



Shelley-Anne Salisbury and Judy Marcus in competitive mode (Photos: Judy Marcus and Shelley-Anne Salisbury)

JUDY MARCUS

As part of my role as a Suburb News roving reporter I am sent out by the editors to discover hidden treasures of the Suburb. A few weeks ago I was lucky enough to be invited, along with co-editor, Shelley-Anne Salisbury, to Bishopswood Bowling Club for a complimentary bowls lesson, tea and biscuits included.

The Club is in a secluded corner of Lyttleton Playing Fields, backing onto Norrice Lea and the synagogue.

Upon our arrival, we were greeted enthusiastically by two Michaels – Michael Spiro (Michael no.1) and Michael Hart (Michael no.2), the Club president and Club captain respectively. The rest of the Bowls players were just setting up on the immaculate Green; they seemed very happy to be there. We were definitely the new kids on the block but were made to feel extremely welcome.

The Club was an oasis of calm, a park within a park. The sun came out and there was a gentle breeze. We were in for a treat.

The aim of the game is strategic throwing of a Bowl (a weighted

Anyone for... Bowls?

ball) to try to hit smaller balls (Jacks) previously rolled by the teams to certain predetermined positions on the Green. The Bowls are designed to curve making achievement of the objective a real skill.

Long term member and trainer Michael no.2, explained a careful yet slinging movement was needed: this movement was surprisingly tricky and I needed to crouch and really hold my balance while throwing – excellent for those core muscles! When I tried a hard lob it would send the ball out of 'court' but a too restrained throw resulted in the ball falling very short of where I was aiming (all a bit embarrassing). Michael no.2 remained patient and non-judgemental. He was just concerned that we were enjoying the game. Watching the other players, I could see that they were serious about the rules, but they were also there to enjoy themselves, and there was a real sense of camaraderie. After some 'tries' at pitching the bowl I

started to relax into it and noticed how my aim really improved. The day's worries disappeared as I concentrated on getting the positioning correct. Time somehow slowed down and we were in another world and then there was the sudden clanging sound of an old-fashioned school bell calling everyone in for half-time tea. A much needed hot drink and chocolate biscuit – bowls is surprisingly demanding. The tea break was also a lovely opportunity for everyone to catch up and have a natter.

Tea break over, Shelley-Anne and I (we had both demonstrated excellent tea drinking skills) went back onto the Green and watched some of the more experienced players. We saw one gentleman use a specially adapted 'grabber' to prevent overarching his back. The Michaels explained how they have been successful in supporting members with physical challenges

by allowing the use of adaptive equipment and relaxing rules where necessary. Shelley-Anne and I spoke to a member with Parkinson's disease who couldn't play for the full two hours and this was accommodated very much on issue. The emphasis is very much on getting people in to play. Michael Spiro, in his role as president, has introduced an open gate policy to encourage passers-by to pop in and see what's going on. He wants to appeal to a younger demographic and has invited local schools in to try out the game. Michael would also like to encourage more female members.

I remember walking past the Club over the years and thinking it was not aimed at someone like me but I could not have been more wrong. Bishopswood Bowling Club is an open, welcoming space, bringing together people from all walks of life to the Suburb, some local and some from afar. I can see why they make the journey.

For more information speak to Michael Spiro on 8058 2212 or email info@bishopswoodbc.co.uk.

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