

Part eleven of *A History of Thingwall Recreation Centre* – a personal memoir by the late Frank Nicholson



The revival of the Thingwall Players began with the play 'Stepping Out' in 1992

The decision of the Management Council in 1989 not to continue in office brought the life of the Centre to a standstill. It had been closed for some weeks, but there was much activity among the few of the members that were left, and these were rather more than their last meeting indicated. A special Management Meeting was held, to which certain members were invited, namely: Geoff Heath, John Richardson, Doug Rogers, Ken Bell, and Liz Williams. A number of Resolutions were proposed and carried, which resulted in the formation of a new acting Management Council with John Richardson as Acting Vice Captain, Geoff Heath as Acting Secretary, Bob Herries as Acting Treasurer, Liz Williams as Acting Booking Secretary and Doug Rogers as Acting Membership Secretary. In addition, the following were co-opted onto the now depleted Wine Committee: B Davies and Ken Bell, with P Mara to be approached to see if would he join them. These then were the members who stepped into the breach, and set about restoring the good spirit so necessary to the Centre's well-being. Much credit must go to Reg Bissell for the part he played in restoring the activity of the bar, so necessary for the financial security of the Centre.

This meeting even found time to consider further activities, viz. a weekly draw (100/200 club) and a Quiz Section for later in the year. They also discussed the problem that appeared to exist with the Charity Commissioner regarding use of the bar, and wisely accommodated these decisions.

The next meeting established a management change in as much that John Richardson was now Acting Chairman with Robin Williams as Acting Vice Chairman. I note in passing that the Council were having discussions about the Centre's Constitution, and this being a thorny and controversial subject, I propose to touch upon it later.

In May, we found that our new Council were taking steps to initiate more work at the Centre, this time it was redecorating and refurbishing the main hall. In addition, they listed possible future projects, these being a periodical newsletter, decoration, and carpeting of the foyer, surfacing of the car park and a second bowling green. They were certainly not letting the grass grow under their feet.

During that summer the car park was surfaced, a long-needed improvement that seemed to give the Centre a real 'face lift'. Another much-needed action was the employment of a Bar Steward. I know that many felt over some preceding years the Centre could not afford a full-time Steward, although some attempt had been made in that direction. My own view had long been that the Centre could not afford to be without a steward.

It merely remains to report that the AGM in 1990 returned all the Officers of the Management to office: Chairman, Secretaries and Treasurer, they had served us well. 1991 saw the establishment of a new section called the Creative Writing Section. This included a Painting Section, it having been agreed that they merge into one unit. Sid Dundas agreed to be their representative as Acting Chairman until they became firmly established. This was followed by a revival of Amateur Dramatics at Thingwall; yes, once more we were to enjoy the 'Thingwall Players', who helped to stage a show in April 1992. At the AGM all the Officers were unanimously returned to office. The year came to close with well advanced plans

for a permanent bar in the Tea Lounge, which was able to be extended. This became necessary because the use of temporary bar with its attendant gas cylinders would shortly become illegal, also it was becoming clear that such a development would greatly improve the overall facilities of the Centre.

The year 1992 brought an indication that our President, Mr Jack Robbins, was not very well, but he asked our Secretary to convey his best wishes to all members. The Secretary drew attention to the fact that Jack was our only Honorary Life Member, and this initiated a discussion which culminated in the Council deciding that there should be more so they set up the following criteria for their selection: (a) Long-serving member (b) Active participation over the years in furtherance of the Centre's activities, and (c) Age. They felt that in order not to devalue the honour, the numbers must be kept small. They come up with the following list, which was confirmed at the AGM. Mr A McKenzie, Mrs P Marsh, Mrs H Ashworth, Mrs H Nicholson and Mr F Nicholson. Which leads me to reveal a little known fact – my wife Hilda is now the member of The Thingwall Centre with the longest unbroken membership, spending all the years since 1948. Oh yes! Longer than me! Remember, I was out of the picture for a few years.

The New Thingwall Players duly staged their first show *Stepping Out*, and there was no doubt it was an unqualified success. I am sure we can look forward to enjoying many such events from our new section.

The summer saw the opening of the extended Tea Lounge complete with permanent Bar, which has proved to be very much appreciated. I am quite sure that our many bowls visitors will think us very fortunate to have such a good set-up, particularly with the continuing improvements that are being made outside by the voluntary efforts of members, mainly bowlers.

Then follows the new Bowling Green. A somewhat contentious issue this, but I am sure it will prove to be a considerable asset. It was estimated to cost £6,000 but finalised at £7,500 due to unforeseen difficulties, trouble with tree roots and bottoming out on rock, with increased costs of turf. Very few jobs of that nature run out to estimate.

1993 started with a long, highly acclaimed pantomime produced by New Thingwall Players. Bingo has been making modest progress on alternate Thursday evenings in the Main Hall, and alternating with the Bingo evenings, Quiz evenings have attracted an enthusiastic following in the Bar, except during the summer season.

The new green has encouraged growth of the Men's Bowls membership, enabling them to establish five evening teams. Great things are expected of this green in the coming years, and it seems destined to become an excellent 'Home' green. As I write, much improvement is taking place in the surrounding areas due to the efforts of a little band of workers, who seemed to find this an escape to a 'haven of rest'.

But I am no longer writing history... I'm in grave danger of telling you what may be happening soon, and that is not within my brief.



The cast take their applause at the end of the first night