

lifestyles

Lawnbowling club a proud White Rock legacy

A community composed mostly of water and hills seems an unlikely place for a national-class lawn bowling club.

That's unless you know that White Rock contains

two overriding assets: legendary weather and resourceful seniors.

Competing at the national level is no novelty for the White Rock Lawn Bowling Club, which is gearing up to host the Canadian Mixed Pairs Championships in September.

It all began in the midst of the Great Depression. In the summer of 1935, the novice group gathered to bowl on W.J. Habgood's lawn on Stayte Road, sharing bowls and enjoying Habgood's strawberry patch.

By the end of the year they had achieved two main objectives: to find a home, and to incorporate the club.

Provisional officers were newly arrived Anglican minister H. U. Oswald, chair, and Harry Vidal, sec-

retary. The season's modest budget included expenditures of \$10 for the use of Habgood's lawn, and a \$5 deposit on a site for a new green.

Since the membership agreed with Harry Vidal that Semiahmoo was "more euphonic" than White Rock, the association began life as Semiahmoo Lawn Bowling Club.

Officially incorporated Nov. 21, 1935, club membership elected Mrs. Calder-

bank as vice-president, and J.D. MacMillan as treasurer to join Oswald and Vidal for the following year.

The site at Royal Avenue and D (Dolphin) Street was purchased for \$750. Immediate plans were made to build a clubhouse.

Opened July 8, 1936, the building served until 1974 when a burgeoning membership required larger quarters.

During the early years, bowling news consistently occupied a prominent spot on the front page of the



Members of the Semiahmoo Lawn Bowling Club (above), including W.J. Habgood, in front of their clubhouse in 1947. Alex and his father, Jim Hazlitt (right), dominated lawn bowling competitions in the '50s and '60s.



local newspaper, and editor Louis Starck, an avid bowler, seldom found reason to displace it throughout the Second World War.

Aside from the name of the club being changed to White Rock Lawn Bowling Club in 1949, modifications to the club's makeup have

been few. The Ladies Division, established in 1939, has since been assimilated into the main body. Flood lights – 40 years after they were proposed – arrived with the new clubhouse, and a telephone was installed in 1977.

Longtime White Rock resident and club member Guy Weston, 88, can count himself one of the few gainfully employed by the club; as a boy, he was paid 50 cents to mow the green, but

White Rock Museum & Archives photos

only once.

1974 proved to be a critical year. The prospect of the cost of the new clubhouse and soaring taxes led to negotiation with the city. An abortive attempt to relocate the club to Maccaud Park resulted in the city taking ownership of the Royal Avenue property, and leasing it back to the club, which pays all maintenance and improvement costs.

From the start, the club has produced champi-

ons, Habgood and Vidal amongst them.

Currently, several members are competing in a national competition in Edmonton, while others have qualified for upcoming international meets.

Club president Arlene McGinn acknowledges the journey through 75 years has not always been a walk in the park, citing a recent example. During the changeover from grass to carpet to allow year-round play, a long-hidden garbage dump was uncovered, costing \$26,000 to remove.

Although justifiably proud of all the club has brought to White Rock, it is not content to rest on its laurels. Current challenges include devising strategies to attract younger members, and to set up a school program.

Judging by its first 75 years, it'll find a way to succeed.

The Peninsula's best-known mother-and-son historians, Lorraine and Hugh Ellenwood, are dedicated to preserving local history through the White Rock Museum & Archives. If you want to learn more about White Rock's history, or if you want to share your memories, call 604-541-2222 or email whiterockarchives@telus.net

Lorraine and Hugh Ellenwood
historical
perspective

