

COMO CROQUET CLUB - HISTORY

Como Croquet club was founded in June, 1928 by Mrs. A.C. James, the pioneer members being Mesdames A.C. James, McClay, Davies, Haffner, Slade, Cass, Edgecumbe, Walker, Smallacombe and J. James.

The club's first secretarial records commenced in 1932, with Mrs. James being secretary, then President in 1932/34.

Mrs. Blakers was President in 1934/36 and drew up the Constitution, when the club had 21 members. (This was revised in the 1970s and again in 2005, which is the current document in use.) The Secretary, Mrs. James was very pleased to advise they had a bank balance of £34.12.0 (\$69.20) to go towards erecting their pavilion at an early date.

In 1934 Como acquired their own lawn and pavilion (which was situated down near the existing shelter shed near the Comer St. gate), November 13th being the official opening. That season 1934/35 the South Perth Road Board (as it was called then) handed over the maintenance of the green to the Club, which caused severe inroads into the banking account! The Road Board was to help with the watering and provide top-dressing at the end of the season.

Bridge was played regularly, in the evenings and afternoons, and more often when the club was in recess, which helped towards financing the upkeep of the green and the pavilion.

In the 1930s the South Perth Road Board provided the assistance of a green keeper, sand, loam and manure for the lawn and the club paid for the top-dressing and mowing. Some years they had problems with the lawn, but interviews with the green-keeper seemed to improve matters, and the green was in good condition for pennant play !

The husbands of some members painted the pavilion and the fence and did odd jobs for the ladies.

In 1936 the fees were raised from 26/-(\$2.60) to 30/-(\$3.00), (with the President's casting vote!)

A green-keeper was employed in 1937/38 at 15/-(\$1.50) per week from October to the end of April, then May to September at 9/-(90¢), that included doing the top dressing.

With the advent of the war, things changed and the club offered the use of the pavilion to the A.R.P., so a letter was sent to the Warden, who duly replied thanking the ladies for their offer.

During 1941/42 bridge was played for 5-6 months in the evenings, but because of the blackout regulations it was discontinued. Afternoon bridge was not well patronised because so many ladies were busy working for the war effort, therefore they had to dispense with the gardener during winter months to curtail expenses. During the latter part of 1942 the lawn was divided into 2 greens to enable more members to play at a time.

In 1942 it was agreed that everyone bring 1 teaspoon of tea and 1 teaspoon of sugar, for teas, on account of the shortages during the war!!

General meetings were held quarterly, and a motion in October 1942 to hold them more often was defeated. It wasn't until November 1961 it was agreed to hold them monthly, and now they are held quarterly, with monthly Management Committee meetings.

The lawns improved during 1942/43 owing to being able to finance the use of a petrol mower each fortnight. At the end of the season the club had a Field Day and the land army members manured the greens after hand mowing the clover, and the members were somewhat weary but content as they had saved the club "some few pounds in hard-earned cash!"

During 1942/43 and 1943/44, owing to difficulties of transport and war work amongst the members, no pennant teams were entered.

In 1944 members were asked to look for coupon-free material for curtains for the pavilion.

With the war clouds lifting the secretary hoped the club would get back to more social activities and the year ahead bring the peace and freedom from war for which they all longed and prayed.

In 1949 the club celebrated its 21st birthday with a successful party and it was also the 21st anniversary for Mrs. James as an office bearer as either president or secretary ~ a notable performance!

In July 1951 the Secretary wrote to the South Perth Road Board asking would they consider leaving one of the two lavatories in the adjoining reserve, for the use of the club, with a lock affixed to keep it private, as the sanitary block on the foreshore was nearing completion. The Board wrote back in October saying they would leave one, and a key given to the Club ~ for a period of 6 months ~ position to be reviewed !! (The minutes do not reveal how long it was left, but there was no more correspondence on the matter. Our late past patron, Mr. George Burnett, then a councillor, said he was responsible for that decision!!)

In 1953 the club successfully celebrated its 25th birthday, with Mrs. Brooks, president, Mrs. Ritchie, secretary, and Mrs. Hooper, treasurer. There is in the clubhouse a wooden mallet with plaque attached to commemorate the occasion, listing members at that time.

March 1955 the club was struggling to accommodate all members so they wrote to the Road Board asking for a piece of further land, to increase the green sizes.

In September 1956 The Municipality of South Perth, (as it was then known), agreed to granting the extra land, subject to verifying the measurements.

In May 1957 The South Perth Council, wrote advising additional land had been pegged out for the club, making the greens full size.

During gala days interesting small games such as "wobble wobble, hurry scurry, apple-core, bubbles, tunnel, devil's stick, pancake, jazz stick, stick and circle" were played - does anyone know of them today?

In 1956/57 the Secretary was asked to contact the boy scouts re top-dressing the greens, as in previous years, and pay £2-0-0, (\$4.00). The scouts also provided canvas awnings for club gala days and gymkhanas.

In May 1959 the Council advised they were drawing up plans and calling tenders for the new clubhouse. This meant a lot of fund raising, but everyone worked hard, and construction commenced on the building. Now, 'having lovely new clubrooms' the members decided the greens and clubhouse should be enclosed with a 6 ft cyclone fence to prevent vandalism, so in March 1960 they wrote to the Council requesting the fence be erected. The Council agreed.

In June 1960 the new clubrooms were occupied and members donated various items to help furnish it. Their goal had been reached, but still funds were needed for a few more necessary alterations. Fund raising seemed an on-going task for the members, as well as playing croquet!

In 1961 it was agreed that when the temperature printed in the "West Australian" newspaper was 102°F there would be no shield games played. It seems the problem still exists to this day, deciding how hot it has to be to cancel the games. The players, when playing shield games, were requested to "look alive and bright, dress correctly and not to drag mallets across the greens if they were having a bad day"!! The length of dresses for Association play was to be the middle of the calf of the leg. (If the ladies could see what the players of today wear we wonder what they would think ?)

In August 1963 there were 1012 croquet players in W.A.
(In 2004 there are now around 550 players in WA)

During the passing years there were many clubs mentioned that no longer exist, the Como members having been asked to opening or gala days. These clubs were, Carnamah, Balingup, Toodyay, , Swan, Corrigin, Collie, Esperance, Bridgetown, Northam, Ashburton, Beverley, Brookton, Yealering, Tambellup, Kalgoorlie, Cottesloe Royal Park, Perth, Hollywood, Mt. Lawley, Claremont, Maylands, Midland Junction, Kitchener Park, and Kings Park [Subiaco club closed in October 1993, (being established in 1904) and Fremantle club is "in permanent recess" as from July, 1997 (being established in 1900). Also closed, or ceased to affiliate, in more recent times are Katanning, Pingelly, St. John's Albany amalgamated with Albany Gomm Park in 2003, Leederville and Floreat closed to reform as Cambridge, and North Perth changed its name to Forrest Park, as the WACA had finally established head quarters in 2000 at a disused bowling club in Mt. Lawley, called Forrest Park.]

In February 1964 each club was asked to pay 2/- (20¢) annually for a bulletin put out by the Hollywood Club, who received a letter of congratulations from the Council on their initiative.

In the season of 1964 the Perth Croquet club moved to a new green and club rooms at Langley Park, through the assistance of the Perth Bowling Club. Around this time there was talk of a headquarters being established at Smiths Lake area, (off Charles Street, North Perth) and the Council asked each member to give 1/- (10¢) for 3 years to the Lawns Account, to help develop the area. There doesn't appear to be any more correspondence regarding that matter, until October 1967 when Langley Park was mentioned as Association headquarters and was to be discussed further at WACA Council meetings. No more information was forthcoming on the headquarters subject, so it was assumed nothing came of the discussions ~ probably financial troubles!

In August 1967 Como wrote to the Association asking if the changing of the name to "Lawn Billiards" would be Australia-wide? There was no reply or further correspondence, and as the name is still croquet, we gather no action was taken on the matter!

Como club had around 45 members in 1967 and when gala days and gymkhanas were held they used to ask the Council to mow the area at the back of the club house to accommodate everyone. Finally they wrote to the Council asking for the lawn to be made into greens, a request to which the Council agreed, and the club eventually had 4 full sized greens, all enclosed by a 6ft cyclone fence. There was no door to the back of the club house, so finance had to be raised to build in one, as now exists.

In April 1969 a momentous decision was reached - a vote was taken and it was decided to admit male members to the club !!

The members agreed that the clubhouse needed another toilet, so permission had to be received from the South Perth Council before work commenced. It was decided not to call it a men's toilet, but an extra one! (Was that in case the men might not remain permanently as members??) In 1998, and at present, it is the men's, as male membership has continued to grow!!

The next event of interest to occur was the club's 50th anniversary, in August 1978. The President, Mrs. J. Barnaby, Secretary, Mrs. M. Cook, and Treasurer Mrs. V. Ferry presided over a very successful party to mark the occasion and everyone enjoyed the celebrations.

Late 1977 it was decided it would be an asset for the club to have two greens lit for night play, and after much discussion, in December 1977 a fund was started to raise money to light the 2 back lawns. Many raffles, cake stalls, lamington drives, donations and much fund raising later, the finance was raised to install the lighting.

Bridge evenings were discontinued in November 1978 owing to declining numbers.

In February 1979 the club hosted a special party to turn on the lights, and members have enjoyed many evenings of play since, including Como's first Association night tournament event in March 1992. This was successfully held again the following year, and has now become an annual fixture.

The Way '79 Carnival was very successful with 71 games played at Como and 48 at Nedlands. Como had a busy time providing refreshments to players and spectators during the tournament.

The club continued, providing social games, club championships, gala days, hosting Association events, Country Week, shield teams, and generally catering for all croquet players.

In 1988 Como celebrated its 60th anniversary. With Mrs. Janet Chapman President, Mrs. Dai Maskew Secretary, Mrs. Marion Burke Treasurer and a hard working social committee a very successful luncheon was held, followed by small games in the afternoon. Special guests were invited, including the daughter and grand-daughter of founding member Mrs. A.C. James.

1991/92 season saw the first male president of the club elected, Mr. Terry Speers.

February 1992 the club decided to host a night tournament of handicap doubles, played over 10 nights, with participants playing only 4 nights each, but plenty of work for our club members. 16 years later it is still being successfully conducted and enjoyed by players and helpers alike.

In October, 1992 the South Perth Council advised the club they would dig up 1 and 2 greens (facing Comer St.), to a depth of 1 foot, laser-level, replace with new topsoil and weed-free grass, and be ready for play January/February 1993. Unfortunately this did not eventuate and it was not until the commencement of the 1993/4 season in October that the greens were back in use again. A whole season with only 2 lawns restricted club activities and Association events quite considerably.

We are very fortunate that the South Perth Council continues to maintain our greens to a high standard for our playing enjoyment.

When the courts were closed for maintenance in September 1994 a bus was hired and some of our members travelled to Busselton for a weekend of croquet and socialising with the country players. As such an enjoyable time was had by all, the trip was repeated again the following year. This proved to be a suitable alternative to a one day picnic trip which was usually organised while the courts were closed.

In November 1996, with financial assistance from the City of South Perth and the Dept. of Youth, Sport & Recreation, the club financed the building of 5 new shelter sheds. Since then we have erected a further 3 sheds, and now have 8 smart-looking large sheds to cope with any number of players wanting shelter from the sun and rain on all courts.

The club was always looking for new members and had Mr. Roy Dransfield, Mr. Terry Speers, Mrs. Anne Middlemas and Mr. John Middlemas as club coaches and Mrs. Verna Waterhouse "on call". Saturday mornings saw newcomers and members alike practising their skills and taking note of the coaches' advice.

1998 was our 70th anniversary, with Mr. Terry Speers as President, Mrs. Jenny Burns and Mr. John Middlemas as vice presidents, Secretary Mrs. Lona Barrett, and Treasurer Mrs. Phyl Abbott. They and a well organised social committee helped celebrate the occasion in October with a luncheon at the club.

Since the early 1990s we have had players selected to represent WA in State teams, with some winning Australian titles, and we continue to have members representing the State and Australia at events.

The year 2000 ~ the start of a new millennium ~ saw Como advancing with the times, by having a telephone installed, which has proved very convenient. We also decided to upgrade the toilets and with a third contribution from the Dept. of Sport & Recreation, the South Perth City Council and us we finally saw them built at the end of 2001. The previous women's toilet on the verandah is now a handy storeroom.

December 2003 saw us celebrate our 75th anniversary by holding two days of croquet for members and visitors. President Judith Speers, Secretary Jenny Burns, Treasurer Phyl Abbott and a busy social committee chaired by Claire Wade made sure things ran smoothly. The first day catered for golf croquet players and the second day association games. Each evening a very enjoyable sausage sizzle was held to complete the days' activities.

December 2003 also saw the up-grading of the lights, which we paid for ourselves. The club playing night for association croquet was changed to Thursdays, and it is hoped members will take the opportunity to enjoy many evenings of play in the summer months. Our own annual night tournament has been held for 16 years and continues to attract entries from various metropolitan clubs.

Golf croquet was introduced in October 2002, in addition to association croquet, so new-comers have the option of first learning either association or golf croquet. Golf croquet is proving popular, being played Saturday mornings and Thursday afternoons, and early Wednesday mornings in summer to beat the heat ! Jenny Burns and Terry Speers are available for Saturday morning coaching, and with the golf croquet players, the greens are full of active members.

Como club members continue to take an active part in the WA Croquet Association by serving on committees, hosting tournaments, playing in shield matches and entering various events.

2007 has seen another busy year, during which the National Championships were held in Perth, using Como's facilities as well as various other city clubs. Como club members can look forward to many more enjoyable years of croquet being played, hopefully with continued increasing membership.

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LIFE MEMBERS, SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS, PRESIDENTS, SECRETARIES and TREASURERS who have held office since records commenced are as follows:

LIFE MEMBERS:

Mrs H Waller	Mrs E M Hill	Mrs M M Blakers
Mrs M E Marsh	Mrs I A Hunter	Mrs M Ritchie
Mrs D Guthrie	Mrs I N Jodrell	Mrs D Mellor
Mrs E Seymour	Mrs E Metcalf	Mrs N Watt
Mrs D Creek	Mrs E Wallis	Mrs J Barnaby
*Mrs V Waterhouse	Mrs G Hartland	*Mr R Dransfield

*Mrs M Burke

(*Current Life Members)

SERVICE AWARDS

Mrs Grace Hartland 1996	*Mr Roy Dransfield 1996	*Mrs Verna Waterhouse 1997
*Miss Dorothy Alexander 2000	*Mrs Judy Cain 2000	Mrs Claire Wade 2005
*Mrs Judith Speers 2005	*Mrs Phyl Abbott 2005	*Mrs Jenny Burns 2007
*Mr Terry Speers 2007		

(*Current Service Award Recipients)

SECRETARY/TREASURERS:

1932-34 Mrs A C James	1934-35 Mrs M Blakers	1935-38 Mrs I A Hunter
1938-40 Mrs A C James	1940-41 Mrs M Ritchie	1941-44 Mrs E Stockdale
1944-50 Mrs E Miller		

PRESIDENTS:

1932-34	Mrs A C James	1934-36	Mrs M Blakers
1936-38	Mrs A C James	1938-41	Mrs M Blakers
1941-49	Mrs A C James	1949-50	Mrs E Stockdale
1950-61	Mrs M Brooks	1961-62	Mrs M Blakers
1962-63	Mrs E Hill	1963-64	Mrs I Jodrell
1964-71	Mrs D Guthrie	1971-77	Mrs E Metcalf
1977-80	Mrs J Barnaby	1980-83	Mrs J Chapman
1983-85	Mrs J Barnaby	1985-87	Mrs V Waterhouse
1987-90	Mrs J Chapman	1990-91	Mrs V Waterhouse
1991-94	Mr T Speers	1994-97	Miss D Alexander
1997-2000	Mr T Speers	2000-03	Mrs Jenny Burns
2003-06	Mrs J Speers	2006-	Mrs P Abbott

SECRETARIES:

1951-54	Mrs. M. Ritchie	1954-63	Mrs. D. Guthrie
1963-65	Mrs. N Watt	1965-70	Mrs .A. Harvey
1970-75	Mrs. F. Moore	1975-81	Mrs. M. Cook
1981-90	Mrs. D. Maskew	1990-98	Mrs. J. Cain
1998-2001	Mrs. L. Barrett	2001-02	Mrs. A. Middlemas
2002-03	Mrs. L. Barrett	2003-	Mrs. Jenny Burns

TREASURERS:

1949-60	Mrs. Hooper	1960-65	Mrs. V. Sanderson
1965-68	Mrs. L. McCreer	1968-70	Mrs. W. Mann
1970-74	Mrs. D. Creek	1974-87	Mrs. V. Ferry
1987-93	Mrs. M. Burke	1993- 2005	Mrs. P. Abbott
2005-06	Mr. T. Speers	2006-	Mrs. C. Broun

