

A History of the Cammeray Croquet
Club

1909 to 2009

By Neil Hardie,
Alma Montagu
and Stephen Howes

CHAPTER 1: 1909-1930

On 10th May 1909 the Warringah Club was founded. In its articles of association its aims included:

- To provide and construct ... a Public Hall and other suitable rooms buildings places and works convenient for the purposes thereof to construct and maintain ... gardens greenhouses and pleasure grounds bowling greens and other conveniences
- To permit public meetings exhibitions concerts lectures dinners balls dances theatrical performances and other entertainments and for reading writing and newspaper rooms libraries club rooms masonic rooms oddfellows rooms baths laundries refreshment rooms shops businesses offices teaching rooms and residences.
- To provide amusement entertainment and instructions for the shareholders of the Company and others.
- To carry on the business of Concert and Dancing room proprietors and managers and to provide for the production representation and performance of operas and stage plays promenade and other concerts lectures and other musical dramatic and spectacular and educational performances
- To enter into agreements with actors authors musicians teachers lecturers entertainers and other persons for the purposes aforesaid. To manage public or private socials dances and entertainments.
- To do all such other things as are incidental to the attainment of the above objects.

The initial subscribers who funded the development of the club were:

J.T. Ralston solicitor Rangers Road, Neutral Bay

Geo S Littlejohn merchant Hayes Street Neutral Bay

Olav E Paus shipping agent 'Norge' Raymond Rd Neutral Bay

Leonard Dodds mining agent George & Wynyard Sts Sydney

Chas R Crossman merchant Neutral Bay

John H Beaton merchant Karraba Road Neutral Bay

Robt. Craig merchant Shell Cove Road Neutral Bay

The initial capital of the Company was £2,500 divided into 500 shares of £5 each. The initial promoters – Ralston, Littlejohn, Crossman and Paus – had gathered in Bridge Street on 13th August 1908 to agree to buy part of the Yeolands Estate. When the Warringah Hall Company was formed, the Company purchased this piece of land from the promoters.

Although croquet is not specifically mentioned in these articles, it was one of the early activities. In 1928 the secretary of the croquet club reported in a letter to North Sydney Council that they had been on this site for more than eighteen years. There is also a sketch of the Warringa Club in a magazine of 12th January 1909 that shows the main area in front of the clubhouse as a croquet lawn.



The Warringah Hall in 1910

The Warringa Club was in Neutral Bay, covering a large area bounded by Yeo Street, Barry Street and Bydown Street. This site now has a large block of units on it.



Site of the former Warringa Club in Neutral Bay

This part of Neutral Bay seems to have been a centre for croquet. Next to the nearby Ilbury Park there was at this time a grand house called Rahnie where the Ilbury family lived. This house had a croquet lawn in the grounds. The Ilberys were merchant traders who 'conducted important business for the Colony between India and the Far East'.

The croquet club operated for the next twenty years at this site. It seems to have been independent of the Warringa Club, as it reports paying rent to the Warringa Hall Co. Ltd.

It is believed that the Warringa Club ceased operation around 1929, and the land was sold for development, which led to the croquet club seeking a site for croquet elsewhere in North Sydney.

CHAPTER 2: 1930-1976

ADAPTED FROM:

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GAME OF CROQUET AND THE
CAMMERAY CLUB NORTH SYDNEY

by Mrs Alma V Montagu 1976

(with additional material from *Croquet History: mainly Australia, especially New South Wales* by Max Hooper 1991).

The Cammeray Club, at one time in its early formation, was used part-time by the NSW Croquet Association which in those days was not affiliated with the newly-formed Croquet Players' Association, NSW.

Cammeray, like most croquet clubs, had its ups and downs, and in those early days it almost ceased to function. Members from other clubs, however, came to the rescue; Mrs Bayliss from Chatswood, Mrs Taylor from Cheltenham, and, a little later, Miss Morgan, Mrs Barrett and Colonel Saalfeld, O.B.E. from Mosman. Through their generosity, Cammeray was able to carry on. There is a letter from the Club Secretary of 19th June 1941 asking that a reduced rent of £40 be continued, as the Club could not afford any more.

Most of the members in 1976 had been in the club for a period up to twenty years. The longest playing member of the club was Mrs K Leaver, who held the post of President several times and was also a Life Member.

Mrs Wells was probably the first President of the present Club, Mrs Oxley the first Secretary and Mrs Rogers the first Life Member of the Cammeray Croquet Club.

Mrs Wall was a member of Cammeray Croquet Club for several years from 1957 onwards. She was at the centre of the great dispute in Australian croquet in the 1950s. She was the founding President of the Australian Croquet Association, but other croquet players resented her election, and as a result New South Wales Croquet Association did not join the ACA.

Later, a rival NSW organisation was set up – the Croquet Players Association, CPA. Mrs Wall become President of this in 1953. Attempts were made to amalgamate the two associations, but they were thwarted by various personalities. Gradually clubs switched their allegiance from the NSWCA to the CPA, until finally in 1959 the NSWCA expired.

Another formidable person in this dispute was Mrs Oxley who was secretary of Cammeray from 1941 to 1957. She resigned from Cammeray when Mrs Wall joined.



Mrs K Leaver, President 1961-4 & 1968



Mrs A Martin, President 1969-72

Another member, Mrs Alice Martin, donated tables and chairs, plus a large window box which contained most of the equipment.....



Unfurling of our pennant and Australian flag 31st October 1971



Col Albert Saalfeld

A shelter shed was donated by the late Dorothy Cormack, which was erected by Stan Sharp and his son..... Even the House Flag and Australian Flag were beautifully made by Mrs Ann Imray and donated to the Club.....

The Cammeray Club supported the Association's Interclub Competitions, with entries in all grades. These competitions are, understandably, very difficult to win, but between 1959 and 1976 Cammeray won 13; 3 in 'A' Grade, 6 in 'B' Grade and 4 in 'C' Grade.....

Cammeray Club has always been progressive. In May, 1970, it held the first ever tournament in Australia *for Men Only*, for the 'Albert Saalfeld Trophy'. For this event, 7 of the Club's 10 men entered.....

A little later, Cammeray held an Open Invitation Men's Handicap Tournament with eleven entrants from eight different city clubs. This was

won by Neville Montagu (Cammeray) with 52 points from Albert Saalfeld (Mosman) with 51 points. Colonel Saalfeld was on a handicap of minus four – the lowest in Australia at that time.

Cammeray Croquet Club has always been known as a progressive club, but unfortunately, we have one incident when we were not so:

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 14/1/61:

MALE MEMBERS: It was moved by Mrs Rogers that Cammeray Club do not take male members. Seconded by Mrs Wells. Carried.

Minutes of Special Meeting 3/3/62.

MALE MEMBERS: It was moved by Mrs Orton and seconded by Mrs Hood that previous motion of 14/1/61 re male members be rescinded and in future we will welcome male members at Cammeray Club. Carried.

Some time ago a circus was set up in the park just outside the Club boundaries. The water supply was used to water the horses etc. The large double gates were left ajar for easy access and some of the ladies were enjoying their matches when a huge elephant, evidently liking the look of them, decided to take a closer interest in the game and strolled onto the lawn in their midst. As you can imagine there was quite a scatter until he was captured by his trainer.....

"... sometimes danger can enter the scene, as about five years ago, when the top-dressing was being spread, one of the shovels struck a metallic object, which turned out to be a live hand-grenade. The military was contacted and a bomb disposal squad arrived and took away the dangerous souvenir". (Montagu, 1976)

CHAPTER 3 1977-2002

Much of this period was a struggle to survive with a relatively small membership. There were some good players in the club, such as the Wiesner family. Miss Diane Wiesner won the ACA Gold Medal in 1976, was NSW Champion in 1977 and 1982, and won the NSW Open Doubles with Mr T Cresswell in 1976, 1977 and 1985. She was in the NSW State Team from 1976 to 1979, and was Captain in 1979.

Her father, Mr Jack Wiesner was NSW Champion in 1976 and won the Beryl Chambers in 1977 and 1981. He was also in the State team in 1977. Her mother, Mrs Mary Wiesner had been NSW Champion in 1972, and was in the State Team in 1971 & 1972. Jack and Mary Wiesner won the NSW Open Doubles in 1979 and 1981.

Around 1980 there was a colourful addition to the club when Jose Sanz-Tonnellier joined. He soon made the NSW State Team, being a member between 1981 and 1985. He came from Argentina and took up croquet in his thirties. He won several major competitions, including the International Challenge Cup United States vs. Australia in 1984. He was involved in medicine, ran a farm and worked for Qantas among other activities. In 2001 he was ordained as a Laotian Buddhist Monk and largely abandoned croquet. He was President of Cammeray Croquet Club 1982-4 and 1988-90. The club was often short of funds, and Jose often paid bills out of his own pocket.

He was Club Champion from 1980 to 2001 apart from 1996 when Ken Clapp won this competition. As a Buddhist Monk he was involved in charitable activities helping down-and-outs and drug addicts in Darlinghurst, but these activities led to conflict with the police, and in recent years he has suffered poor health.



Jose in his 30s



Jose, now Venerable Yanatharo, playing in 2005

The club was quite small at this period, and had few men as members. For some years, Jose and Ken Clapp were the only men there, which put a heavy load on their shoulders.

Ken Clapp joined Cammeray around 1985. He was a first-rate croquet player, winning many trophies including the Makara Tournament at Sutherland, and several at Tempe. He was Cammeray Club Champion in 1996 and 2003. He is a very practical person, and looked after the maintenance of equipment for many years. The trolleys we use for the hoops were designed and made by Ken. He was made a life member in 2001. and was awarded the Australian Sports Medal in 2000 for his contribution to croquet.



Ken Clapp



Claire Givney



Mila Kotala

A key member of the club over this period was Mila Kotala. She has been secretary of the Club since 1999. Her apartment overlooks the Croquet Club, so she can keep a friendly eye on what is going on all the time. It was Mila who developed the close relationship with North Sydney Council that has led to our involvement in croquet for Seniors' Week, Children's Day, and the intellectually handicapped. This has led to our winning several awards for our community service, and is a factor in the generous support which North Sydney Council gives to the Croquet Club.

Mila was awarded the Premier's Seniors Week Award in 2003.

Another key member of the club has been Claire Givney, who was President in 1991-3 and 1997-9. In addition to her work for croquet, she was awarded the order of Australia Medal for her work supporting Catholic charities in India in 2004.

Pat Wright has also made a considerable contribution, being President 1994-6 and 2000-2.

Pat presided over the 70th Birthday Celebrations in 2000:



**70th Birthday Cake
(baked and decorated by Jean Clapp)**



Pat Wright cutting the cake

Another great celebration was for one of our most remarkable members, Inez Muir. She played croquet until she was 101, and even at that age was a good player, in spite of failing eyesight. Cammeray held a party to celebrate her centenary in August 2002. She had been a fine player for many years, and went with a group of Cammeray members on a trip to the USA organised by Jose Sanz-Tonnelier in 1984.



**Inez Muir at her 100th
Birthday party**



Burnt out shed

The club also had its setbacks. One of these was when vandals set fire to the equipment shed and destroyed both shed and equipment in March 2001. Fortunately North Sydney Council replaced the shed, and since then we have added a further shed.

Late in this period Neil Hartley became a member; a fine croquet player who won the NSW Gold Singles in 2004 and became the President of Croquet NSW from 2005-7. He then became Cammeray President in 2009.

CHAPTER 4

2003-2009

SECTION 1: 2003-2005 (by Stephen Howes)

The membership at the start of 2003 was about 35 and the atmosphere was very much that of a real community club, with most players attending on Saturday mornings to play and socialise. Working Bees had been regular features to keep maintenance up to a reasonable standard.

As the average age at the Club was rather high, it was clear that a rethink on the Club's future was required, thus a questionnaire was circulated amongst members to see what they wanted from the Club. As a result, Twilight Games started during Daylight Saving months and in the winter months a coaching program; both continue to be a great success.

It was also decided that we needed to grow the membership so a series of promotions was undertaken including many successful Open Days, sometimes in association with other North Shore clubs, and a stall at Kirribilli markets. These actions resulted in an overall doubling of the membership during this period to 70.

Naturally, as new people came along they had to be taught how to play the game so several members, including Neil Hartley, Neil Hardie and Stephen Howes were inducted as State coaches and undertook the rewarding duty of teaching others and engendering a love of Association Croquet. The game of Golf Croquet was becoming increasingly popular in New South Wales and we attracted 13 new members from another club who now play the game regularly at the Club.

During 2003, North Sydney Council decided to take over the maintenance of the Club grounds themselves rather than continue with a contractor. This resulted in the welcome erection of the shade shelter on the eastern side of Lawn 2 and the replacement of the rather dishevelled bushes and dangerously overgrowing bougainvillea with the beautifully scented Murrayas along the Ernest Street frontage. In 2005 the lawns were re-laid by Council, but as completion was delayed, it was not possible to top dress in the autumn growing season and we put up with very bumpy lawns for a considerable time.

It seemed sensible politics to invite the Mayor to present the annual awards at our 2003 Christmas Party in order to maintain the good relations with North Sydney Council and that practice continues today. In fact, the Christmas Party is now pleased to see the Mayor, a Councillor and the local State member for Willoughby in attendance.

For a number of years the Club has been involved with the life of the broader community with a regular attendance at North Sydney's Children's Day, where the kids love to hit balls through the bagatelle, and through our involvement with the *Chatswood Housing Connection* (an organisation for the intellectually disabled). These are not only tiring days but also good fun for both Club members and our guests. These activities were, I'm sure, helpful in our being awarded The Joe Hockey Community Award and The Mosman Daily Award for the Best Sporting Organisation, both in 2004.

The Club first started play in the present location in 1930, so 2005 was an appropriate year to celebrate 75 years here. This important occasion was celebrated in two ways. A thoroughly enjoyable lunch at The Oaks in Neutral Bay, attended by some 80 current and former members, followed by play at the Club, and by the institution of The Cammeray Birthday Tournament, now held annually in May. That first year lives in the memory as being a most difficult one as the newly-laid lawns made play quite tricky,

but not tricky enough to upset Alan Honey of Queanbeayan who won the trophy.



Lunch at the Oaks for the 75th Birthday



Fun games after the birthday lunch

With the influx of new members, Beginners' Days were started on Saturday afternoons and a Beginners' Tournament was held in April 2005. Some of those players who joined and started to learn the game in 2004 were now at Bronze Level and a spirited Club Bronze Championship featured one semi-final between Mike Hughes and Julie Chong and the other between Ted Griffin and Alan Walsh. The tense nail-biting final saw Ted make a late run against Mike to clinch the title 12-9. Now of course those players have progressed to the highest levels of State croquet.

With such players it was no surprise that the team of Alan, Mike, Ted and Glyn Gill won the Bronze Pennants for NSW against the best that the state could produce.



Bronze pennants team 2005



Alan Honey (r) after beating Alan Walsh (l) in the inaugural Birthday Tournament

The work of building the Club as a force in NSW croquet now passed to a new President.....

SECTION 2: 2006-2008:

With the increase in membership and the influx of good players over the last three years, the club was in a good position to develop further. The lawns had now settled down, and were of excellent quality.

Our good players develop rapidly, and were soon in the forefront of croquet in NSW. In 2006 Cammeray won the silver pennants – not surprising as Alan Walsh won the silver singles with Mike Hughes runner up, and Ted Griffin won the silver brooch. Half way through the silver pennants Alan and Mike went down to gold, and were thus ineligible, but others filled the gap.



Silver pennants team 2006 – Neil Hardie, Glyn Gill, Audrey Lamb and Ted Griffin, with our supporter, Bebe Abdullah



Alan Walsh, Mike Highes, Stephen Howes and Ted Griffin with the CNSW prizes they won in 2006

By 2008 Mike Hughes won the Senior Citizens and the Platinum Singles, Alan Walsh won the NSW Open Singles and the 3 and under singles and Neil Hardie won the Fransted. Cammeray won the Gold Pennants. We had also acquired Peter Landrebe as a member, the NSW Men's Singles Champion and the Australian Open Champion. We were clearly one of the strongest clubs in New South Wales.

With our growing reputation and good lawns, we were asked to help host several major tournaments. The most notable was the Australian Championships in November 2006. This coincided with the MacRoberston Shield being held in Australia, so many of the top overseas players came to Sydney. We were privileged to have former world champion Chris Clark of England playing at Cammeray, and his partner, Jenny Williams, the leading woman player in the world.

Unfortunately, when there is heavy rain, our lawns get flooded and play is impossible. The next three events which we hosted were all moved to other clubs due to such floods. The Champion of Champions in June 2007 was moved to Killara and Chatswood, the NSW Open Singles in September 2007 was moved to Mosman, as was the same event the following year.

We have reduced the flooding problem recently by top-dressing the lawns and by buying a super-sopper, so we should not be affected except by major storms in future.



Flooded lawns in 2007



Our new super-sopper in use

The membership continued to rise, and in 2008 Cammeray became the largest club in Sydney with over 90 members. This rose to over 100 in early 2009. This placed a heavy load on the coaches of the club. With only two lawns, we decided that we would no longer actively pursue new members.

A number of the new members were people who were still in full-time work. They were attracted to Cammeray because we had floodlights, and could play croquet at night. The lights were installed in January 2007, followed by a grand party in February attended by the local state member, Gladys Berejiklian, and the Mayor of North Sydney, Genia McCaffery.

The lights cost \$33,400, so we had to raise substantial funds. A grant from the Federal Department of Tourism, Sport & Recreation for \$16,100 helped, we had a few thousand in reserve funds, and club members made donations, organised raffles and found sponsors to cover the remainder. We also had to prepare a Development Application, reassure neighbours that it would not affect them, and satisfy the RTA that Ernest Street traffic would not be distracted.

Play under lights was slow to take off, but gradually we developed a range of events, from Night Invitations for a mix of Cammeray members and members of other clubs, an Egyptian tournament played at night, and an evening for new bronze members at night.



digging holes for the light poles



playing at night

We continued our good relationship with North Sydney Council, hosting Children's Days, Seniors' Days and other events. The Council responded by putting a lot of effort into the maintenance and care of our lawns and premises.



Club members running a Children's Day – September 2006



Members painting the clubhouse in September 2008

A major project during this period was the refurbishment of the clubhouse. We first erected a new shed to store the playing equipment. Then North Sydney Council repaired the clubhouse (based on a building report prepared by one of our members, John Fransen) and put in a new wooden floor section so we had a level floor. The club then arranged for the floor to be sanded and polished, then members painted the inside, replaced the blinds, and bought new furniture.

Other activities included the development of an excellent website by Warren Yates and Ron Wiebe – agreed to be the best croquet website in Australia; the establishment of a system to hire good quality mallets to try out various makes before buying one; re-writing the Constitution; and acquiring some new land to be developed into a practice lawn.

We developed a range of coaching courses for members at various levels. Dennis Faggotter became a member in 2007, and contributed a great deal to our coaching. Neil Hartley, Alan Walsh, Neil Hardie and Stephen Howes also worked hard at this.

As we reach our centenary in 2009, we have a large and active membership, good facilities, an active committee, and a strong group of players and coaches. We can face the future with confidence.

CAMMERAY PRESIDENTS:

1958-9: Mrs L Wells
 1960: Mrs Cumberland
 1961-4: Mrs K Leaver
 1965-7: Mrs D Cormack
 1968: Mrs K Leaver
 1969-72: Mrs A Martin
 1973-5: Miss D Pender
 1976: Mrs A Martin
 1977-8: Miss L Stewart
 1979-81: Mrs B A'Dames
 1982-4: Mr J Sanz-Tonnelier
 1985: Mrs E Henderson
 1986-7: Mrs S Curtis
 1988-90: Mr J Sanz-Tonnelier
 1991-3: Miss C Givney
 1994-6: Mrs P Wright
 1997-9: Miss C Givney
 2000-2 : Mrs P Wright
 2003-5: Mr S Howes
 2006-9: Mr N Hardie
 2010: Mr N Hartley

CAMMERAY CHAMPIONS:

1965: M Williams
 1966: Mrs B A'Dames
 1967: Mr F A'Dames
 1968-70: Mrs B A'Dames
 1971: Miss D Wiesner
 1972-3: Mr J Wiesner
 1974-5: Mrs B A'Dames
 1976: Mr B Buchanan
 1977-9: Mrs B A'Dames
 1980-95: Mr J Sanz-Tonnelier
 1996: Mr K Clapp
 1997-2001: Mr J Sanz-Tonnelier
 2002: Mr N Hartley
 2003: Mr K Clapp
 2004-5: Mr N Hartley
 2006-7: Mr A Walsh
 2008: Mr M Hughes

CAMMERAY LIFE MEMBERS:

Mrs Florence Rogers
 Mrs Kath Leaver
 Mrs Alice Martin
 Mr Fed A'Dames
 Mrs Bea A'Dames
 Dr J Sanz Tonnelier
 Mrs E Henderson
 Mr Ken Clapp
 Mrs Mila Kotala