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**CLUB COMES HOME AGAIN****Preston Lawn Bowling brought back to life**

**Neven Mujezinovic**  
*Special to the Times*

With the celebration of Preston's centennial year, one of its landmarks has been brought back to life by an unlikely group.

It all started a year ago when a group of about a dozen Preston neighbours decided that enough was enough. The Preston Lawn Bowling Club, a part of the city's culture and heritage for over 60 years, was at a risk of being lost forever.

Due to the aging of its membership, the club had fallen on lean times. The clubhouse was deteriorating and the greens were in a terrible state, says Mark Clare, vice-president of the club.

The dilapidated premises were not only an eyesore, but it struck at the very heart of this community.

"We did not want another parking lot," says Clare. "We wanted to preserve something that we thought was of value to the neighbourhood."

So, last summer, the group mobilized and got to work.

"We sort of stumbled into this, but we soon realized it was a lot more work than you could ever imagine," says Clare.

Site manager Ian Scott was surprised by the enormity of the job at hand.

"We put in thousands of man/woman hours to bring this place back into shape. It was

brutal."

But as he shows off the fruits of their labour, there is no doubt the task was gratifying.

"Definitely worth it," he says beaming proudly.

Soon the group found itself in a paradoxical situation. Lawn bowling is usually associated with seniors, but none of the new members were retired. This posed a bit of a problem, since everybody worked and there was no one to keep an eye on the club during the day.

Then they found Bill Blake, the only person now at the club who was an active member before it went into decline. As the person with the most experience, it was only fitting he be made president, not to mention that he was the ideal candidate to keep an eye on the club. He lives just across the street from it.

Blake said he was thrilled to get the club rolling again.

"It was just wonderful. They worked their butts off to get everything into shape."

Indeed, the neighbours dedi-



Ian Scott demonstrates his lawn bowling skill as sons Jim and Nick wait for their turn.

cated a tremendous amount of their spare time into re-establishing the greens and refurbishing the clubhouse.

But they will be the first to tell you they never could have done it without the help of the city.

"The city staff were terrific," says Ann Clare, Mark's wife and secretary at the club. "We got nothing but encouragement from them."

They helped organize, advised, lent equipment and donated materials, she explained.

It was not uncommon that parks and recreation staff would pop by to see how things were going and end up helping with the weeding, levelling or building.

"They realized we were keen and excited about this," says

Ann.

And it was not only the "middle-aged" members who were enthused about this project. Their children have put in just as much passion and hard work towards rebuilding the club.

When the weeds were pulled out, the sandy surface flattened and the grass grown, there was only one thing left to do - learn the game.

Except for Blake, none of the new members had ever lawn bowled before.

What started perhaps more as a heritage-preserving project has developed into a full-fledged love for the game.

Lawn bowling is a game of skill and finesse. The rules appear simple enough. The point is to get your bowl nearest to the little white ball, called a jack. The bowls are

slightly flattened and weighted, so they will always curve to one side. The game can be played by two, three or four players. The points are counted identical to curling.

Of course, as the skill level increases so does the complexity of the shots. Unlike curling, the jack can be moved, setting up a myriad of possibilities. All this doesn't concern the members more than it should. They love the game for different reasons.

"It's the banter," says Scott. "Sure, it's nice to be competitive, but I'd say 80 per cent of the game's beauty is in its social aspect."

There is nothing nicer than sitting in the screened-in veranda sipping a glass of iced tea, watching people bowl, says Mark Clare. "And then taking a turn yourself."

Even though they are novices, many of the members have made great strides in improving their skill. They may not be tournament-ready just yet, but the future looks bright for this club.

"Some of the kids are really good. They show great potential," says Blake.

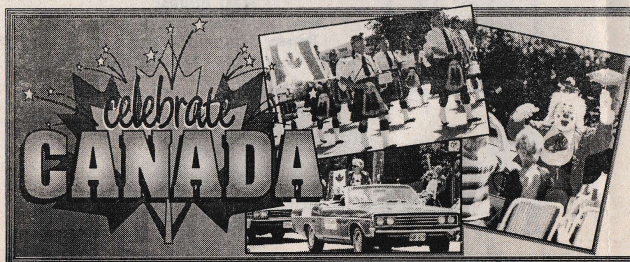
The club is open Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. As demand increases so will the open times.

For more information, visit them at 427 Queenston Rd. and give this gentle sport a try, or call Ann and Mark Clare at 653-7960.



Three generations of members of the Preston Lawn Bowling Club pose in front of the refurbished building. The club attracts lawn bowlers of every age and ability.

NEVEN MUJEZINOVIC, SPECIAL TO THE TIMES



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