

## A Short Account of the Formation of Port Macquarie Croquet Club.

The recorded history of the club-in-embryo begins on the 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1951 when a public meeting was convened in the Municipal Council Chambers with Alderman L.Crisp presiding. At this meeting, a group of interested Port Macquarie citizens resolved to form a croquet club and to petition the council for the construction of a green at the eastern end of West Port Park. An organizing committee was elected and empowered to open a trust account with four initial donations totalling five pounds two shillings.

Three months later, on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1951, the inaugural meeting of the club was held in the local offices of the Bank of New South Wales where Mr Simpson was the manager. After a motion to form a croquet club (moved by Mrs McHattan seconded by Miss Flynn) was passed unanimously, Mrs G.M. Pountney was elected as the first President and a further four office bearers and four committee members were then ensconced. The annual subscription for members was set at two guineas, to be paid in advance. The minutes of this first meeting also record that the council provided an estimate of cost of constructing the lawn (which was five hundred and forty pounds) and it was agreed to embark immediately on raising funds to meet this cost. House parties were suggested as an initial means of fund raising. Mrs Simpson was thanked for allowing practice at the Bank on Wednesday afternoons where 3d was charged for afternoon tea and use of the facilities, and Mrs Crisp (snr) was thanked for providing instruction on how to play the game of croquet.



**Mrs Lena Campbell hits the first ball on 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1953**

Momentum gathered quickly in 1952. At the second meeting, held on the 21<sup>st</sup> January, the name "West Port Croquet Club" was agreed and the club colours were nominated as royal blue and red. The rules of the existing Taree Croquet Club were adopted as the provisional club rules with the power to alter these at general meeting adopted. Significantly, two club members Mrs I.Brownlow and Mrs L.Campbell provided loans of two hundred pounds and three hundred pounds respectively to allow the construction of facilities to get underway. These two personal loans were probably critical to the early viability of the venture.

On 13th February, 1952, club representatives met with the council's Parks and Gardens Committee and the minutes of the subsequent committee meeting, (held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February), reported that "agreements were arranged".

By June of that year a formal quote from McCudden & Freeman for preliminary civil works was in hand (the cost was three hundred and eighty four pounds) and this was duly accepted on the proviso that the council guarantee to continue with their part of the contract. Work got underway shortly after this with the council apparently acting as prime contractor and project manager. Perhaps not surprisingly, the project was soon over budget and many letters were exchanged between the club and the council regarding additional funds for completion of the work.

The first Annual General Meeting was held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1952 where Mrs McHattan ("Mac") succeeded Mrs Pountney as President.

With work on the lawn progressing slowly attention turned to other facilities, the first of which was a clubhouse. On 21<sup>st</sup> March 1953 a sketch plan for a 30 x 15 ft clubhouse was tabled and on 25<sup>th</sup> April a contract to build this was let to Mr Irvine. The cost of the clubhouse was significantly reduced by benevolent donations of materials from local timber mills. One of these was the Heron's Creek Timber Mill but the names of the others are unfortunately not identified in the minutes.

Amazingly, the clubhouse was finished by July and it hosted its first meeting of the club on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1953.

With the first lawn and the clubhouse completed, the club hosted its **official opening on 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1953** with one hundred and sixty people attending including visitors from neighbouring Taree and Wauchope clubs. The mayor, Mr Brownlow, cut the ribbon and turned the key in the clubhouse door and Mrs L.Campbell was given the honour of playing the first ball (see photograph).

The following month, Mrs Campbell who played a key role in the club's formation and who had been secretary for the first two years, was elected as the first "Lawn Captain". She continued as Secretary for another four years and then filled the Presidency for nine years from 1957/8 to 1965/6. She also became the first Life Member of the Club. Her name is perpetuated on the trophy for the winner of the club's annual handicap singles competition, played in alternating divisions, which was donated in her memory by her family.,



**28 of the 32 founding members of the club photographed at the Opening on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1953.**

Back: Mrs I.E.Blair, Mrs Blake, Miss McClintock, Mrs D.Smith, Mrs Beesley, Mrs Mcmillan, Mrs Schrader, Mrs R.Cattell,  
Mrs Debreny,  
Mrs Rosendahl, Mrs C.Lewis, Mrs Garnside, Miss B.Nichols, Mrs Johnston.  
Front: Mrs Roberts, Mrs W.Cantell, Mrs Redford, Mrs Robson, Mrs L.Campbell, Mrs McHattan, Mrs Simpson, Mrs  
Brownlow, Mrs McCrae,  
Mrs Pountney, Mrs Lunnon, Mrs Cadell, Mrs Estens and Mrs Crisp Snr. (Patron, seated).  
Absent: Mrs M.Buckmaster, Mrs A.McRae, Mrs J.Mitchell, Mrs D.Elliott.