

# **MID WALES BOWLING ASSOCIATION**

## **THE FIRST 100 YEARS**

**1912 - 2012**



## President's Foreword

It was a real honour, back in August 2009, to be nominated by Hay on Wye and District Bowling Club to serve as Junior Vice President for the Mid Wales Bowling Association. Shortly after accepting this position, I was told "You do realise that in 2012, when you will be President, the M.W.B.A. will be celebrating its centenary year!" "Oh no", I thought, "What have I let myself in for?" But having Barry Tomlinson and Peter Johnson preceding me and having attended various County, Welsh Presidential and Welsh Bowling Association events over the past two years have been a great help in learning the procedures. Also, meeting the Officers of the other nine Counties and the Officers of the W.B.A. has been of great benefit in getting to know who is who in the Welsh bowling world.

As I have mentioned, 2012 will be a busy year, not only for the M.W.B.A., but also for the Llandrindod Wells Bowling Club who will also be celebrating their centenary year. I wish you all the best for the forthcoming season's activities that you have planned.

This year is also the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Hay on Wye and District Bowling Club. It may not be a major milestone timewise, but it is only fitting to acknowledge the efforts of the few surviving founder members who re-introduced bowls back in to the town, with the Green being opened in 1987 by Mid Wales President, D.B. Jones. Again, I wish them a successful season with several matches to play and host.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed towards the compilation of the '100 years of Mid Wales Bowling' webpage. Special thanks must go to Derek Mansley and Eddie Williams for putting in so many hours of research and for organising the history page. It has been quite an achievement to condense so much information from the archives and various sources, including photographs and reports submitted by our previous secretary, David Davies, MBE, founder member of Brecon Bowling Club, Tom Jermin, and former Welsh international, Edgar Thomas. Thanks also go to Clive Barrett: not only does he compile the Mid Wales League results but also submits the results and reports into our local newspapers.

Finally, I would like to thank the Officers and club representatives for their dedication to the management of the M.W.B.A. and also all the clubs and club members for being part of this historic year. May you all have an enjoyable season of competitive bowling, whether it is at club, County, national or international level.

Darren Ricketts

## Introduction

When I accepted the suggestion from the Mid Wales management committee to write the history of the association from 1912 - 2012, little did I know that there were no minutes available before 1964, it therefore, unfortunately, made the task much more difficult. There is a summary of events on our website history page which I wrote when the association website went live in 2000, which has been included in the Welsh Bowling Association handbook for their centenary year in 2004, but obviously much had happened in the first 50 years of the association which has not been recorded.

I am truly indebted to Mr Derek Mansley from Llandrindod Wells for his chronicled document of events compiled over a considerable period of time, trawling the local newspaper sports pages including, the Wellington Journal, Montgomery Express, Radnor Times and many more publications, also the county's libraries in search of information about bowls in Mid Wales. I also acknowledge the contribution from David Davies MBE (Knighton), Edgar Thomas and Tom Jermin (Brecon) and Brian Maund (Llandrindod Wells), who together have supplied me with a wealth of information and dates, but without the contribution made by Derek Mansley, it would not have been possible to achieve or indeed do justice to the 100 years of history of the Mid Wales Bowling Association.

Whilst I undertook the task of compiling the various contributions including the reading of almost 50 years of minutes, it is David Davies, Clive Barrett, Brian Maund, Derek Mansley and Ormond Davies who we have to thank for proof reading this commemorative article which will be of interest to everyone and obviously many bowlers. However whilst writing the history over the winter months of 2011/2012 to the best of my ability, I realised how little most people know about what has gone on before in bowls in Mid Wales or indeed Wales. Hopefully this history will provide that information for everyone and when completed will be put on the Mid Wales Bowling Association website, so that it may be added to or adjusted in the future. Despite the time it has taken to write and the lack of minutes and publications, I am pleased that I have been able to restore some of that lost history back to the County and I have enjoyed the task. Our heartfelt thanks once again to Derek Mansley for his massive contribution to this history.

The history adopts a quarterly approach ie,  
1912 - 1937 (The Formative Years)  
1937 - 1962 (Continued Progress)  
1962 - 1987 (Trouble in the Camp)  
1987 - 2012 (The Last Quarter)

Eddie Williams  
Hon Secretary

## The Formative Years 1912 – 1937

Mid Wales Amateur Bowling Association was formed on 18th July 1912 at the inaugural meeting at The Bear Hotel in Newtown, following a singles competition for the area's clubs, (which had nearly 100 entries). This was the first County Bowling Association formed in Wales, after the Welsh Bowling Association was formed in May 1904. The original Mid Wales clubs being Aberystwyth, Newtown, Welshpool, Royal Welsh Warehouses (Newtown) and Oswestry Conservative, with Machynlleth, Oswestry Belgrave and Llanidloes joining in 1914.

Each club held qualifying rounds to get two finalists and then these finalists played on a very fast Newtown green with J Baird (Aberystwyth) beating E Davies (Newtown) 21 – 16 to become the first County Singles Champion.

The inaugural meeting with two representatives from each club passed a motion to form the Mid Wales Amateur Bowling Association, also to adopt a draft copy of the rules of the game. They also agreed that a singles competition would be held each year, with the 1913 venue to be Aberystwyth.

Mr E Powell was elected the first President and Mr E C Morgan (Newtown) the first Secretary/Treasurer, the executive members being J Evans (Oswestry) J Farmer (Aberystwyth) T L Phillips (Newtown) J Pugh (Welshpool) and T F Benbow (Royal Welsh Warehouses).

Play continued throughout the war years 1914 – 1918 but with a very low priority and a much smaller entry. The singles game was played with two bowls and a number 3 bias jack, all over the green (Federation game). The county committee would not agree to adopt the rink game (as in Scotland) until several years later.

In 1918 Sir William Carruthers presented the Welsh Bowling Association with a shield to be played for annually by all the clubs in Wales, which was aptly named the Carruthers Shield and was first played for in 1919, with Cardiff beating Newport Athletic in the final. This is still the competition which every club strives to win each year. Newtown are the only club from the Mid Wales Bowling Association to have won the coveted shield, which they achieved in 1930. Aberystwyth won in 1977 and 1982 when they were a Cardiganshire County team. Presteigne got to the final in 1991 and 1998 but lost to Merthyr West End and Pontymister Athletic respectively.

Clubs expressed an interest in an inter club league championship and the first final was played at Welshpool on 17th August 1920 between Newtown and Oswestry. Newtown became the first holders of a magnificent silver cup winning by 354 shots to 255. The format of the match was each pair played the other 6 pairs from the opposing sides, in games first to 11 shots, playing all day, with Newtown winning 25 games to 11. The Mayor of Oswestry congratulated Newtown on their fine win and believed strongly in inter club matches because, he said, they made for friendship, improved bowling, and were necessary in these troubled times.

The 10th annual singles championship played at Machynlleth on 2nd August 1921 attracted 288 entries from 8 clubs with the final being won by G Ahern beating J E Benbow, both from Aberystwyth, 21 – 17. At the AGM following the final, Aberystwyth proposed that since there was a minimum jack length of 21 yards there should be a maximum jack length of 45 yards, this was accepted by the meeting and was to be added to the association rules for the next season. Also at the meeting a letter was read out which had been received from 10 Downing Street, Whitehall, London from the Prime Minister, Mr Lloyd George, saying he would be delighted to accept the honour of being the Patron of the Mid Wales Amateur Bowling Association and wishing the Association every success in the future.

The Barmouth club affiliated in 1921 followed by Builth Wells in 1923 and Llandovery and Llandrindod Wells in 1924. In 1922 Mid Wales became the first county to affiliate to the WBA and in September 1923 a team from Mid Wales played a team from South Wales on the Rock Park greens in Llandrindod Wells under the Scottish rules (i.e. played in rinks). This did much to popularise the rink game in Mid Wales, as they were still playing the Federation game, but it was not until 1924 that the committee adopted the WBA rules.

In September 1924 the match between Mid Wales and South Wales became officially recognised by the WBA, when 71 nominations were received to play for the South team, who selected 12 internationals and won the match by 32 shots. The match was becoming very popular and the WBA secretary Mr A J Hutchings stated at the AGM that the fixture would be an annual event.

What a monumental year 1924 turned out to be for Mid Wales. Firstly, the Association dropped the word Amateur from their title, then officially adopted the Scottish rules (i.e. the rink game) and there were now twelve clubs affiliated to the Association. With the game increasing in popularity 354 entries were received for the singles championship, which was reduced down to 44 players in club eliminators for the finals to be played at Aberdovey on 12th July. Great Western Railway announced special trains to get players and spectators to the event for what was described as a gala day for Mid Wales bowls, with the final played late in the evening between H R Edwards and A J Bibb both of Newtown with the former winning 21 – 8.

Another first for Mid Wales was the hosting of the international series at Llandrindod Wells in 1925 with Wales winning the series for the first time on Welsh soil since the series started in 1903, although Wales did win the series in Glasgow in 1920. A J Stacey from Llanelli was the Welsh Captain and A J Bibb from Newtown became the first player from Mid Wales to gain a Welsh cap, and he continued to play international bowls for the next 15 years. Other notable international players from Mid Wales being Brian Maund (Llandrindod 14 years), Robert Jones (Builth Wells 11 years) and Robert Weale (Presteigne 30 years) Robert Weale won his first cap in 1982 and has not missed a single series since then, and hopefully he will win his 100th cap in 2012, our centenary year. Other county members who gained international caps are L Williams (Llandrindod Wells) in 1946 and 1956, D L Williams (Talgarth) in 1951 and 1952, H Davies (Builth Wells) in 1960 and Edgar Thomas (Talgarth) in 1981.

At the AGM in 1926 Mr E C Morgan (Newtown) retired as Secretary/Treasurer of the Association, a post he had held since the inaugural meeting in 1912. Mid Wales had come a long way in those 14 years mainly due to Mr Morgan's vision and contribution to bowls. Mr W H Jones from Aberystwyth took over as Secretary/Treasurer. 1927 saw H R Edwards beat A J Bibb again 21 – 19 to win the county singles and Aberystwyth beat Newtown 96 – 63 to win the league championship.

The 16th May 1928 saw a team from New Zealand visit Mid Wales to play a match on the Rock Park greens in Llandrindod and they proceeded to do the haka before the start of the game. The many spectators present had not seen anything like this before and were quite amused by the performance. At a management meeting in March it was agreed to convey the New Zealand tourists from Cardiff to Llandrindod and to provide lunch and dinner, as this was the first colonial team to visit Mid Wales. No effort was to be spared to make the historic visit a complete success, with the arrangements being carried out to the letter by CC Hughes. Interestingly Mid Wales won the match 129 – 100. The international series returned to the Llandrindod club again in 1929, and although Wales did not lose a game, it was England who walked off with the News of the World trophy having won two games and the other being drawn, thereby beating Wales by one point. Incidentally this was the first international series where all the bowls had to bear the new International Bowling Board (IBB) stamp.

A team from Australia toured Wales in 1930 and they played a Mid Wales team at Builth Wells on 14th June with Australia winning 139 – 101.

In 1931, the WBA decided to introduce a County Championship of Wales competition, there being four counties in membership, namely Carmarthenshire, Glamorganshire, Monmouthshire and Mid Wales. It was Mid Wales who became the very first winners of the Alex Crate Shield, beating Glamorganshire 113 – 95 in the final at Lampeter. The only other time Mid Wales have won the County Championship was at Brecon in 1989, but they did win the Bowls Association of Wales County Championship in 1965, but more of that later.

Newtown won the Carruthers shield beating Cadoxton in the final at Llandrindod Wells 97 – 71, they also won the league championship and the county singles championship all in the same year, making it

an outstanding treble. At the AGM that year, Aberystwyth proposed that Mid Wales introduce a pairs and a rink competition and after much debate the meeting agreed to the proposal which brought them in line with the WBA, who had introduced both competitions some 12 years earlier.

Also in 1931 Wales won the international series played at Westcliffe-on-Sea, England, with A J Bibb (Newtown) as captain and the News of the World trophy was brought back to Newtown where a celebration took place in the club house.

Lampeter bowling club affiliated to the Mid Wales Association in 1927, Cardigan and Talgarth in 1928, and Knighton joined in 1933, making the Mid Wales Association 10 clubs in membership for the start of the 1934 season. There were also bowling greens in Presteigne around this time, as it is reported they changed greens from the Radnorshire Arms Hotel to the Oxford Arms Hotel in April 1927, but do not appear to have formed a club or taken part in any of the Mid Wales Association affairs until 1972.

Following on from the visits by New Zealand and Australia, South Africa toured Wales in 1936 and played Mid Wales on 7th June at Llandrindod Wells. However the match had to be abandoned due to very heavy rain after 10 ends with Mid Wales leading 70 – 53, and this was taken as the final score.

With the Llandrindod club having laid a third green in 1935, an 18 rink match was played in the summer of 1936 when a South Wales team played a team called “The Rest”, which included players from England, Scotland, North and Mid Wales, but the South Wales team were much too strong winning 448 – 278, this was the first and maybe the only time a match used all 18 of the Llandrindod rinks.

Also in 1936 the WBA granted patronage of the Open Pairs Championship of Wales to the Llandrindod tournament committee, as it attracted bowlers from all over Great Britain and they wished to encourage more flat green bowling in Mid and North Wales.

The selection for the match against Monmouthshire on 20th June 1936 at Brynmawr in the county championships was one rink from six clubs namely:- Aberystwyth, Builth Wells, Llandrindod Wells, Llanidloes, Newtown and Talgarth, with the reserves coming from the rest of the clubs. Was this the strongest team? The result is unknown.

## **Continued Progress 1937 - 1962**

At a meeting of the WBA in February 1937 Mr G W Gibson of Llandrindod was elected onto the Welsh Selection Committee, a position warmly welcomed by all Mid Wales bowlers. Also in 1937 the International series returned to Llandrindod Wells with Wales winning the series for the 7th time and the 3rd time on Welsh soil, but it would be 63 years before the international series returned to Llandrindod Wells in 2000. It was also the year a bowls match was broadcast on BBC radio. Mr G W Gibson commentated on the international series played on 15th, 16th, 17th July; another first for the area. Also in 1937 “The Rest” beat a South Wales team in their annual 18 rink match by 359 – 331. This was the first time for Mid Wales to win this match after 16 years of trying, and ironically the match was never played again.

In 1940 with the outbreak of the 2nd world war, the WBA cancelled all county matches and competitions until 1945, but it was not until 1942 that Mid Wales did likewise. At the AGM on 10th November 1945 at Llangurig, and attended by representatives from nine clubs, it was agreed that competitions should start up again in 1946 with New Quay and Aberaeron accepted into membership. A friendly bowls match between Mid Wales and Birmingham took place at Llandrindod Wells on 8th June 1946, which Mid Wales won 162-87, but what was significant about this match was that coloured discs on the bowls were used for the first time, blue for Mid Wales and yellow for Birmingham; this greatly assisted the many spectators following the match.

Newcastle Emlyn were accepted into the Mid Wales Association in 1947, but New Quay did not play. In the Mid Wales singles competition there were 710 entries, which was played down to 2 finalists from each club, who then contested the Mid Wales Singles championship finals held at Plascrug, Aberystwyth. A J Bibb (Newtown) beat R F Evans (Aberystwyth) in the final, and Newtown won the Mid Wales League title for the 15th time.

In January 1948, the WBA granted the five clubs from Cardiganshire their own County status, which meant they would not be participating in any further Mid Wales competitions. Many bowlers did not wish for this to happen, particularly losing the Aberystwyth club who were great friends and founder members of Mid Wales and had played a major part in the many Mid Wales successes over the last 36 years. Barmouth and Welshpool were again accepted into membership, having lapsed for some years, taking the number of clubs back up to nine.

A team from America toured Wales in 1948 and played a match against Mid Wales on 19th August on Llandrindod Wells Rock Park greens, with Mid Wales winning by 28 Shots 105 – 77. The tourists were entertained at the Hotel Metropole to lunch and dinner, with souvenirs being presented by Mr Tom Norton JP, the High Sheriff of Radnorshire. President and Captain of Mid Wales was Mr Frank Morris of Builth Wells BC.

Brecon BC were accepted into the Mid Wales League in 1951, but were actually formed 13 years earlier in 1938. A new green was laid in Rhayader and they joined the league in 1952. On 8th September 1951 a match was played on the Recreation bowling green in Llandrindod Wells (now the site of the Radnorshire Indoor Stadium) between Wales and “The Rest”, comprising of six rinks each side, with “The Rest” winning the match by 13 shots 78 – 65. What was different about this game was that it was played on a Thursday evening under flood lights, believed to be the first time an outdoor bowls match had been played under lights. A large crowd witnessed the game and the general feeling was that this kind of event should be continued. Congratulations to Llandrindod and Mid Wales for this innovation. At the Annual General Meeting on 16th November it was agreed that Llandrindod could enter two teams in the Mid Wales League making twelve teams from the eleven clubs now in membership.

Canada toured Wales in 1952 with a match against the so called minor counties, Cardiganshire, Pembrokeshire and Mid Wales at Llandrindod Wells, but no result is recorded.

In 1955 it was Montgomeryshire who had permission from the WBA to form their own County Association, with the result that Newtown, Welshpool, Llanidloes, Machynlleth and Barmouth left the Mid Wales Bowling Association. Newtown being founder members and a very successful club were greatly missed. The Mid Wales BA was now down to six clubs.

The Mid Wales management committee inaugurated the pairs competition in 1956, with A R Lane and J E Lloyd (Llandrindod) beating brothers A Cadwallader and J Cadwallader from Knighton 27-10 in the first final held in Brecon. Then in July 1958 with the Empire and Commonwealth Games coming to Cardiff, the WBA decided that our representatives in the singles, pairs and rinks in the sport of bowls would be the winners of a play off competition between the holders of the Welsh titles in each discipline over the last 4 years, from 1955 to 1958. These games highlighted the importance of sport and bowls in particular as our membership continued to grow in numbers. The first BIBC championships were held at Paisley Park, Belfast on the 5th July 1960, when England won the singles and pairs and Scotland the rink. A number of Mid Wales players have since won British titles with Rob Weale of Presteigne being the most prolific winner. Also on 15th October 1960 Mid Wales BA played against the Welsh Indoor Bowling Association in an Indoor friendly match at Cardiff Indoor Stadium, but were soundly beaten 157 to 75 shots.

## Trouble in the Camp 1962 - 1987

1962 saw the fiftieth anniversary of the Association with a golden jubilee celebration match on 1st September against a WBA representative side at the Rock Park greens in Llandrindod when President of the WBA, Mr W T Griffiths of Cardiff was welcomed by Mid Wales President Mr A Wilding of Knighton BC. The WBA won the match by 23 shots.



Players of both sides who took part in the match

Concerns were being aired about the breakup of the WBA with six counties in dispute with Glamorgan CBA because of the power they had over the voting system, whereby Glamorgan CBA could out vote the other six counties on any subject. This dispute then escalated and at the AGM held in Cardiff in 1964 it was decided to hold a special meeting between representatives of both sides to try to avoid a split.

At the reconvened AGM in Cardiff on 27th January 1965 a notice of motion was put forward by Cardiganshire supported by the other five counties expressing their dissatisfaction at the way decisions were taken in affairs of the WBA. The notice was put to the vote and Glamorgan out voted the other counties by 127 votes to 73, so all 73 delegates withdrew from the meeting and the counties resigned from the WBA. This momentous decision to split from the WBA, then led to those six counties, Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, Mid Wales, Monmouthshire, Montgomeryshire and Pembrokeshire forming the Bowling Association of Wales, at a meeting in Llandrindod Wells on 18th March 1965, at which over one hundred bowlers from the six counties turned up. More detailed information on this split and the reasons for it can be found in the WBA centenary handbook of 2004, and the Carmarthenshire 75th Anniversary book.

Officers of the new association, (in short BAW), were President Mr T I Williams from Llanelli and Secretary Vernon Jones Llandrindod, and Treasurer Mr D D Jones also from Llandrindod.

The BAW County championships was won in 1965 (the first year) by Mid Wales BA, whose effort must go down in history as they soundly beat all the other five counties, the last one being current holders Monmouthshire, at home, in Llandrindod Wells by 134-110. It has to be said the victory is tinged with sadness because of Glamorgan's absence, but never the less it was a wonderful team performance.



**Back Row:** F L Williams, I Jones, C Jones, L Davies.

**Middle Row:** L Pugh, V Davies, J Palmer, V Moses, D Jones, T Jermin, R Oakley, L Moses, P Pugh, W Bunney, W Evans, W Davies, B Davies.

**Front Row:** D Williams, B Maund, W Foulkes, D D Davies, V Jones W Price, F Corely, N Lewis.

The BAW held their own competitions of singles, pairs, rink and club championship (called the Meryck Owen Trophy) in the following 5 years, with the champions of each county being drawn against each other on a knock out basis, with the first years finals being held at Parc Howard, Llanelli.

The last finals of the BAW competitions were held at Llandrindod Wells on 6th September 1969 and the club championship at Newtown, when Llandrindod Wells beat Bedwellty Park 71-66, with Talgarth having won the trophy in 1966 beating Llanelli bowling club.

Through those 5 years there appeared to be happiness, camaraderie and good competition among the bowlers and counties of the BAW, so much so they were reluctant to join up again with the WBA until their aspirations were met. These included the Vice Presidency going around the counties in turn; the makeup of committees, (particularly the selection committee); the competitions and the International team. However the main bone of contention was having equality of voting rights for all the counties. This was thrashed out and agreed during 1969, albeit not parity to all counties, and harmony was restored in 1970, much to the delight of the Minister of Sport for Wales at that time, who was pleased with the outcome of the negotiations enabling bowls to move forward again.

In October 1966 Brian Maund of Llandrindod Wells BC was chosen along with four team mates to represent Wales in the first ever World Championships which were held in Kyeemagh bowling club, Sydney, Australia. This was a great honour for the Llandrindod Wells club and Mid Wales Bowling Association, with sixteen countries taking part.

The Mid Wales BA affiliated back to the WBA at a meeting in the Castle Hotel in Llandovery on

1st May 1969, where it was unanimously decided to apply for membership for the 1970 season. Competitions and the club championship of the BAW would continue for this year with the finals being played at Llandrindod Wells BC.

In 1971 the BIBC introduced a triples championship to go with the singles, pairs and rink competitions. Also 1971 is recorded as the most successful year for the county team playing for the Alec Crate Shield (the county championship of Wales) with Mid Wales winning 5 out of the 6 matches, losing only to eventual winners Glamorgan. They also won 4 out of 5 friendly games that year and the Three Counties Competition for the second time.

At the MWBA AGM held at the Wellington Hotel in Brecon on 3rd November 1973, much concern was expressed regarding the proposed impact the local government re-organisation would have on bowls in Wales. Would the County Association continue as agreed in 1970 or would the proposed boundary changes effect the WBA structure. The county were also in the process of designing a new tie and a better quality blazer badge. Danny Musto from Brecon became the WBA representative on the Council, allowing him enough time to qualify for nomination as JVP of the WBA.

It is worth noting that the first winners of a Welsh Title were, A J Hughes, D C Musto, F Williams and C L Jones, from Brecon BC who won the national fours, beating a rink from Ebbw Vale in 1964, the year before the breakup of the WBA and a rink from Llandrindod Wells BC, W Richards, E Spooner, J Palmer and B Maund won the title on the first year back after reconciliation, beating a rink from Thomastown in 1970, although a rink from Talgarth skipped by D L Williams were runners up in 1951. BAW winners during those five years were W Richards, E Tidman, J Palmer and B Maund who won the fours in 1969.

In 1972 Presteigne BC were accepted into Mid Wales for an initial period of two years to assess their green, but not into the Carruthers Shield until 1974. Also in 1972 L H E Thomas and L Moses, Talgarth, became the first Mid Wales bowlers to win the Open Pairs title against P Bailey and H S Andrews from Brynhyfryd BC and they repeated the success again in 1974 against N Harris and R Harris of Kenfig Hill BC. Also in 1974 Brian Maund of Llandrindod Wells BC Captained Wales at the International series played in Edinburgh, a fitting end to an International career spread over 14 years, with his first international being in 1961 at Eastbourne . In 1975 Llandovery applied for membership of the Mid Wales BA even though they were a Carmarthenshire club under the new boundary changes introduced in 1974. They were accepted, but could not play in the Carruthers Shield until the following year. In 1976 Danny Musto of Brecon was elected as the President of the WBA and was the first member from Mid Wales to receive this high honour.

The WBA Vice Presidents Association was formed in 1977, to foster the social aspects of the game at the highest level. The Welsh Men's Umpires Association was also formed in 1977 and amalgamated with the Ladies in 1993. The county management committee decided that the MWBA finals would be played at a central venue rather than being played at different venues around the county, not necessarily the Presidents club, from next season and that the winners of each discipline would be our representatives to go forward to the Welsh National Finals and also to initiate a triples competition and a under 35 singles competition in line with the WBA.

In 1978 Montgomeryshire came up with a proposal to run an U35 three counties competition, as well as the open three counties competition between Mid Wales, Cardiganshire and Montgomery, which was successful for a number of years. The National Championships would be held at Llandrindod from 10th to 12th August, with a notable success for the Mid Wales Triples Champions of A Colcombe, A Jenkins and R Walker of Builth Wells BC who beat J King, G James and J Owen of Penylan BC and thereby proceeded to the BIBC Championships held in Pontypool the following year.

A number of rules were amended at the 1979 AGM. Firstly the MWBA league winners to go forward to the Carruthers in the following season; the Pairs, U35 and Open singles to be zoned, Breconshire and Radnorshire. To qualify for a county badge a player must represent the county on six occasions, three of which must be WBA county matches.

An application from Kington BC for membership to the MWBA was turned down due to added travel costs or maybe because they were from over the border in England.

1980 saw the introduction of the WBA coaching scheme at Rhydycar IBC Merthyr, where David Davies, Ormond Davies and Gordon Poole were appointed as WBCA coaches. Edgar Thomas, then with the Talgarth Club won the National Singles title, beating D Poole from Saundersfoot in Cardiff, the first time a player from Mid Wales had won the Open Singles since its inauguration in 1919. In 1981 the WBA agreed to Mid Wales running its competitions on a geographical basis North and South sections. Edgar Thomas gained his International cap at the International series in Worthing. Then in 1982 Robert Weale gained his first Welsh cap at 18 years of age and will have completed 30 consecutive years as an International player in 2012. Also in 1982 the County discontinued the U35 singles in favour of a U25 competition, which was won by Robert Jones of Builth Wells, who beat Robert Weale of Presteigne in the final. 1984 saw Robert Weale win the first of many National titles, the U25 and also the fours with his brothers Brian and David together with father Bill at Ebbw Vale. Presteigne also won the Mid Wales league for the first time. They have won the championship 15 times and been runners up 12 times in the last 40 years, but Llandrindod lead the way with 27 championship wins and 17 times runners up, followed by Talgarth with 18 titles and 9 runners up.

A competition secretary was appointed for the North, being G Checketts from Llandrindod and for the South, G Poole from Brecon in 1984, and a closing date for each round was also introduced, due to the many disputes between the players not being able to agree dates or indeed leaving it very late to play their games before the finals day in July.

At the 1985 AGM it was decided to increase the county selectors from 3 to 4 and then in 1992 they increased from 4 to 6, then it changed again in 1997 to 5 selectors and a team captain. Then following on in 2007 to a Team Manager, the President and 4 selectors and then in 2010 to the Team Manager and two assistants. Also in 1985 Gordon Poole of Brecon was appointed as chairman of the Welsh Umpires Association.

1986 saw Edgar Spooner of Llandrindod Wells become President of Wales following D Musto of Brecon 10 years earlier, a well deserved honour for a man who had held most offices in the Mid Wales Bowling Association, including President twice, Secretary, Treasurer and Welsh Council Member. Robert Weale gained his first Gold Medal as lead in Jim Morgans winning fours at the 1986 Commonwealth Games held in Edinburgh.

## **The Last Quarter 1987 - 2012**

It was decided at the AGM that the county finals would be held at Llandrindod Wells BC and that the management meetings would also be held centrally, virtually making Llandrindod Wells the Mid Wales Bowling Association headquarters from 1987, but officially from 1992 when it was agreed that all open county championship matches would be held there if the greens were available, this was subsequently added to the constitution.

1989 proved to be a monumental year for Mid Wales; they won the Welsh County Championship with four section wins and beat the Vale of Glamorgan in the final 124 – 114. This was only the 2nd time the county have won this much sought after title, having won the inaugural county competition in 1931, although they did win the BAW equivalent in 1965.



**Back Row:** E Spooner, T Ardolino, G Moorhouse, R Morgan, J Arkel, M Williams, G Morgan, K Davies, R Weale, C Turford, K Tampin, J Weale, D B Jones (Umpire).

**Middle Row:** C Davies, R Roberts (Selector), R Oakley, C Durns (President) M Lewis (WBA President), W Weale, E Thomas, C Davies (Team Manager), M Bryne.

**Front Row:** B Weale, D Weale, R Jones, N Price, M Padmore, I Mills and R Ahrens

1990 saw Hay on Wye affiliate to the MWBA, although the club was formed three years earlier, and 1992 saw the introduction of a Secretaries Cup which was first won by Richard Long of Knighton BC who beat Edgar Thomas from Brecon BC in the final.

Also in 1990 the WBA introduced the National Mixed Pairs competition, which was won by L Davies & I Morgan from Port Talbot beating M Davies Llandrindod Wells & D Weale Presteigne in the final. The nineties continued at a pace with a number of Presteigne and Llandrindod players winning Mid Wales and National Titles, including Ron Rowlands of Llandrindod Wells BC winning the National Singles title, beating John Price, Aberavon 21 – 5 in the final in 1993, he also went on to win the National senior singles title in 1998, to become the first player to do this unique double. This double was matched last year (2011) when Rod Hugh from Tyrfran won the senior singles title. 1993 also saw the Welsh National finals return to Llandrindod Wells. Robert Jones of BUILT Wells won his first International cap in 1994 and Kaye Ltd from Presteigne took over sponsorship of the Mid Wales League, also Robert Weale won a silver in the Commonwealth Games in Victoria Canada with partner John Price in the Pairs.

The Channel Islands were included in the International series for the first time in 1995 in Llanelli and Wales won for the 15th time with Robert Weale in the team. Concern was expressed at the 1995 AGM by the Secretary about apathy amongst clubs regarding county games and friendly matches, with the embarrassment of having to cancel the fixture against Herefordshire, which was established in 1929, but thankfully the fixture was revived again in 2008.

1996 saw the WBA introduce a 0'60 County Championship of four rinks playing for the Llewellyn Trophy which was won in the inaugural year by West Glamorgan who beat South Glamorgan in the final. Since then the competition has been increased to six rinks.

The Atlantic Rim Games was hosted by Wales in Llandrindod in the summer of 1997. Although a Ladies competition of three weeks duration, the event was supported by Mid Wales BA members. Also in 1997 Robert Weale received his 50th Welsh Cap, a milestone which was recognised by a presentation on the green in Worthing at the closing ceremony of the International series.

Wales played Israel in four test matches throughout the principality in July 1998, and in the second test at Presteigne BC hosted by Mid Wales, Robert Weale and Robert Jones were selected in the six man team. Wales won 7, drew 1 and lost 3 of the eleven matches played.

At a management meeting in 1998, member clubs decided to change the scoring system for the Mid Wales league to 8 points for a win, 4 for a draw and 2 points for each winning rink and 1 point for a drawn rink. This has subsequently been changed to 6 points for an overall win.

Also on 2nd August 1998 Mid Wales secured sponsorship for new playing shirts from Nash Rocks Quarry of Walton, these were presented to President Eddie Williams at the county match against Pembrokeshire at Presteigne by representative Cliff Davies, himself a bowler with Kingsland BC over the border in England. Unfortunately the Mid Wales Team went on to lose the match 105 – 111 shots.



Back row. I Hammond, C Martin, M Allen, W Weale, R Ahrens, R Price, P Carey, D Stephens, B Weale, D Jones, and A Morris.  
Middle Row. R Jones, D B Jones, S Weale, C Davies, N Price  
K Price, B Jones, T Evans, P Page, D Weale M Stephens,  
G Moorhouse, and K Stephens.  
Front. Mr Cliff Davies, President Eddie Williams, Robert Weale

2001 saw North Road Garage Built Wells sponsor the County team with new playing shirts and in 2007, The Forge Garage Llanigon took on the sponsorship for new shirts.

The WBA revamped its Carruthers Shield qualification to 64 sections, which meant that Mid Wales would have two teams going through to the first round of the open draw.

Also in 1998 Robert Weale carried the flag representing Wales at the Commonwealth games in Kuala Lumpur and won a silver medal. In 1999 Llandrindod Wells entered another team in the Mid Wales league called the Spa Bowlers, another successful venture for the Club and the County, making nine teams in one division.

During the nineties and in the last decade a number of young players from Mid Wales achieved their U25 International caps, including Brian Weale (Presteigne) 1990, Wayne Phillips (Presteigne) 1993-2003, Kevin Stephens (Llandrindod Wells) 1996-2001 and Captain in 2000 in Ayr. Gareth Wills (Presteigne) 2001 and Mathew Bithel (Presteigne) 2002 – 2004, Gareth Sims (Llandrindod) 2008-09, and Chris Lewis (Llandrindod) 2009 - 2011, but what a achievement for Wayne Phillips, a record 11 consecutive years.

At the turn of the century the British Isles Championships and International Series returned to Llandrindod Wells and Mid Wales in 2000 after a break of 63 years, the last time being 1937. Wales won the Nat West Trophy for the B I Championships only losing one discipline, but unfortunately they were 4th in the series. Also in 2000 Mid Wales Bowling Association launched their web-site. They were the only county in Wales who did not produce an annual handbook, so driven by the then treasurer Eddie Williams (whose daughter Jennie designed the site), they went live with the web-site on April 20th; another first for the area.

Eddie Williams achieved his International Badge as an Umpire during the 2000 International Series in Llandrindod, although he umpired at the Ladies Atlantic Rim Championships in 1997. He has gone on to an impressive career as an International Umpire, officiating at the European Games in 2003, 2005 in Portugal and 2007, 2009 in Cyprus. The Commonwealth games in Manchester 2002 and the World Championships in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2008, as well as three British Isles Championships and International series. Incidentally he is the only Umpire in Wales to have officiated at all four major outdoor championships.

In 2002 Mid Wales County won the Alan Williams trophy which was given in memory of Alan, the Welsh Secretary and a past World Bowls President. This was for an open double rink competition amongst all Welsh counties and played at Ebbw Vale. The trophy has since been played for by the U16 pairs from all the Welsh counties, but will return to the open double rink competition in 2012. Wales won the International series and the News of the World Cup in Ayr Scotland in 2003, with Robert Weale as their captain, starting a run of three consecutive years as captain of his country. This was the last time Wales won the international series let's hope they can repeat that success in 2012 on home soil.

At the 2003 AGM the members agreed to a submission sent in by treasurer Eddie Williams, to form a veterans league starting in the 2004 season, with clubs entering a rink to play against each other on a Thursday afternoon at prearranged venues around all the clubs. There were two teams from Brecon and two from Llandrindod with Brecon "A" the first winners. This competition had Mathews Jewellers of Brecon as its' sponsor. This proved to be a very popular decision and it gives clubs an opportunity to blood new players into a league format.

2004 saw the centenary celebrations of the WBA with a representative game at the Rock Park International greens, Llandrindod Wells, on 13th May 2004. Then in 2005 Robert Weale won the National Singles for the 2nd time and Ken Price won the O'60's singles for the 3rd year running and five times in total, another notable achievement. 2006 saw Robert Weale win a silver medal in the men's singles losing to Kelvin Kerkow of Australia in that much talked about final in Melbourne at the Commonwealth Games.

David Davies of Knighton retired as County Secretary after 20 years in post in 2009, the longest serving Secretary of the Association. Previously he had been match secretary for 10 years and our representative on the WBA council for 3 years. President of the county in 1985, President of Wales in 1996 and President of the British Isles Council in 2008. On top of all those achievements he was the coaching co-ordinator for Mid Wales until 2001 and ever present at the Welsh National Finals held in Llandrindod since 1993. At a dinner at his own club in Knighton, in recognition of his achievements, in 2010 he took on the new name of "Mr Bowls for Mid Wales".

Ormond Davies another prominent member from Mid Wales held various posts in the county including Treasurer and in 1987 was appointed Treasurer of the WBA, a post he held for 8 years and is currently the Auditor for Mid Wales. Both Ormond Davies and David Davies had their services recognised by being made Life Members of the WBA. Both men were also accepted as members of the Barbarians Bowls Association which honours high achievement in Bowls, in 1985 and 1994 respectively. Eddie Williams was also accepted into this Association in 2003 for services to umpiring and coaching. Eddie was President of Wales in 2006 and was elected President of the European Bowls Union in 2011.

It would be remiss not to mention the Weale family from Presteigne with brothers Robert, Brian, Stuart and David winning 7 National fours titles and going on to win 3 British Isles fours titles. Also winning the National fours title with their father Bill before Stuart was old enough in 1984, and David and Robert winning the Welsh pairs title three times.

Robert has achieved success individually representing Wales in five Commonwealth Games and five World Championships, winning a medal at most of them, with a fantastic gold medal in the Commonwealth Games singles event in Dehli, India in 2011 - an outstanding record. Mid Wales and indeed Wales are very proud of his achievements, what an ambassador for our sport.

## **Concluding Remarks**

So we look forward to the Mid Wales Centenary year under the Presidency of Darren Rickets from Hay on Wye BC (who also celebrate their 25th anniversary this year) with anticipation of a memorable year

amongst fellow bowlers, friends and acquaintances who are much valued and respected. We can reminisce about all those characters who have graced the clubs in Mid Wales through the years. Long may the camaraderie, friendship and hospitality shown to our visitors continue, as the lifeblood of any County Bowling Association lies with its membership.

I hope I have played my part in recording most of the important dates and achievements by the Mid Wales players and administrators in the last 100 years and that as a county the foundation is laid to continue to play our part in Welsh bowls for the next 100 years.

It was the Queen Mother who said that the best way to celebrate a century is to build for the next one and that Gentlemen is the duty of us all as members, to ensure the continued success of this great game of bowls, both on and off the green.

Eddie Williams