

A Brief History of Malden Manor Bowls Club

Malden Manor Bowling Club plays in Manor Park, Old Malden. It was formed in 2009 following the amalgamation of Malden & Coombe BC and Manor Park Ladies' BC.

The green at Manor Park (known until 1953 as Malden and Coombe Sports and Recreation Ground) was laid down in 1933 and Malden and Coombe B.C., a men's club, was founded as a Council-run club under the auspices of the then Maldens and Coombe Urban District Council¹, who had bought the sports ground from the Columbia Graphophone Company².

Malden and Coombe flourished although with some inevitable interruption to events during the war years. There is no mention of women bowling until the middle fifties when the first to appear, recorded in 1956, was the bowling club attached to Cuddington Townswomen's Guild. In 1962 it was agreed to sever this connection and to rename the club Manor Park Ladies B.C. The two clubs shared the use of the green harmoniously.

1965 saw the absorption of the small local boroughs into the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames and the useful arrangement of meetings to discuss fees etc. between the officers of the clubs and the council ceased. For some years the members bought season tickets from the council for playing on the green for £6.50; by 1979 this had risen to £20, or £15 for OAPs.

Towards the end of the '80's the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, in line with other boroughs, was seeking to divest itself of the expense of the upkeep of public bowling greens. The council approached Malden and Coombe B.C. with a view to the clubs taking over the running of the facility, making it clear that 'this was an offer the clubs could not refuse'.

The clubs formed a committee to run the affairs of the facility and negotiate with the council. This consisted of a chairman and three members elected by each of the clubs under the name of the Manor Park Bowls Management Committee. This committee organised a Joint General Meeting of the clubs in September 1992 to discuss and vote upon the possibility of privatisation, which was passed with a very large majority under the new name of Manor Park Bowls Management Association.

It officially took over in January 1993, leasing the ground from the council but managing its own affairs, becoming a Private Members' Club, meaning of course, running not only a bowling club but also a business. Fortunately, the clubs were able to provide expertise in these matters from the membership. Many improvements were made: the illegal banks were replaced, at the same time an automatic watering system was installed, the pipes being laid under the new concrete banks. Vandalism was rife in the nineties with several break-ins, and the ladies wooden hut was burnt down in 1991 then replaced with a stronger construction, now used for equipment. The hedge was allowed to grow higher to discourage human intruders and also a very necessary anti-fox fence was installed.

The clubhouse was extended with proper changing rooms, a large lounge and small bar and, to much rejoicing, was officially opened on July 31st.1999. The extension was funded by the National Lottery and the Foundation for Sports and the Arts, and a great deal of work and fund-raising by the members. This allowed room for the club to host County and District events as well as members' special parties. The larger clubroom, together with recent improvements to the kitchen, also made possible the social events held every month during the winter, which prove very popular.

The two clubs amalgamated in 2009 under the name of Malden Manor Bowling Club bringing it into line with modern trends. An Executive Committee runs the business side of the enterprise, while small ladies' and men's Section Committees deal with the bowling activities. A working party of members carries out ongoing maintenance and continuous improvement to the facilities. The Club engages a contractor to deal with the bulk of the green keeping work, although club members play their part too.

Membership has held up well, partly due to word of mouth and partly to Open Days held in May. A full programme of special events and competitions is held during the season, culminating in our very special Finals Day and the Presentation Evening. 2014 saw our successful first Crown Green tournament.

Work to further extend the clubhouse, funded by donations from members, was completed in 2017. The internal footprint was much increased, and glass fronted, bi-fold doors were installed.

Malden Manor is currently the home green of the Surrey County U25 Squad.

The area known as the **Maldens And Coombe** covers four distinct districts. These are in order of age, (Old) Malden, Coombe, Kingston Vale and New Malden

Both Malden and Coombe appear in the Domesday Book (1086) (as Meldone and Cumbe), but their history dates back earlier. Kingston Vale, previously known as Kingston Bottom, dates back to at least 1791, whilst New Malden came into existence in 1850.

New Malden became a Local Government District in December 1866 under the Local Government Act.

After efforts by Kingston to include Coombe and New Malden in their borough, New Malden became an Urban District in January 1895, adding Coombe and Kingston Vale later in the month, and (Old) Malden in February, thus becoming The Maldens and Coombe Urban District.

In June 1935 the Urban District applied for a Royal Charter of Incorporation as a borough and received the document in September 1936 from the Lord Mayor Of London.

The borough was abolished in 1965 as a result of the London Government Act 1963 and the area became part of the Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames on 1st April 1965.

The **Columbia Graphophone Company Limited** was one of the earliest gramophone companies in the UK.

Founded in 1917 as an offshoot of the American Columbia Phonograph Company, it became an independent British-owned company in 1922 in a management buy-out after the parent company went into receivership.

In 1925 it acquired a controlling interest in its American parent company to take advantage of a new electrical recording process. The British firm also controlled the US operations from 1925 until 1931. That year Columbia Graphophone in the UK merged with the Gramophone Company (which sold records under the HMV label) to form EMI. At the same time, Columbia divested itself of its American branch, which was eventually absorbed by Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) in 1938.

As Columbia Records, it became a successful British label in the 1950s and 1960s and was eventually replaced by the newly created EMI Records, as part of a label consolidation. This in turn was absorbed by the Parlophone Records unit of Warner Music Group in 2013