

## Early History of Braid

The Braid Recreation Grounds (consisting of a Bowling Green and Tennis Courts) were opened in 1890 for the sole use of the feuars and their families, in a specific area owned by the Trustees of the Gordons of Cluny. In due course the feu charter was handed over by the Trustees to the feuars who appointed a Committee of Management to run the Braid Recreation Grounds on their behalf. The list of Presidents and Vice-Presidents on the Honours Board in the Clubhouse show Wm. Cargill in 1890 and George Stewart in 1891 as the first two Presidents of the Bowling Club. The Club was reconstructed prior to the opening of the 1892 season and the earliest recorded Minutes refer to a Club meeting held on 26 April 1892 with Mr Cargill in the Chair. The Chairman explained the purpose of the meeting – unfortunately not recorded. The meeting decided to apply for membership of the Edinburgh & Leith Associated Bowling Clubs and to arrange matches with neighbouring clubs in the coming season. The meeting then elected a Bowling Club Committee consisting of four feuars and four non-feuars to run the Bowling Club on behalf of the members. This eight men Committee then elected from its own ranks three Office Bearers i.e. President, Vice-President and Secretary. A further two members were elected to a Refreshment sub-committee and two other members were appointees of the Committee of Management as Treasurer and Green Ranger. An amendment to Rule 4 to allow the Club to elect the Office Bearers was accepted by the Committee of Management, but they turned down a request to increase the Club Committee to ten.

In 1892 membership included 39 feuars and 19 non-feuars but as the numbers rose to 94 in 1902 and reached a maximum of 118 in the period up to 1914, the percentage of feuars in the club declined. The Committee of Management imposed a restriction of not more than 100 members with the proviso that feuars would always have priority in joining the Club. The Club boasted one of the highest memberships in the City or County of Edinburgh. Despite a disastrous first year in 1892 when it lost 174 shots over five games with neighbouring clubs, it rapidly established itself as one of the most successful bowling clubs in Edinburgh and Leith. The increasing membership, keen practice in Rink play and a first class green (looked after by the green-keeper Mr. MacNab) all contributed to the Club's success.

The Edinburgh and Leith Association held three Competitions annually – The Tait Trophy (Champion of Champions), The Trophy (4 first sixteen rinks per club) dating back to 1877, and the Reid Trophy from 1894 (4 second sixteen rinks per club). The competition (similar to the Sharp Trophy today) was a one-day event held on a Saturday in mid season. An average of 13-15 Clubs took part in the first sixteen Trophy and the Reid Trophy. In their fourth attempt in 1897 Braid came second and they won the Trophy in 1898. The clubs competing in that year were, in order of merit: Braid, Hillside, Ardmillan, Summerside, Lutton Place, Edinburgh Northern, West End, Seafield, Coltbridge, Leith, Parsons Green and Pilrig. The Braid second sections did not win the Reid Trophy but were 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1899, 1902 and 1906. Braid's prominent position around the turn of the century can be seen from results against other clubs in the S.B.A. and Edinburgh & Leith Competitions. Braid declined an invitation to join the newly formed S.B.A. in 1892 but they did so in 1893 and entered the Competitions with enthusiasm. Best attempts were as follows:-

### S.B.A.

1894	Rink	Beaten in Area Final
1900	Rink	Beaten in Area Final
1901	Singles	Thomas Simpson lost 16-21 to G. Muat, Edinburgh in area semi final.
1905	Rink	Lost to Burnbank in second round in Glasgow
1912	Rink	Lost to Corstorphine in Area Final

### Richardson Trophy

1913	Rink	Braid were highest up with a win by 28-4 over Lesmahagow. In this S.B.A. Competition 180 Clubs took part.
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### Tait Trophy Best Results as follows

- 1896 – Thomas Simpson lost in Semi Final
- 1897 – Thomas Simpson lost in Final
- 1899 – Thomas Simpson won the Trophy
- 1902 – Rev. A. M. Smith won the Trophy
- 1902 – J. Douglas lost in Final
- 1903 – Wm. Gray lost in Semi Final
- 1909 – Rev. Father Forsyth lost in Final
- 1911 – A. Cockburn lost in Semi Final.

## **Selection Procedures**

A major item of discussion at every A.G.M. was the selection of Rinks to represent the Club in both friendly and Trophy matches. Skips were elected according to the number of votes cast, and they were allowed to pick their own teams. This procedure was varied occasionally when the club deemed it advisable to ballot for leads, seconds and thirds leaving the Skips to choose their players from among those with the highest number of votes. It was not until 1910 that the minority group in favour of appointing a selection committee won the argument, but here again the Skips were elected first and then assisted the selection committee to choose the teams.

An indication of how seriously election was considered is seen in the Committee Minutes of 6 May 1903. The Chairman announced the Mr. Gavine had resigned from Mr. Adamson's rink and he proposed a Special Meeting of the Club to select a 3<sup>rd</sup> player in his place. At a Committee Meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1906 the Secretary read a letter from Councillor Forrest intimating his resignation as President of the Club unless appointed Skip of 1<sup>st</sup> XV1. The committee instructed the Secretary to advise the President in terms of great regret that his resignation had been accepted.

## **Club Competitions and Trophies**

A handsomely engraved silver medal was presented to the Club by Mr George Stewart, President of the Braid Recreation Grounds. He requested the medal remain the property of the Club, to be played for annually, and kept by the winner whose

name would be added annually by a clasp as shown on the ribbon attached to the medal. It was decided to award the medal to the winner of the Club Championship. Two Competitions would be arranged, open to all members without entrance fee. (1) The Club Championship (the winner entitled to compete in the Tait Trophy). (2) The President's and Vice President's and General Prize Competition – members and friends were invited to contribute to the Prize Fund. The Secretary (Mr James Reith) and two others combined their contributions to the Prize Fund, to purchase a Rink Medal for competition annually by the Match Rinks and any other rinks that might be formed under other Skips. The name of the winning Skip would be engraved on the medal. Each of these competitions would consist of 21 ends (22 in the event of a tie). Four Saturdays in September were set aside for The Rink Medal Competition, a Tournament Competition and a Points Competition before the green closed on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1892. Handicaps for the Tournament were:- Skips – 2 or scratch, others not to exceed +5.

The Prizes in 1892 for the President and Vice-President's Competition:-

1<sup>st</sup> Presentation 'Bowls, 2<sup>nd</sup> Claret Jug, 3<sup>rd</sup> Hair Brush and Case, 4<sup>th</sup> Prize value 10s.

Tournament Prizes:-

Value 10s, 7/6 and 5s.

Points Competition:-

6 Prizes valued between 20s and 2s.

In 1894 The Rink Medal was played for in May, the Handicap Tournament was held on 8<sup>th</sup> August (games of 15 ends) entry fee 1s. and the final of a Pairs Competition took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1894 (Prices 7/6 each and 3/6 each). In 1895 all games in the Championship were to 31 shots, and the Rink Medal was played for on a league basis. (This competition contributed to the Club's success against other Clubs)

In May 1903 Councillor Forrest, acting on behalf of Judge MacKenzie, Councillor Inshes and himself, presented the Club with a Councillors Cup. The Committee were divided whether the trophy should be played for in Rinks or by Points and the latter won the vote 7-5. The Points Competition was three rounds with four bowls.

In 1904 the Cup was presented to the winner of the Single Handed Tournament. In 1905 the Councillor's Cup was played for in Rinks. At the AGM 28th March 1907 it was agreed the Rink Medal and Councillors Cup be embodied in one competition and that the single handed Tournament be discontinued. In 1912 the competition for the Councillors Cup and Rink Medal was altered to a knock-out Competition.

At a meeting on 29 May 1895 the Committee agreed "that the jack is always to be thrown and played to where it lies, and the mat be placed to where the jack lay".

In 1986 the Committee decided in the event of ties not completed by the due date the non-challenger would go forward, unless intimation is made to the Committee.

In 1894 all ties and games had to be played with Bowls which conform with the Standard Bowl of the S.B.A.

The first **Ladies Day** took place on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1900 when President Ross and Mrs Ross were hosts to a large number of members and their lady friends who enjoyed an afternoon on the Green in a novel game of Progressive Pairs (ladies and gentlemen). These occasions may have become an annual event although not always recorded in the minutes.

Instead of the usual Annual Dinner, the Club organised a Concert in aid of the Building Fund of the New Pavilion, in Morningside Public Hall on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1900, and repeated the event the following October. These two concerts materially added to the Building Fund. On the opening day 4<sup>th</sup> May 1901, a new and handsome Pavilion was declared open, and was much admired by members and lady friends and many guests from various clubs etc.

### **Annual Dinner**

The first annual dinner was held in Torrance's Rooms, Comiston Road on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1892. There was a financial loss of 6s (including 4s for an unpaid ticket) and this was carried forward as a charge against the Refreshment Account. There was a change of venue in 1895 to the Braid Hills Hotel – a deficiency of 6/6d was cleared by Mr. W. H. Torrance. The event continued there until 1898 when over 60 attended. In October 1899 the West-End Café, 129 Princes Street was the venue. The function was replaced by Concerts in 1900 and 1901 and in 1902 it resumed again in the Royal British Hotel. The Green Ranger, Mr. Jas. Thomson lost his pipe at the event in October 1895 and at a Committee Meeting on 16 September 1896 the Secretary was instructed to replace the pipe from the Prize Fund.

### **Tourists at Braid**

#### **July 1901**

The season's main event was a Four Rink game at Braid against a team of Australian Bowlers. The match was reported as follows: "The game was played according to the Australian system of conducting it and this concession put our men to a decided disadvantage at first, so that the lead which they got could not be wiped off before the game was ended, and then it terminated in favour of the strangers by a majority of 14 shots". Australia 89 - Braid 75.

#### **1904**

In May 1904 the Committee agreed to a match against 20 gentlemen from Torquay on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. This was their first game in Scotland and on Braids fine turf, the score was Devonshire 39 - Braid 127. The President was asked to represent the Club at the International Contest in Glasgow on 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> July 1904.

The Braid Green was chosen for a match between a Canadian Team on tour in Scotland and rinks made up from Clubs in the Edinburgh & Leith Bowling Association. To everyone's great disappointment the Canadian game was rained off after 5 ends.

### 1907

In the minutes of the AGM on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1908 we find “on 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> July 1907 the International Contests took place on the Braid Green and the honours fell to the Scottish Team”.

In 1907 under the auspices of the ELBA a Canadian team faced a team drawn from Clubs affiliated to ELBA, on Braid Green, resulting in a decisive Scottish victory. Braids share of the expenses £1-7-9d

### 1913

16<sup>th</sup> July

Braid (4 rinks) and Edinburgh Corporation (2 rinks) v Canadian Bowlers.  
Canada 4 up against Braid and 4 up against Edinburgh Corporations.

### **Correspondence between Club and Committee of Management**

A letter from the Club Secretary to the Directors dated `3 May 1902:-

“While the Committee are aware that non-feuars are not entitled to be present at your Board Meetings, they consider it would be a prudent course, were the non-feuars, representing three fourths of the Bowling Club, allowed a voice in say (1) The opening and closing of the green (2) the financial matters concerning the Bowling Club”. In reply:- “The Directors will welcome the presence of the President or Vice President or Secretary at their meetings, when Bowling Matters come up for discussion”.

In 1902 the Club Committee recommended to the Directors that a Board (similar to the one containing the list of Champions) be put up showing the Presidents and Vice-Presidents since the Opening of the Green.

At the Club AGM on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1903 the Treasurer read a Statement as to the financial position of the Recreation Grounds. (This is the first indication in the Minutes, of finance being discussed). No details were recorded in the minutes. At the AGM in March 1904 the financial position of the Recreation Grounds was outlined by the Treasurer. In April 1904 the Club asked the Directors to increase the contribution from the General Fund to the Prize Fund to £5. At the AGM in March 1905 Mr. Wyllie, Chairman of the Directors, intimated that annual subscription would be 25s for non-feuars and 20s for feuars. In 1906 the Club Committee made two attempts to persuade the Directors to increase the money from the General Fund to the Prize Fund to £10, but the Directors refused and sent a cheque for £5.

A Coronation Handicap Tournament had to be held over from 26<sup>th</sup> June to September 1902 owing to the illness of the King. Special prizes were gifted by club members. It was agreed to put up decorations for the occasion at a cost of not more than £5. The Directors gave £2.2s towards the cost and the balance raised by subscription amongst members limited to 2s.

At the AGM in 1903 the Treasurer read a statement as to the financial position of the Recreation Grounds. No details are recorded in the Minutes and this was the first occasion in the Minutes in which a financial statement was mentioned.

### **May 1903**

Committee refused application from Dunfermline to play Braid, meantime matches were played against West End, Ardmillan, Lutton Place, Merchiston, Whitehouse & Grange, Linlithgow and Kirkcaldy. Braid scored 782 shots to their opponents 780, a modest surplus of 2 shots.

### **1904**

Owing to limited time on the green, the matches with Ardmillan and West-End were cancelled. It was agreed to reserve three rinks on the green for ties.

### **1905**

Chairman of Directors (Mr. Wyllie) intimated the Annual Subscription would be 25s for non-feuars and 20s for feuars.

### **1906**

The Secretary wrote to the Directors to ask them to favour a scheme whereby the Rules of the Club be amended as to comply with the provisions of the Licensing (Scotland) Act of 1903. Credit balance of £3-2-6d at close of the year (Refreshment Account).

A match with Dean Bowling Club was refused meantime but 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> XV1 matches against Gorgie Mills were accepted. Braid won both games by 59 shots up and 20 shots up. As Club prizes totalled £19 in 1906 the Club asked the Directors to increase their grant to the Prize Fund from £5 to £10. This was firmly refused and the books were balanced by transferring £5 from the Refreshment Account.

### **1907**

Despite the continue prosperity of the Club and a high membership, match results were disappointing. The first XV1 lost 51 shots over 5 games (winning only once) and 2<sup>nd</sup> XV1 were 32 shots down overall.

### **1908**

A four rink match with Dunfermline was arranged. A match with Gorgie Mills was refused.

The Secretary was voted an honorarium of £5 5s from the Refreshment Account and Mr. MacNab (Green-keeper) £3 3s.

### **1909**

Membership 118. 14 Rinks take part in Friday Evening Rink Competition.

Mr. Stenhouse appointed Clubmaster. The Directors stipulated the Refreshment Bar close as follows:- 9.15pm May, 10.15pm June, 10pm July, 9pm August, 8pm September.

### **1910**

In was resolved the Annual Dinner be not held (committee Meeting 22.9.1910).

No alterations in the subscriptions. 56 entered the Club Championship. The Selection Committee were congratulated on the improved results last season and were re-appointed. Judge Inches hosted the annual Ladies Day.

### **1911**

A rink was selected to play for the ELBA Coronation Trophy.

14 Rinks entered the Friday evening and Rink Competition.

64 entered for the Club Championship.

Date for Trinity March was fixed for 9th June

Subscriptions again unchanged.

The Coronation of King George V was celebrated by the Club. The President entertained members to tea and handsome prizes were awarded to the winners of a single handed competition. The grounds were tastefully decorated.

### **1912**

At a committee meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1912 a proposal to limit the number of ties was discussed. It was agreed the single-handed tournament be not held this year.

A letter from Mr. Hamilton, Secretary of SBA invited applications from Clubs desirous of playing a match against a party of Australian Bowlers expected to reach Scotland on 29<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Committee Meeting 9<sup>th</sup> May 1912**

It was agreed to hold a "Ladies Day" on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June when Councillor Torrance would provide tea for the members and their lady friends. It was agreed to support a motion at the ELBA annual meeting calling for a King George V Coronation Trophy Rink Competition.

Regarding Club Competitions it was agreed that the Competition for the Councillors Cup and Rink Medal be made a knock-out competition and that the winners of the Pairs Competition must remain until the close of play on the day of the Competition (this year fixed for 8<sup>th</sup> June).

Rules of play for ties in the Championship and the President's and Vice-President's Prizes were unanimously approved. They are (1) All ties must be played off by the dates marked on the draw sheet. (2) The competitors whose names are on the left side of the draw sheet are the "challengers". (3) Failing other mutual arrangements, a challenger shall, as soon as possible, and always before the expiry of half the time limit allowed for the tie, offer to his opponent a selection of dates for the game, and the time offered must be in the evenings or on Saturday afternoons, otherwise the opponent may claim the tie. (4). On such a challenge being made, the challenger shall take all reasonable steps to have the tie decided. (5) If players are unable to play the tie before the expiry of the time limit, the tie must be played on the last available date, but if both parties agree, they may draw lots or otherwise arrange who is to be awarded the tie. (6) The player who has won or been awarded the tie shall delete the name of his opponent before the expiry of the time limit. (7) In all disputes referred to the Committee their decisions are final.

The Directors were asked to provide marking boards for each rink and the necessary pins to indicate the 25yards limit.

### **Committee Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1912**

2 Rinks were chosen for the S.B.A. Rink and the Coronation Trophy Rink. It was agreed the Club Champion of last season represent the Club in the S.B.A. Singles. E.L.B.A. had asked for the courtesy of the Braid Green on the afternoon of Wednesday 10 July for a match between Clubs in the Association and a party of Australian Bowlers. The request was granted on condition that any damage be made good by the Association and that the Club be involved in no extra expense by reason of this match being played on the Braid Green. The President reported he had not been able to arrange a Club Match against the Australian Bowlers.

It was agreed to recommend Mr. J.H. Cooper (who is within the prescribed area) to the Directors for admission to the Club.

### **Meeting of the Sub-Committee for Match Australians v ELBA**

The arrangements were made as follows:-

Club House decorated with festoons, baskets of flowers, flags etc. and a streamer from Club House to the Entrance Gate at a cost of from £2 to £3.

Forms to be placed round the green and the flower borders and tops of banks suitably protected. Three dozen rosettes for the use of officials and use of a blackboard to show progress of game. Teas to be provided by Councillor Torrance @ 6d per head. The bowlers to be made honorary members for the afternoon of the match so that refreshments may be provided for them. A Special licence to be got for the Club House at the West side of the green and spectators only to be supplied there with refreshments.

### **Committee Meeting 18 September 1912**

It was agreed to hold a Reunion in the Club Pavilion in place of the annual dinner. The Secretary read a letter from the Directors informing the Club that the green would be closed for the season on 28<sup>th</sup> September (normal practice) and that a sub-committee of the Directors was engaged in re-drafting the Rules of the Club to bring them into consonance with the new Feu Charter of the Grounds and asking the Committee of the Bowling Club to appoint two representatives to confer with the Sub-Committee as to the revision of the Rules bearing on the internal management of the Bowling Club. Councillor Inman (President) and Mr. C.C. Moffat were appointed to confer with the Directors Sub-Committee.

The Braid Rink reached S.B.A. District Final losing to Corstorphine.

### **Annual General Meeting 31 March 1913**

The secretary submitted the Committee's Report for season 1912 and the Clubmaster's Balance Sheet for the same period. Member ship 117. Satisfactory results on the green, especially for the 2<sup>nd</sup> 16 which won all five matches played. The first 16 won 7 and lost 3. In the Trophy Competition Braid continued to feature in the middle of the league placings.

Lord Provost Inches was elected Honorary President for the Club for the ensuing season. It was intimated that Councillor Torrance and Mr. W. Cowan had been nominated as the Directors representatives on the Committee in terms of the new

Rules and Regulations. The Club then elected five members to the selection committee. The meeting elected skips as usual despite motion referring this to the Selection Committee. It was agreed the 5 men Selection Committee should choose the rinks for all outside competitions.

#### **Committee Meeting 29 May 1913**

It was reported that a match against the Canadian team was fixed for Braid on 14 July.

#### **Committee Meeting 27 June 1913**

The Club won the Richardson Trophy for the first time Braid 28 Lesmahagow 4. Two challengers in the Championship and President's prize had their names deleted as the ties had not been played.

A request from the Metropolitan District Bowling Association for the courtesy of two rinks on the green for the Masonic Tournament was granted.

The President intimated that he desired to bear the expenses of the match with the Canadian Bowlers on Braid Green which would consist of four club rinks and two rinks of the Edinburgh Corporation. The visitors would be entertained to lunch at the City Chambers. The Pavilion would be suitably decorated for the occasion and the Police Pipe Band had been booked. It was agreed to send complimentary tickets to the President, Vice-President and Secretary and seven admission tickets for the members of the local clubs and five for those of the Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy Clubs with whom the Braid Clubs played matches and also to send complimentary tickets to the President, Vice –President and Secretary of ELBA. Complimentary tickets also to:- Sir Richard Mackie, Provost Smith, Leith; Sir W. Brown, Mr. James Russell, City Chambers Chief Constable Ross, Mr. J. McHattie, City Gardener, Rev Dr. Fisher, Rev. A.M. Smith, Canon Forsyth, Messrs A H Hamilton, S.S.C., A.J. Simpson, S.S.C., and James Arkell??? And it was agreed to issue tickets of admission to Braid Members desiring same. With regard to Refreshments, it was arranged to make the Canadian and the Corporation players and the Pipers honorary members of the Club for the afternoon and that other visitors could only be supplied if accompanied by a member of the Club. £5 Grant as usual to the Prize Fund from the Directors.

The Secretary was instructed to request the Committee of Management to change the hand-towels three times per week as there had been several complaints from members regarding the dirty condition of same.

#### **Committee Meeting 19 September 1913**

The Secretary reported the Committee of Management has agreed to bear the expense of framed photos of the Richardson Trophy winners and of the Canadian Bowlers and also to provide clean hand-towels in the Pavilion three times per week.

It was agreed to have a match on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September between members over 50 years of age and those under that age. (Result: Over 50 – 99 Under 50 – 128)

#### **Committee Meeting 27 October 1913**

It was agreed to hold a Dinner at the Braid Hills Hotel on 19<sup>th</sup> November. Tickets to cost 5/- each. Reply post cards to be sent to members. The number of guests to be restricted as the accommodation was limited and there was likely to be a financial deficit.

The dinner was held as arranged and as the price per head for the dinner was the same as the price of the tickets, there was nothing over to meet the expenses of £3-4-6d.

The sum was paid by the Committee of Management on the understanding no precedent was created.

#### **AGM 30 March 1914**

There was a large attendance of members including the Hon President Lord Provost Inches. Membership 117. 180 Clubs took part in the SBA's Richardson Trophy on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1913. Braid's 24 shot win over Lesmahagow was the highest up. The first time the honour was gained by an Edinburgh Club. Councillor Inman who has been President for the past 5 seasons is not seeking re-election as he considers a new president would be of benefit to the Club. It was agreed the retiring President and Vice President be elected members of the Committee without voting. The election of Skips took place and also five members of the Selection Committee.

At a joint meeting of the Committee and the Refreshment Committee, the new arrangements to put the Refreshment Account on a sound commercial basis were approved. The Clubmaster would receive whatever assistance was necessary.

From 1912-1937 James Stirling was the Club Secretary. Throughout that time the minutes are couched in pedantic style. For instance, the 1914 season had been "quite successful both as regards weather conditions and the pleasure derived from ordinary games and matches, marred only as it was towards its close by the fact that a great war had been thrust upon the British Empire by reason of its resolve to maintain the neutrality and independence of smaller states in token of its solemn covenant so to do."

After report the Club's total failure in ELBA and SBA competitions the minutes continue

"Conscious as we all are that the various players engaged in these competitions did their utmost to bring success and honour to their Club which had placed its confidence in them, it behoves us not to grumble at defeat but rather to take heart from the fact that there is ample scope for improvement and to look forward to the time when fortune may smile upon us."

No competition matches involving other clubs or association were held in Braid Green during the war.