquet lawns of the Devonport Club. Croquet promises to be very popular this year. The Club have prepared two greens, and have already elected a membership of fourteen to this section of the Club. At the invitation of the Club the members of the adjacent bowling club visited the lawns and partook of refreshments, after which Mr J. C. Macky, president of the tennis club, in a few well-chosen



Photos. by Vale.

THE CHAMPION CROQUET FOURS.

Davenport Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club Nov 1900

Devonport Squash Club

Wairoa Road, Narrow Neck, Devonport, Auckland

Postal address P.O. Box 32-091

Our History

In 1880 the Devonport Tennis Club was formed at the location of the current squash club. At the height of its popularity in the 1930s the club operated six grass courts cared for by two groundsmen. In October 1963 the club closed its doors due to competition from the Vauxhall and Ngataringa Tennis Clubs and the rising costs of maintaining the courts.

In February 1975 the Devonport Tennis Club became the Vauxhall Racquets Club with squash facilities under construction.

In the late 1980s the tennis side of the club folded, leaving the club in a financially difficult position. Thanks to members loans and a loan from North Shore City Council the squash club survived and changed its name to Devonport Squash Club, reflecting the nature of its sporting interest and the clubs location.

At its last name change in 1992 the Devonport Squash Club had a membership of 25 financial members and, although debt free, the future of the club was far from certain. Since then many things have changed and now the club is stronger then ever before having over 100 members, 8 teams in Auckland wide competitions and a vibrant junior programme.

Site of Devonport LT + CC, Wairoa Rd, Narrow Neck



By croquet - 100 years of playing the game

By LIZ WILLIS

The Auckland region's oldest croquet club, which brought the sport into the public spotlight in Devonport after years of playing on private gardens, is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

North Shore Croquet Club of Devonport president Joy Fleming says the small club is very proud of its history and has original club records dating back to 1917.

Mrs Fleming says the club records are "fascinating reading" and paint a picture in the early days of a formidable group of women running the club.

At first men were discouraged from joining.

"The men were told they could play, but not on club days," she says.

Men didn't join the club until the 1980s.

During the war years delegations would head to the Devonport Borough Council seeking assistance with club facilities and lawn maintenance.

"They didn't stand any nonsense.

"The war made a difference to the women, it made them come out of their shell."

They were also prolific fundraisers holding gymkhanae and card evenings to raise money.

The club history dates back to 1895.

That is when the wives and daughters of Devonport Men's Bowling Club started playing croquet but were allowed to play only once a week on one lawn. They formed their own club in 1905.

In 1929 they celebrated the opening of their own lawns and clubhouse in Wairoa Rd.

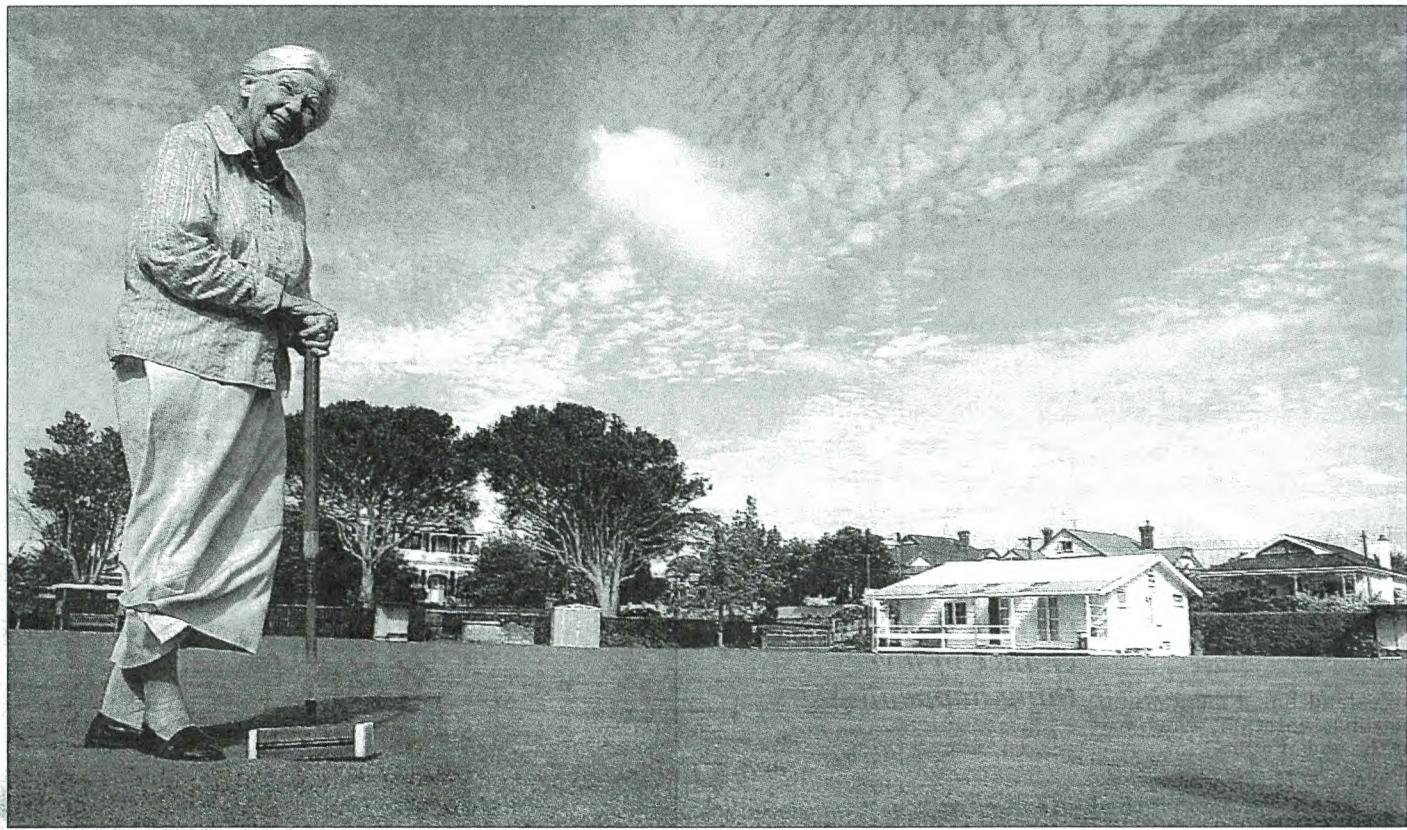
Membership dropped to six in the 1950s.

In the 1990s it grew to 80 and now enjoys a membership of about 60.

Mrs Fleming says the longevity of the friendly club is largely due to the commitment of the life members and other long-standing members who support it.

The club welcomes new members.

For more information, contact Joy Fleming, phone: 445-3103.



Proud history: Above, president Joy Fleming on the lawns of 100-year-old North Shore Croquet Club of Devonport.

Photo: MIKE KNOTT

Looking back: Right, meet the North Shore Croquet Club members of 1936.



North Shore Improvements.

With the transformation of the Takapuna race track into a golf course, a number of alterations and improvements have been rendered possible. The seats of the old grandstand are in process of demolition, and most of the old stable buildings have disappeared—so too has the famous notice board on an entrance gate: "Horses—Enter by Other Gate," which led one small child to inquire, "Mummy, s'posing they can't read?" The old corrugated iron fence which formerly bounded the track alongside the right-of-way from Wairoa Road to the foot of Ascot Avenue is gone, and in its place is a flower bed, 10ft wide, already gay with flowers and backed with closely-planted hydrangeas of fair size which soon will make a dense hedge. The removal of the high fence appears to open up a better view of the beautifully-kept triangular reserve whereon are the courts of the North Shore Croquet Club, with its pergola of punga stems and crimson climbing roses, its graceful statue, and formal flower beds, which contain some remarkably fine standard roses. Busily engaged in cropping the grass of the new golf course is a flock of sheep, complete with lambs—very young lambs, which are the delight of children passing on their way to Vauxhall School. The whole of this flat area is, of course, reclaimed ground. Until some 50 years ago Narrow Neck (Te Kiri Kiritai) was in truth narrow, being no more than a sandy ridge a few hundred yards long, and a tidal swamp extended over the area now occupied by streets and houses, the gas works, the race ground, and the grassy flat beyond. There was considerable Maori occupancy here in the past, and a fortified pa stood where now is the military camp at Narrow Neck.



12 The sporting North Shore

Local historian Paul Titchener didn't overstate matters when he wrote that 'Devonport could well claim to be the cradle of sport in New Zealand'.¹ To support this claim he pointed out that Devonport had the oldest cricket club, soccer club and rugby league club, along with the third-oldest rugby club, in New Zealand. He also claimed Devonport had Auckland's oldest rugby club and rowing club, the second-oldest golf club and jockey club (at the time), and the third-oldest yacht club and men's bowling club. He also noted that the only baseball club ever founded in New Zealand was a short-lived Devonport-based club. According to Titchener, the main reason for this early interest in sport lay in the visiting British regiments and naval ships that brought them to the colony via the Devonport wharves, dockyards and forts. As well as sports events associated with summer carnivals

and beach activities, organised sport has long been an intrinsic part of recreation on the North Shore.

Bowling and tennis

The development of a bowling or tennis club is a sure sign that a new suburb has come of age. The Devonport Bowling Club dates from 8 February 1895, and its pavilion opened for play in January 1896.

The Takapuna Bowling Club dates from 1911 and was a joint venture with the adjacent Takapuna Tennis Club, while the North Shore Women's Bowling Club was established in 1947.

The Waitemata Bowling Club in Church Street, Northcote Point started in 1899, its bowling green was opened in 1909 and in 1912 it was renamed the Waitemata Bowling and Croquet Club, catering to both Northcote and Birkenhead residents. In 1951 it was

renamed the Northcote Bowling and Croquet Club and from 1973 the Northcote Bowling Club. A separate Birkenhead Bowling Club was formed in 1943. In Devonport, the Cambria Terrace Bowling and Croquet Club, was formed in 1917 and became the North Shore Croquet Club.

Bowling and tennis clubs often go hand in hand, and so it was with the development of tennis on the North Shore. The Devonport Tennis Club, formed in 1880, was wound up in October 1963 because of competition from hard courts at Vauxhall and Ngataringa Bay. Further away, Birkdale had a tennis club, at least in 1923, and it was likely formed earlier. There were of course other local tennis clubs,

including Kitchener Park Tennis Club in Milford.

The Takapuna Tennis Club dates from 1912. It grew from several small groups of tennis enthusiasts that played at Mrs Harriet Shakespear's home in Milford, which eventually had three courts, and at the O'Neill family home in O'Neills Avenue off Hurstmere Road. It was originally called the Takapuna Lawn Tennis Club to distinguish it from hard-court clubs elsewhere on the North Shore. The pavilion in Bracken Avenue was built in 1926 at no charge by a Mr Howe, a master builder, and the grass courts formed by volunteers in the same year.²

During World War II, the Takapuna Borough Council bought

THE CLUBHOUSE & GROUNDS

Sources: **Club Minute Book 1917 -1932
(Held at Devonport Museum)**

**Oral History passed down through the generations of
North Shore Croquet Club members**

The Club Minute Book still in existence makes no mention of exactly how, when and why it acquired the building that became the clubhouse from the Takapuna Racing Club but reference is made to it variously as a workman's cottage and the jockeys' tack room.

However, in minutes dated **2.8.1932** it is recorded that "*...in view of the cost of installation and maintenance it was decided not to install the electric light in the new Pavilion at present.*" so the acquisition was sometime prior to that.

The photographs displayed show the area of land just behind the stables of the Takapuna Racing Club which were to become the croquet grounds and two small stand-alone buildings are clearly seen. It is believed that one of these became the NS Croquet Club's club pavilion and whilst this is likely it has to date not been proven. It is certainly known that by the late 1920s the Racing Club was facing financial difficulties and in fact closed in 1934.

The paneling is believed to be 'original' to the building (but whether 'original' to any refurbishment undertaken by the Club in the early 1930s to suit its new purposes, or 'original' to the time of its use by the Racing Club is unclear.) The lockers which now hold the club members' mallets are fairly reliably believed to have been in use as the jockeys' lockers where one assumes they stored their silks, caps and/or personal effects.

In **1995/6** when the Club undertook substantial renovations of the clubhouse, (plans drawn up by Manning & Associates) the tongue-and-groove timbers and the lockers were carefully removed and stored until reused in their present positions.)

The front deck was extended in **2004** and the building has remained unchanged since that time.

The area of land acquired from the Devonport Borough Council required draining and one assumes that the Council undertook this work. Quite when the building - variously described as a "jockey's tack room" and a "workman's cottage" - which was to become the Club's Pavilion arrived on the site is unknown.

(Refer to the display on "The Building & Grounds" for photos of the land area and what "might" be the building acquired then relocated to the Club grounds)

1932 Official Opening of the new lawns and clubrooms was held on Labour Day, 24 October

Minutes of Annual Meeting of the North Shore Croquet Club state the meeting was held in the Club Pavilion at Wairoa Road on Tuesday 13 June 1933. Prior to that, records show that meetings continued to be held at the Devonport Bowling Club Pavilion.

1936 From Minutes of NS Croquet Club Committee meeting 20 Jan. 1936 "....that an "At Home" be held on the lawns on Saturday afternoon on 25th January at 2 pm. *This function is to celebrate our having paid in full our liability.*"

(The photo displayed below was published in the Devonport Borough Council's Jubilee Booklet in 1936; not necessarily but perhaps taken during these celebration?)

Throughout the intervening decades, croquet continued to be played on the lawn, and the club went through the usual 'highs' and 'lows' of all sports clubs. At one point membership dropped as low as six in the 1950s and rose again to 80 in the 1990s. Current membership stands at around 40.

See footnotes below

1995 Substantial internal alterations undertaken and new decks to eastern entry and along the northern side facing the greens
2004 verandah to north deck

NZHPT Listing:

Not registered by the NZHPT.

Significant Elements:

A sports pavilion, rectangular floor plan with a simple gable roof and sheltering verandah facing onto the greens. Brick, timber weatherboards and joinery

Extent of Listing:

Entire exterior of club house, croquet greens and shelter sheds around the greens, extent of greens defined by timber perimeter fence.

History:

Croquet was first played in Devonport "...on a lawn laid down at Mr. Roy Alison's strawberry and rose gardens in Beach Road" [King Edward Parade] in the 1870s - 80s.¹ Then, in the mid 1890s, a croquet ground was formed in Cambridge Terrace [by Devonport Domain] for the wives and daughters of members of the Devonport Bowling Club. By 1905, the number of women involved in the game had increased and the decision was made to form their own separate club. Thus the Devonport Bowling Green Croquet Club came into being with a yearly subscription of one guinea and a membership of local women over the age of 18.²

The Social Gossip columns of the Auckland newspaper, *Observer*, describe some of the early events in the life of the club:

...The lady members of the Devonport Croquet Club entertained their friends and members of several other clubs on Thursday last. The members of the Devonport Bowling Club had kindly placed part of their green at the disposal of the ladies, who arranged a progressive croquet tournament. The game was very enjoyable, and resulted in Mrs Reynolds winning the prize in the first grade, and Mrs Boak in the second (22 December 1906).

...The Devonport Croquet ladies, in connection with the Devonport [Bowling] Club, turned out in large numbers at the club's opening. Their corner of the grounds looks really beautiful, and the game has caught on over the water. I noticed that the ladies had not time for the opening speech, for they continued playing during the oration (2 November 1907).

...Last week the Devonport Croquet Club gave a large 'At Home' at their lawns, Stanley Street [now Cambridge Tce.]. The tea-table was prettily decorated with the club's colours, blue and yellow (13 March 1909).³

¹ North Shore Times Advertiser (NSTA) 16/11/1971:53.

² The Devonport Flagstaff, 10/3/2005:10 (interview with Joy Fleming); The Devonport Flagstaff, 7/9/2007: 14-15 (Ramblings with Rod).

³ Papers Past (on line): Observer : 22/12/1906:8; 2/11/1907:22; 13/3/1909:8.

These accounts continue with elaborate descriptions of what each woman was wearing in the way of brocades, lace and silk. The sensible white 'uniform' came later.

In 1930 a small portion of land was made available, by the Devonport Borough Council, for the formation of new grounds. Situated in the eastern corner of the Wairoa Road Reserve, this section was near the entrance to the racecourse which, at that time, was experiencing difficulties and which would finally cease operations altogether in 1934.⁴

By November 1931, the women had severed all associations with the Devonport Bowling Club and, in June the following year, changed their name to the North Shore Croquet Club. Once the grounds were laid out, around August 1932, the club opened for the new season⁵ utilising a workman's cottage, acquired from the Takapuna Jockey Club, as a clubhouse. The historic nature of this building (also thought to have been the tack room) has been retained with members now storing their mallets in old lockers believed to be original.⁶

Electric lighting was installed in the pavilion in 1937 at the personal expense of Mrs Griffiths, wife of Devonport's engineer.⁷

Two new lawns were added in late 1969. A notable growth in club membership over the previous two years had necessitated the increased playing area which was officially opened by the Mayor of Devonport, Mr E. Jackson. The Mayoress then "played the first ball" and declared the season open.⁸

Repairs for which the Council provided "...a grant of up to \$200 on a one for one subsidy basis" were carried out on the pavilion in 1973. Numerous shelter sheds were also erected around the perimeter of the greens during the 1970s.⁹

In April 1995 Manning and Associates drew up plans for general alterations most of which were internal. Two new decks were added at this time, one at the eastern entrance and another one on the northern side. This latter deck was smaller than the one that now extends along that side of the building.¹⁰

In 2004 an ASB grant of \$14,000 allowed for the construction of a covered verandah on the northern side of the original structure.¹¹

By 2005, when the Club celebrated its centenary, it had the honour of being the Auckland region's oldest croquet club with an active membership of about 60. Around 100 former players and members celebrated the occasion with a formal luncheon at the Wakatere Boat Club on 11 March.¹²

Statement of Significance

⁴ *The Devonport Flagstaff*, 7/9/2007.

⁵ Devonport Bowls Green Croquet Club Minute Books (1917-) held by the Devonport Historical and Museum Society.

⁶ *North Shore Times* 31/8/2010:31.

⁷ *The Devonport Flagstaff*, 10/3/2005:10.

⁸ Auckland Public Library, Auckland Scrap Book, Sept 1969 – p.204.

⁹ North Shore City Council Archives, DBC 109/36 7/17.

¹⁰ Plan (dated April 1995) held by the Devonport Historical and Museum Society.

¹¹ *The Devonport Flagstaff*, 10/3/2005:10.

¹² *The Devonport Flagstaff*, 10/3/2005:10; *North Shore Times*, 12/4/2005:6.

The North Shore Croquet Club building is an important local sports club and the game itself has a long history in Devonport

Architecture:

The clubhouse is significant as it illustrates the reuse of an existing cottage and tack room from the Takapuna Jockey Club and its adaptation to a new use. Such a process was common for many clubs, with slender financial resources and only volunteer labour to rely on. Its design is that of a simple pavilion and similar designs are found elsewhere in Devonport and on the North Shore.

History:

Croquet is a game which rose to prominence in Victorian and Edwardian times often as a game for ladies, enabling them to take gentle exercise while wearing restrictive and elaborate dresses, hats and gloves. It was played in the 1870s-80s in Devonport and it is significant that the club is the oldest in the Auckland region and that the building and grounds continue to be used for their original purpose. It is also significant that the club along with many others in Devonport was supported by the Devonport Borough Council by making reserve land available through a License to Occupy to the club and later through grants for repair work to the pavilion.

The Croquet Club is important in representing themes in the historic development of Devonport including Local Government, Devonport Borough Council, Sporting Organisations and Venues and Community Organisations.

Context:

Situated on the edge of the Wairoa Reserve it sits adjacent to the Wairoa Road Plunket Rooms (formerly the North Shore Women's Bowling Club) and both buildings adjoin the Waitemata Golf Club. The croquet club is otherwise surrounded by a mature residential landscape.

Fast and furious

The New Zealand Herald



Torn branches and ripped shelters from a croquet club on Wairoa Rd in Devonport, minutes after a wind blast ripped through streets in the Auckland harbourside suburb last evening.

Picture: Richard Moore

North Shore Croquet Club

1999

In 1895, The Devonport bowlers offered their wives and daughters some lawn on which to play croquet. By 1905 the game had become so popular that a separate club, the Devonport Croquet Club was formed. In 1930, the bowlers wanted the land back and the croquet players were forced to seek lawns elsewhere. Devonport Council made the available a section of Alison Park beside the old Takapuna Race Course. In February 1932, after a great deal of work on the grounds, the renamed club, North Shore Croquet Club was opened with four lawns.

The existing clubhouse was formerly the Racing Club's Tack Room and Caretakers cottage, which stood on the adjoining racecourse until it was moved to the croquet lawns. In 1994, with a budget of \$50,000 the clubhouse was upgraded by taking in the tool shed doubling the area but still retaining the original ambience of the workman's cottage. Opening membership was 45 and over the years numbers have fluctuated between 40 and 60. In spite of small membership, the club has always employed a full time lawn keeper and gardener who was often assisted by enthusiastic club members. As a result the local residents admired the club grounds through the 1930's and 1940's. However the 1950's saw a decline in membership numbers partly by natural attrition and partly by competition from other sports. This drop in membership forced the club to return part of the land to the council. However in spite of these difficulties the North Shore Croquet Club remained active and membership through the 1960's gradually increased and in 1970 the club asked the council for use of the land previously returned to them.

Through the 1970's the club improved its facilities by piping and covering the large open drain which ran along the road boundary, planting adjacent areas in suitable vegetation and fencing the property to provide shelter for the players.

Today lawns have been drained and a watering system installed along with many other improvements. Fundraising is always required in the form on garage sales, sponsored tournaments, bridge tournaments and speaker lunches. At the present time, the North Shore Croquet Club is in excellent shape with an active and enthusiastic membership, including a good proportion of men. Hopefully we are no longer thought of as "the funny little old ladies club".

NORTH SHORE CROQUET CLUB IN 1936.



← another ~~two~~ lawns
thru this gap



North Shore Croquet Club 2010



View of Takapuna Jockey Club (c 1930)
Showing future North Shore Croquet Club
site (green) and possibly existing
(2010) clubhouse building (red)

