

# **THE BIG MOVE**

A SHORT ADDRESS PRESENTED TO AOBC CLUB MEMBERS AT THE  
OPENING OF THE 2021-'22 BOWLING SEASON IN THE ABC CLUBHOUSE  
ON TUESDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2021.

Good afternoon, gentlemen,

Our President, John Scales, has invited me to present to you a summary of the events that took place at the time of the departure of the Adelaide Oval Bowling Club from the Adelaide Oval – certainly one of the most important events in the Club's long history since it's foundation in 1902.

To set the scene, you must understand that the South Australian Cricket Association (SACA) leases the Adelaide Oval precinct from the Adelaide City Council who are charged with the administration of the Parklands by the State Government.

In 1902 SACA established the Adelaide Oval Bowling Club, as well as the Adelaide Oval Tennis Club, on spare land they had at the site as an amenity for members and no doubt, as a means of attracting new members. The Oval ground-staff maintained and marked the bowling greens (two) and tennis courts (four) that were both situated between the western grand-stand and the nearby Memorial Drive Tennis Club. In return, both Clubs paid SACA a nominal annual fee per member that was of course additional to the individual's membership fees for SACA that were paid directly to that body. I believe that in 2007 the annual SACA levy per member was \$100 so that the total fees paid to SACA by AOBC at that time amounted to about \$10,000.

AOBC was a thriving club of just over one hundred members and fielded two teams in both the Wednesday and Saturday pennants bowls competition under the auspices of Bowls SA. Apart from myself, several who were club members at that time are here with us today notably John Skipper, John Cooper, Malcolm Begg, David Clarnette, Henry Krichauff, Bob Shuttleworth, John Sheat, Lance Perrett and Ross Sweet.

I joined the AOBC in 2003, shortly after my retirement, became a member of the committee in 2005 and was elected President of the Club at the June 2006 Annual General Meeting following the untimely death of Ian McBride and continued in that role for two years. Early in my presidency I arranged to have a short meeting each month with Michael Deare, SACA Secretary, usually immediately before our Tuesday club bowls competition, to address matters of interest or problems arising that required our attention.

Thus you can imagine my complete and utter surprise when in late 2007 I received a letter, completely out of the blue, from Michael Deare, requesting me to arrange a meeting with himself and the SACA President, Ian McLachlan, to discuss the exit of AOBC from the Adelaide Oval precinct as the space we presently occupied (and had for the previous 105 years!) was required for a planned major refurbishment of the Oval.

News of this eviction of the Bowling Club from the Oval was met initially with disbelief and then with dismay and consternation by members and at a hastily arranged special general meeting of AOBC members, it was decided that a deputation of three committee members (John Thwaites, Michael Mount and myself) should meet McLachlan and invite him to seriously reconsider this decision that would effectively end more than a century of harmonious co-existence.

The meeting was an abject failure, with the three of us clearly recognizing that the refurbishment plans were well advanced and now essentially a fait accompli. John Thwaites, who, many of you will recall was wont to use a colorful turn of phrase, following that meeting said to me, "Westy, it's like farting against thunder – we've got as much chance of stopping this Oval project as a snowflake has in hell!."

At a further special general meeting the following three motions were passed:

Firstly, that our legal challenge to our eviction from the Oval (passed at the previous special general meeting) should be abandoned as our chance of success was extremely unlikely and continually escalating legal fees (approximately \$7,500 at that time) had the potential to undermine the substantial financial resources the Club had accumulated after a century of prudent financial management.

Secondly, that as the Memorial Drive Tennis Club was very strongly opposed to our acquisition of any of their land and as even if such acquisition was possible our members would have nowhere to bowl for about twelve months whilst new greens and club rooms were established on the new site. The cost of this option was also a major disincentive.

Thirdly, that the President and Vice President (myself and John Thwaites) contact centrally located, well established bowling clubs to investigate the possibility of a merger of AOBC with them. Subsequently John and I spent many days inspecting bowling clubs and talking to their officers before narrowing our choice down to four possibilities; Walkerville, Unley Park, Toorak/Burnside and Adelaide Bowling Club.

The positives for Walkerville were: Good location, pleasant clubhouse and welcoming committee. The major negative was that the greens were unable to be used for several months over winter because of the type of grass used when they were laid.

The Unley Park Sporting Complex (Northgate Street) has a spacious clubhouse, but little on-site parking and we would have required to share our greens with the croquet club who were obviously most unimpressed by the proposal.

Toorak/Burnside had a brand-new clubhouse (following rebuilding after a fire) but both John and I felt that they were suspicious that our superior number of members represented a take-over threat to them despite our reassurances to the contrary.

Adelaide Bowling Club was in a superb location with a dedicated parking area. The clubhouse was tired, dark and uninviting but the greens were superb and the then President of ABC, Gary Benveniste, very warm and welcoming.

At yet another special general meeting of the Club these options were considered at length, and finally the choice that John and I favored of ABC, was supported by members.

I was able to negotiate an extra month of time at Adelaide Oval with Ian McLachlan (in order that our departure could be planned and orderly rather than a mad scramble) so that our final pennants match was played there on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008 following which our records, lockers, shade-cloths and other gear was transported to ABC where we commenced bowling on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March.

In summary, our move from Adelaide Oval to the Adelaide Bowling Club was significantly stressful for all our members and resulted in a loss of approximately 10% of our members, but with the benefit of hindsight, I now consider it to have been most fortuitous as our present facilities are far superior to any we previously had and the relationship between AOBC and ABC has matured as trust and respect have grown and we have entered a phase of mutually beneficial and happy co-existence. Long may it continue and indeed flourish.

*Graham West*

AOBC Life Member