

Norfolk Bowling Club Newsletter

Shining a spotlight on.....

Phil Richards



- 1. Tell us a little about yourself – your background, are you from Norfolk? Your occupation past or present. Your family? Do you have other hobbies and interests outside bowls?***

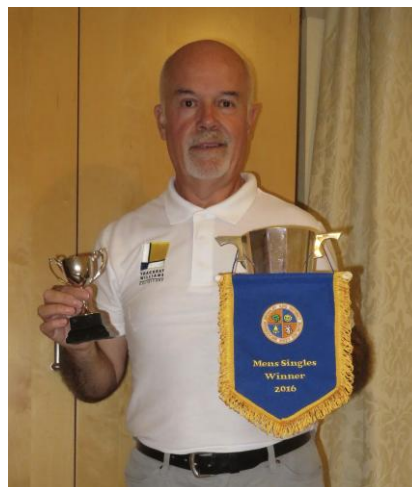
I grew up in a small village in Kent called Bethersden, which is in between Ashford and Tenterden on the A28. We had no street lights. three pubs, three shops and three churches. I attended Bethersden County Primary School before moving onto secondary school in Tenterden. I left school at 15 and took an apprenticeship working at a local garage (Western Motor Works in the neighbouring village of Woodchurch). Having acquired my City & Guilds in Motor Vehicle Mechanics, I promptly moved into the Parts Department where you didn't get your hands so dirty!! I have a sister and two brothers but my oldest brother has since passed away following complications after an operation. I played football and cricket for the schools and later for my village cricket and football teams. I play guitar and belt out a few songs in the privacy of my own home; Beatles, Eagles and Chris de Burgh genre. Having said that, there were three occasions when myself and a few friends from scouts played at local village halls. I own three guitars; a Martin Six String, a Landola 12 String built in Finland, and another Six String which I've owned since I was 14 (almost an antique!).

2. When did you first begin playing bowls?

I moved to Yorkshire in 1975 and, for three years, worked for Express Dairies. My sport at that time was Badminton. I played for International Harvesters (my father-in-law worked there), they had a massive assembly plant in Idle, near Bradford (the old Jowett Cars Factory). The local leagues were very strong and it was a popular sport in the 70's and early 80's.

I didn't start playing bowls until around 1992. I used to go and watch my mother-in-Law play Crown Green Bowls in Wibsey Park, Bradford. I started in the D team away at Bowling Park Bradford, losing 21 - 19. In Crown most games are singles (21 up). Before very long, I had a place in the A team playing for my local Wibsey Park team. We won several league and cup knockouts and, individually, I won the Bradford Hospital Handicap Competition in 2002.

I moved back to Kent in 2007 and in 2012 joined the local Beckenham Bowls Club, winning the club singles. That qualified me to play in the BBDBA, (Beckenham Bromley and District Bowls Association). The finals were at HSBC Sports Ground in Bromley and I made it through to the final and was the eventual winner. (see photo below).



3. How long have you been a member at NBC?

I joined Norfolk Bowling Club in 2017, so have been a member for 8 years now.

4. What do you enjoy about bowling?

I enjoy the friendship you get from bowling. It's a sport for all ages. Playing with our club's top players is good fun especially if you win,

5. Which leagues and competitions have you played in?

I play in many indoor leagues during the Winter Season, including Saturday County League where I am joint B team Captain with Marty Ellis playing in Division 1. Outdoor it's the Yare evening league which I captain, plus Wednesday night County League where both our A and B teams play in the Premier League.

6. *What are your highest achievements?*

Highest achievement was Norfolk County Championship winners 2024 in the Senior



Two Wood Fours which gave us a place at the National Championships in Leamington. I have a photo of us (well three of us; Marty Ellis David Staff and myself). Missing is our Skip, Steve Wells, he was already in the bar! In 2025 I reached the Final of the open Fours at Great Yarmouth (late replacement for Steve Wells who had sadly passed away unexpectedly that summer). We all miss him a lot.

7. *Have you volunteered for any roles or positions at NBC? If so, which and for how long?*

As most people will know, I held the position of Club Captain for several years, taking over from Brian Holcroft. This involved organising posters and teams for friendlies, mostly for indoor games. I've captained in the Outdoor Yare League now for five seasons, always finishing in the top half of the table. We were also winners of the Howlett Cup, and on another occasion losing finalists. I also sit on the Outdoor Committee, and am competition secretary.

Many thanks to Phil for sharing his memories and thoughts.