

Bowls in Ropner Park



Bowls has been played in Ropner Park since the park was created in 1893. There was one green of four rinks and the Council charged 2d per hour for members of the public to play.



William Smith, founder of Ropner Park Bowling Club in 1895, was their treasurer until 1931.

Tennis was also played.

Through the enthusiasm of William Smith, a thirty-year-old administrator at the County Court in Stockton, Ropner Park Bowling Club was established in 1895.

It joined the new Cleveland and South Durham Bowling League with teams from Darlington, Darlington Park, Grove Hill, Middlesbrough, Norton, Redcar and Stockton.



Ropner Park Bowling Club
Winners of the Cleveland & South Durham Bowling League 1896

The league's rule was that each rink of four bowlers would play 31 shots-up, but in one match 31 shots had not been reached when darkness fell. After that the league decided to play future games for 21 ends.

Such was the popularity for bowls that more clubs were formed, the leagues expanded and the tennis court was taken over for a second green in 1902.



Stockton United Bowling Club
Winners of the Cleveland & South Durham Bowling League 1920

Bowlers, who failed to merit a place in one of the teams, formed their own club, West End Bowling Club in 1904.

Ropner Park Bowling Club enjoyed outstanding success until World War One when workers from a munitions factory formed Stockton United Bowling Club and they were supreme between the wars.

A third club to play on Ropner Park greens was Stockton Rooks, which was formed in 1925.



Ropner Park Bowling Greens in the late 1940's

In 1960 a local sportswoman, Mrs. Harriet Williams, founded Ropner Ladies Bowling Club. The club asked Stockton Town Council to replace the wooden pavilion, built at the turn of the century, with a brick one with toilet facilities and a kitchen where tea could be prepared for the opponents. The new pavilion cost £2,550. A works team, currently named K Bowling Club, was established in 1986.



Ropner Ladies Bowling Club
Their founder, Mrs Harriet Williams, delivers the first bowl in 1960



The five clubs with Ropner Veterans formed Ropner Park Bowling Association in 1992 to administer the game and maintain the greens on a voluntary basis under a lease from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.



Volunteers from the six clubs maintain the greens in 1997

With money from funding bodies, main sponsors and the Council the bowlers have transformed the facility. The greens are considered first class and the flower borders and the displays have won awards including Northumbria in Bloom

It is a popular venue for bowls. Cleveland County have played matches here and four open competitions are held each year.