

## **CHELTENHAM BC LADIES**

### **A false hope.....**

In our published history there are two rather enigmatic references to women players. The first came at the end of the Earl of Jersey's speech at the opening of the green in 1902, when he expressed the hope that "the ladies present, if not already proficient in the game, would soon become so". But the ladies on these occasions - wives and friends of members - were invited spectators, and the Earl's remarks stemmed perhaps from ignorance of the true situation. The second reference, which is more substantial, appears in an editorial in the Cheltenham Free Press of 5 May 1906 and alludes to a speech by the Club Captain, Mr. W.H. Horsley:

"Bowls is not a vice - well, hardly so - but it is pleasant, and precisely because it is pleasant, the Feminist movement is rapidly nearing it. That Mr. Horsley, of all men - he who ought to be the bulwark and pillar of the sacred rights and interests of the Bowler - should positively invite and incite the Ladies of Cheltenham to take up their hitherto inviolate pastime, is to me, as it must be to many others, a source of profound *grief*. It is like dynamiting the breakwater of a harbour of refuge, and letting in the pitiless sea. A wanton wicked thing."

Obviously nothing came of Mr. Horsley's invitation to the ladies. But nor, on the other hand, was his reputation damaged by his "wicked" suggestion, for he remained as Captain for two more years.

### **Getting warmer.....**

In 1927 a special general meeting was called to debate a resolution "that ladies be admitted as playing members". Nobody — not even the mover of the resolution - voted for it!

Years later an amendment of the rules provided that "no form of membership will be available for ladies unless approved by a 95% majority of full members in a postal ballot". This was omitted from the new rules adopted at the annual general meeting in 1980 when a form of associate membership was created enabling the wives of members to be elected (subject to certain conditions). Such members may use the pavilion and its facilities but not the bowling greens or billiard tables.

### **and finally.....**

In 2000, 70 years after it was first formally proposed, the Ladies were admitted as playing members of the club. Not everyone was happy with the decision but over the following years the ladies established themselves as a vital and welcome part of the club. The ladies now make up about 30% of playing membership and the following pictures set out some landmarks and achievements on the greens.



2001 - Penny Callaghan and Fay Hodges the first ladies on the green  
 2002- Carolie Brookes the first Lady Captain and Ladies Championship Winner



2016 County Inter-club Finalists & County Top Club Winners



2019 – National Mixed Fours Winners

2019 County Triples Finalists

