THIRTY YEARS OF AUNT SALLY



written by BASIL COLLINS SEPTEMBER 1991

Foreword

- 1. This booklet would not have been possible without the help of Phyl and my two daughters, Angela and Sheila, whose involvement has been given to me 100%
- 2. My thanks to Abingdon Aunt Sally committee for their co-operation publishing this story.
- 3. All dates indicated are as close to their happenings as records have allowed me to make, there was a period of time when finals programmes were not used but just admission tickets, during this period recollections have relied on my memory, should this have failed me in any references, please accept my apologies for omissions that I may have made.

Finally Aunt Sally has been, still is, and will always be an interested part of my lifestyle.

Yours Sincerely

Sanil Gaceino

Foreword Addition

Sadly since completing this booklet Jim Dymore-Brown our ex-President, Jim Whitbread and Bill Boswell have passed on which must be the game of Aunt Sally's loss.

THIRTY YEARS OF AUNT SALLY

As Licensee of the 'Black Swan' Abingdon during early February 1960 my interest regarding pub sports was 100% participating in playing darts, when one Saturday morning two customers came into the bar, whom I knew later to be a Sid Green and Ron Farrell, purchased drinks and making general conversation about pub activities, asked me if I would be interested in forming an Aunt Sally League, to which I replied, "What the hell is Aunt Sally?". and in no time was given full details of the pitch, size of sticks and doll, and the method of playing this game. I was intrigued to say the least, and with a suggestion from these customers that I become Secretary of such a league, was a challenge I could not refuse.

My next step was to contact a few of my Licensee friends, testing the temperature so as to say, as to the feasibility of such a league in the Abingdon area. At that time the Landlords I approached were Wally Hudson The Crown, Ock St., Bill Barnett Horse and Jockey, Bill Smith Prince of Wales, Shippon, Jack Millen Fitzharris Arms, Bill Fleetwood Saxton Arms, Ray Chasney Tandem, Fred Crockford Bystander Inn, Vic Brown Cross Keys, Bob Culm Flowing Well and Walt Long Bowyers Arms. Meetings were arranged\ discussions held and Mr John Lake, then the Managing Director of 'Morlands Brewery', was approached to become President of the newly intended Abingdon and District Aunt Sally Association. He accepted the Presidents office and provided the Morland and Co. Cup for this new League.

1960

The initial signing-on fee to be 1/- per team and 6d each game played. (1/- being 5 pence and 6d being $2\frac{1}{2}$ pence). Twelve teams applied for admission, all went in the hat and drawn out into two blocks of six, to be known as Section 1 and Section 2, the winners of the two Sections to play off on Finals evening to receive the Morlands Cup.

As you may imagine funds were very low, and all the licensees I mentioned earlier, including myself, improved the cash situation by donating £5 each to the League to give it a financial boost during it's initiation. I might add that beer was then 1/- per pint, so in terms of value each donation represented £100 by today's values considering beer is now in the region of £1 per pint. I might add, at this juncture, that Wootton British Legion members often used the Black Swan and informed me that as they were participating in the League they would like to match the Landlords injection of cash as their contribution to the future well being of the League. The W.B.L. members concerned were Bert Thouless, Ron Hibberd, Ron Chandler, Jack Sanwell, Jack Soden, Bill Boswell, Eddy Baker, Vic Hills and Ron Ealey.

Things were now moving and with the league matches starting April 26th and finishing July 26th 1960 the committee of Sid Green, Wally Hudson, Bill Barnett, John Smith and myself were now faced with organising competitions to be run in conjunction with the league. Singles, Doubles and teams of Four and Eight were discussed. Once again the Licensees were quick to come forward with Cup Donations. Ray Chasney provided a Singles Trophy, Bill Smith a Doubles Trophy, Fred Crockford a Fours Trophy and Wally Hudson a Fours Runner-up Trophy. Les Dickenson, who visited me as a 'Skol Lager' Representative, expressed an interest when I said that a few landlords were making an effort to stabilize a newly formed Aunt Sally League in the area, saying that he would approach his company with a view to providing a trophy. Within a very few days I received confirmation from him that Ind Coope, his brewery employers, would provide the Eights K.O. Trophy to be known as the Skol Trophy. Slowly but surely we were establishing some formation of a solid association, but a lot of work was still needed to build our confidence as to the viability and solvency of the League's future.

Our first Finals evening had to be arranged. Where were we to begin to start with this new venture? First we booked the old Abingdon Corn Exchange, which in those days was sited next to the Westminster Bank in the Market Square, the area which is now the approach road to the parking area behind the Shopping Precinct. Through Gordon Butler I managed to borrow a set of portable equipment from Littlemore British Legion, and John Smith who was working at the aerodrome, was able to borrow and transport to our venue a number of P. T. mats used by recruits of the Parachute Training School at Abingdon. These mats were used to form a 30-40 foot floor covering area from the portable equipment back to the oche. The Landlords section of

members agreed to apply for an occasional licence and run the bar between ourselves donating any profit to the league.

One of our regular customers, Eddie Cross, was a Chrysanth enthusiast and voluntarily supplied many vases of beautiful blooms to decorate the large Corn Exchange stage and donated his contribution to be auctioned after the presentations to build up the finances for this new League. Sid Green, with his local contacts in the Sunningwell and Bayworth area, provided branches of various greenery to compliment these beautiful Chrysanths and our stage looked a blaze of colour all along the footlights embracing our fifty prizes proudly displayed in the centre stage backed on a raised dias with our first ever Cups. Our first Finals were under way resulting in the Flowing Well setting a record of being represented in all finals, the two Section winners play off, Sid Green v Ken Ackland in the all Flowing Well Singles Final, during which Ken set Sid a 5 but he replied with an excellent 6, a standard that most of the attending audience, playing for the first time ever, could never imagine that we would ever achieve.

The Doubles final once again saw the Flowing Well taking the honours. The Fours K.O. saw the Flowing Well again defeating Wootton British Legion, the play off of the two Sections winners resulted in the Bowyers just edging the title from the Flowing Well but finally the Flowing Well exercised their authority in the Skol K.O. Final with a fine win. A very good first Finals was completed by Mr John Lake, Managing Director of Morlands Brewery, presenting the 50 prizes to all competitors.

With the first season under our belt we looked at our financial position. Total income, including Landlords donations, bar profits, registrations and raffle, we had the princely total of £102-12-0. On the expenditure side we had to provide trophies, hire the Corn Exchange for £6-1-0, printing and stationary account for £15-9-5, eventually completing the first season with a balance of £9-18-4d.

At least we were solvent, but I wonder what the situation would have been had we to purchase raffle prizes, for I had written to every company I knew begging prizes. Some of the names coming to mind were Wills Tobacco, Players, Haig, White Horse, Black and White, Booths, Grants, Babycham, Martell, Carlsberg, Guinness, Johnny Walker, Ind Coope, Morlands, and Hughes of Reading. All Landlords who had teams in the league generously donated a prize. Had this response for prizes not been forthcoming we would have been in the red, but as I said before, when closing our books at the end of our first season we, the Abingdon Aunt Sally League, were well and truly launched and solvent with a balance of £9-18-4d and all geared up for season 1961.

1961

With registrations and team applications for the 1961 season much the same as our first year we began our second season and would you believe we had our first dispute. Oxford players had decided to filter in to a team in the Abingdon League, remember we played Tuesdays and Oxford played Wednesdays. Obviously the balance of the teams with their inclusion was disturbed, to the annoyance of several new players, but with diplomacy and determination we solved the problem. We moved our playing night to Wednesday, the same as Oxford, but some players from Oxford were still showing a preference to play in the Abingdon League. A distinguishing line was introduced that only players residing in Berkshire (as Abingdon was at that time) should qualify to participate in the Abingdon League. This situation caused a few problems, I can assure you, but we survived.

Finals for 1961 were held again in the Corn Exchange on September 13th. Final participating teams being Horse and Jockey, Bowyers, Black Swan, Wootton British Legion and Prince of Wales, Shippon. On this occasion, a Landlords K.O. competition was introduced to be played on Finals night, costing us 10/- each to enter, considering Finals admission programmes were 1/- each, this represented inflation gone mad, but as I said before it was all in a good cause. We were all amateurs and thoroughly enjoyed the fun of playing on Finals Evening.

Our balance sheet was very similar to our first year finishing with a balance of £9-19-0d but remember we were purchasing prizes of very good quality from Colbournes Jewellers of Trowbridge and we decided in committee we would continue to do so as opposed to purchasing trophies.

1962 A.G.M. introduced some new faces to committee, namely Basil Hall, Richard Cox, Jack Sanwell, Bob Culm and Trevor Rowlands, together with the originals of John Smith, Wally Hudson, Bill Barnett, Sid Green and myself. This year our donated cups were allocated to competitions, Ray Chasney's Singles Trophy, Bill Smith Doubles Trophy, Morlands League play-off Trophy and Vic Brown from the Cross Keys Abingdon for the League. play-off runner-up. Fours K.O. Winners presented by Fred Crockford of the Bystander and runner-up for Fours K.O. presented by Wally Hudson Crown Ock St. and Skol Trophy for Eights K.O. winners. The Guinness Toucan for the Landlords Winner and Guinness Bottle for the Landlords Runner-up.

I mentioned in the 1962 programme that the League now enjoyed the ownership of ten Trophies to be played for annually. The Finals were again successful with the singles championship going to a Flowing Well player Jim Dixey, the runner-up being Bill Coward of the Tandem. Other teams represented in the Finals being Wootton British Legion, Bystander, Plough Sutton Courteney, Black Swan and Bowyers Arms. Incidentally we now had our portable equipment for finals evenings, this had been supplied and made by John Smith who very kindly presented it to the League free of charge.

1963

1963 A.G.M. I informed the meeting things were moving in the right direction for a successful association. I hastened to add we were still experiencing various complaints from teams, bad calling, failing to arrive for scheduled games and playing ineligible players, but thankfully we were able to resolve these incidents in a reasonably acceptable manner. The original committee was voted en-block with the exception of Basil Hall, in whose place Phil Sollis was elected. Seven new teams applied for league membership, Spread Eagle Abingdon, Spread Eagle Hagbourne, Fleur de Lys Hagbourne, Sprat Didcot, Vine Cumnor, The Ox and Fitzharris Arms, who incidentally had left the league for one season.

With more teams having participated during 1962 our balance sheet totals were now indicating an overall income of £189, compared to £102 for our first year, and with a balance carried forward of £20 to the 1963 season and trophies valued at £100 plus, we were well and truly on a forward course. Bill Barnet and his wife from the Horse and Jockey provided an upstairs room for our A.G.M.s, but as the years were passing the space available was decreasing. In fact on some occasions people were having to sit on the floor and stand outside on the landing, indicating we should soon need a larger room for this occasion each year.

Brunsdon and Son of Oxford provided sticks in bulk for the League and an appeal was made to all Licensees to provide as good lighting of pitches as possible, otherwise 1963 had been another successful season.

1964

With an increased number of teams participating a decision to form three Sections was introduced to accommodate the 24 teams involved in the area, which by now had spread from the Thatched Tavern Appleton in the North to the Spread Eagle Hagbourne in the South. Committee members Sid Green and Trevor Rowlands presented two new Cups to the association this year, to be used as needed, and known as the Sid Green Trophy and the Ferndale Cup. A Committee adoption was made for the semi-finals and finals of the Singles K.O. to be played on Finals night in future to add to the atmosphere of the occasion, also that the highest dolly scorer in each section be provided with a prize for his or her achievement.

I was constantly writing to the Oxford Mail for more publicity in the local paper for our Abingdon and District League, but unfortunately in those days we were not recognised to any degree compared to which my friend, John Gainsford, of the Oxford Mail Sports desk, has afforded the League in recent years.

With three Sections operating for the first time and prizes given to Winners and Runners-up in all sections our finances would have to be monitored very carefully. Income for entrance etc. was up but our commitment to provide 95 prizes, as against 74 during 1963, was bound to stretch our finances and consequently our purchase of prizes were treated with financial caution. But all was not gloom. Richard Chasney, the local bookmaker and customer of mine at the Black Swan surprised me one morning. Walking into the smoke room, ordering half a pint of bitter and presenting me with a very green looking dirty old cup commenting, "Basil, I gave this cup to a certain Sports Section in the Town and on visiting their headquarters observed it had not been used or even cleaned". Remarking to them," If you don't intend using it, I will present it to so

someone who will'. Today that Cup is still being proudly accepted in the 'A' Section of the League, a beautiful cup and trophy any team would be envious to win.

This year had also seen changes in the Committee structure. Wally Hudson, our Chairman, chose to resign the office in favour of being appointed Entertainment Secretary of the Abingdon and District Licensed Victuallers Association. Bill Barnet, of the Horse and Jockey, was adopted as the new Chairman of the Aunt Sally League and Bill Boswell, of Wootton British Legion, as a new committee member. A proposal that club stewards be allowed to participate in the Landlords K.O. was defeated at the A.G.M. A rule was introduced to the rules framework allowing "teams to bring forward a league fixture providing a month's notice had been given. Also, to support the newly formed three Section formation, the Committee purchased another cup to accommodate the situation.

Presentation of 1964 Finals were restructured due to the improved trophy situation. We dispensed with the Finals night play off situation with the top two teams, as in the previous seasons, and for the first time were able to provide Winners and Runner-up Cups for the three Sections that had operated during the summer. All this being due to the Cup donations of Sid Green, Trevor Rowlands and Richard Chasney. This was our 5th Finals in Abingdon Corn Exchange, an ideal venue, as there was a balcony accommodating 100-180 people in red plush fold up seats approached by two side staircases, about 7ft wide, which many attending supporters used as view points to the evenings events. Unfortunately plans, and so called progress, were in hand to demolish this lovely old building and the adjoining fire station in preference to a new shopping precinct, so naturally we were sad at the thought that this was to be our last Aunt Sally Finals at this venue.

I was still writing to all the trade wholesalers I previously mentioned and they were still providing all sorts of prizes for our annual raffle, in those days there seemed to be a wonderful reciprocal attitude to sporting events. At one final we had even played an exhibition match of companies representatives verses a league team. Also in this year at the Corn Exchange, the Landlords K.O. consisted of three legs as opposed to the one leg which we had played in the previous years. Not to be out done by Dick Chasney our local bookmaker Sid Orchard, the Ox Landlord, complete with bowler hat stood on a box with a blackboard and easel at the back of the hall and ran a book on the outcome of the Landlords Final, I think I rated in the region of 50-1 against. Fred Barker of the Plough Sutton Courteney was the eventual winner but I certainly cannot remember the odds.

These years hold happy memories for me with everyone chipping in with the chores, I've never seen so many Landlords and Landladies doing a stint behind the bar as on these Finals evenings, and enjoying being part and parcel of the whole event.

Our programme for that evening was as follows;

- 1. Singles Semi-Final
- Singles Final
- 2. Doubles Semi-Final
- 7. Doubles Final
- 3. Fours K.O. Final
- 8. Landlords Semi and Final
- 4. Eights Skol Final
- 9. Presentation of prizes
- 5. Landlords K.O. 1st round 10. Auction of flowers

Thanks a lot to the old Corn Exchange for five years of many happy memories. Including one memory I have regarding Ron Farell, having collected Silver Cups and the Landlords Toucan, fell off his moped on the way home from Finals Evening probably due to excessive alcohol indulgence to find himself apprehended by the police on suspicion of burglary. His explanation of the cups in his possesion eventually being accepted with a severe warning not to repeat such an escapade!

1965

1965 A.G.M saw another replacement on our committee. Jack Sanwell had chosen not to seek re-election, Ron Farrell filling the vacancy. The three Sections had successfully operated during the last season and these formations were adopted for the ensuing season incorporating a system of the two top teams being promoted and the two bottom teams being relegated. Mr John Lake once again accepted the presidency for the 1966 season and had sent a donation of Five Guineas to the League, which in conversion terms was £5-5-Od or £5-25p. A vote to take a two-week break during the summer for the period of the motor factory holiday was defeated by one vote, while another vote was successful in allowing stewards to participate in the Landlords K.O. competition. An increase in subs was adopted, each team to pay 6/- per match, voting being 21-2 in favour.

The remainder of the season was quite successful but the obvious question on everyone's mind was where would the Finals be held this year as demolition of the Corn Exchange was now under way. Consulting with Mr Lake regarding our finals venue he offered us the use of the Tower Brewery Ock St., which many of you know to be the old buildings immediately behind the present Abingdon British Legion Club in Ock St.. We gratefully accepted this offer as there were no other alternatives in the area. Finals were held on a very cold night, October 14th to be precise. With a bar operating under an awning on the outside of the building by Brewery Staff gone were the comforts of the Corn Exchange. But we made the best of Hobsons Choice and with the comfort of warm air being provided by some freestanding hot air blowing units, very similar to a blowlamp but on a larger scale, we were able to witness some very good finals.

Obviously Eddie Cross found the surroundings to his liking in the Singles Final when he toppled a six and a five in reply to Sid Green's three and four. Frank Watson and Sid won the Doubles title by defeating Nod Green (Sid's son) and Jim Dixey in a very entertaining game. Viv Downes defeated Eddie Cross in our first ever Captains final. The Horse and Jockey took the Skol Trophy title by defeating the Bowyers Arms in a three-leg match. Sid Green was involved in four of our six finals on this occasion and his team of four was successful in taking the honours of the Fours K.O. against a very useful Bowyers Arms team. With quite a successful Finals evening, despite the makeshift venue and the cold, we stored our sticks away for the winter to contemplate our 1966 season's future and to speculate where we may hold our finals etc.

1966

Forty-five people attended our 1966 A.G.M., which turned out to be a rather quiet meeting, apart from Jack Sanwell retiring from the committee and Jeff Grimes from the Bowyers Arms replacing him. Three sections would again be operating during the season and I gave an undertaking to investigate the possibility of hiring the ballroom at the M.G Sports and Social Club in the Caldecott Road for the purpose of presenting our 1966 Finals. On this very cold night with snow laying on the ground outside, the meeting was duly closed by Bill Barnet and we all left trudging through the snow with the prospects of an Aunt Sally match in the summer evening's atmosphere seeming ages away. This was to be my first year as Sec./Treasurer not being a Licensee. We had chosen to relinquish our association with the licensed trade and the Black Swan as Phyl my wife was experiencing medical problems. Moving to Dunmore Farm Estate and myself returning to my trade as a butcher. I gave thought to the fact that at the inception of the League I said that I'll accept the Sec./Treasurers office for two years only and hand over to someone more capable of running the show. Should I continue, or call it a day, and thought well one more season and I'll assess the situation again.

We all enjoyed another successful season, highlighted by our Finals held in the comfortable surroundings of the ballroom of the M.G. Sports and Social Club, followed by dancing to Vernon Whitehead and his Band, and still only charging 1/- admission by programme. The Singles finals was between Jim Dixey of the Flowing Well and Ron Purbrick of the Horse and Jockey, the eventual honours going to Jim on this occasion. Sid Green and Frank Watson once again rested the Doubles championship by beating J. Haydon and J. Walsh from the Bowyers. The Flowing Well took the Fours K.O. final defeating the Prince of Wales Shippon by two straight legs, as they also did for the Skol Trophy against the Thatched Tavern by the same margin. Eddie Cross defeated Les Austin in the Captains final and we introduced a Secretary's K.O. competition this year when Den Westbrook of the Black Swan beat B. Lintern from the Travellers Welcome by a 2-1 margin. These Finals were becoming very popular, the atmosphere with all teams meeting together on these evenings was slowly but surely welding together some very good friendships within the league structure. Our new venue was ideal and met approval from all those in attendance.

1967

1967 saw the departure of Bill Boswell from committee, his replacement was Lou Bond, Mr John Lake expressed his willingness to continue as the Leagues President and the balance sheet was the healthiest since the Leagues inception, £94-3-5d to carry forward for 1967. There were still differences of opinions when teams wished to re-arrange matches due to holiday commitments, I was delegated to arbitrate in all re-arrangements to eliminate any unnecessary stalemates arising. Landlords were asked to check on lighting and make improvements to their pitches as required as some were desperately in need of repair, and I think some improvement was forthcoming.

Different names were beginning to appear in the Finals Programmes. 1967 Section Winners being the Black Swan, M.G. and Riley, and the Bystander with runner-up positions going to British Legion 'A', Travellers Welcome and the Wheatsheaf Hendred. Frank Sanders was the Highest Dolls score of 161 in the 'A' Section Ray Anns 131 in the 'B' Section, and Les Austin with 124 in the 'C' Section. Finalists being Dick Cox and Tom Brown in the Secretary's, Frank Sanders and Ron Purbrick in, the Captains with Arthur Stringell from the Plough Sutton and Jeff Pryor from the Fleur de Lys in the Landlords. Les Austin and Mick Ellaway, Bill Boswell and Steve Hills being the Doubles finalists and last but not least were Les Austin and Lou Bannister playing in the Singles final. Unfortunately this year Mr John Lake was unable to present the prizes but he promised that a deputy would be along to make the presentations on his behalf. This deputy proved to be a Mr Jim Dymore-Brown whose introduction to the scene proved to be a great asset to the League for many years to come, as I'm sure many of you will remember.

1968

The year 1968 held many difficult decisions for the committee and will most likely still be in the minds of those serving at that time. An application to join the League was forthcoming at the A.G.M. from the Cross Keys at South Hinksey on the grounds that their area complied with the ruling of all teams participating in the League were in the confines of the Berkshire area. Without going into too much detail regarding players home addresses etc., it was decided by the meeting to accept the application, I think rather reservedly considering this team had a very good track record in the Oxford League for many years past. Making an enquiry from my Oxford counterpart and friend, Jim Whitbread confirmed this situation, and the committee and myself had the task of monitoring the situation during the season to ensure the balance of play was as fair as possible to all teams competing in the Abingdon League, should the Cross Keys agree to certain rules laid down, but with time allowed for them to consider these conditions they declined to enter the League with a proviso that they apply for admission at a later season when possibly the qualifying residential situation was more flexible.

Up until this time in the life of the League the system of playing a team home and away in consecutive weeks had been adopted but a request from the meeting resulted in a complete re-appraisal of fixtures allowing teams to play each other during the first half of the season with the return match scheduled tor the second half, and to this day that procedure has continued.

Again our Finals for 1968 were held at the M.G. Ballroom.

1968-1974

For some reason the years 1968 until 1974 inclusive, despite my enquiries to locate any programmes, it would seem we adopted Finals entrance system by ticket and provided an information sheet of events on the actual Finals evening. Referring to the minutes book allows me to update some relevant information for this period, for instance, the Singles Winners for these years were John Walsh, Tony Thompson, Albert Ellaway, Frank Sanders, Maurice Baker, Gordon Barrett and Hayden Brown. During those years quite a number of events come to mind, Albert Ellaway destroyed one of the central clusters of lights during his Singles final at the M.G. Club, plans were afloat for the Social Club closure and sale of M.G. grounds where the club was situated in Caldecott Road. Incidentally the M.G. Aunt Sally team had played a prominent part in the League, and their destiny as a team was in jeopardy. We moved our venue for Finals evenings to Elms Court Botley, which proved to be an ideal venue apart from the fact it presented a little problem with a few teams having to travel from the Didcot area. You will also note that Singles Winners included Maurice Baker, a very reputable player from Oxford, who had a couple of seasons with the Bowyers Arms when Maurice Charl ton was Landlord, after moving from a well known Aunt Sally pub in the Oxford area namely the Red, White and Blue. Also Gordon Barrett, who played for the Cross Keys at Hinksey, made his mark as a Singles Champion following the Cross Keys entrance into the Abingdon League during the 1970's. Other teams to join the Abingdon League at that time were Abingdon British Legion, Kennington Social Club, Dean Court Social Club, Royal Standard Wallingford and the Bear and Ragged Staff Cumnor.

The League was gradually growing and incorporated four then five sections. During this period Committee members were constantly changing for various reasons, new names appearing as far as I can recall during those years were Fred Ellaway, Ron Farrell, Steve Hills, Frank Sanders, Frank Watson, Pete McDonald, Derek Smith, Reg Lester, Mick Lardner, Alan Drover, Pete Gleed and John Percival. But sadly towards the end of 1973 the League lost an initial stalwart and supporter of the association, I am referring to a founder

member and chairman of the League, and respected Landlord of the Horse and Jockey Bill Barnet. I can assure you a replacement of equal involvement was very hard to find.

Also in the early seventies decimal currency was introduced to the Country. For some reason this conversion seemed to have an immediate escalating effect on the purchases of prizes etc., and for a couple of years during this transition, values as we had appreciated over the years' appeared to lose their stability, and monitoring of our financial situation was constantly being assessed by myself with the aim of guiding our association through this period, trying desperately not to increase subscriptions etc., while at the same time targeting solvency and stability for the association.

During these years our accounts indicated a record of similarity with annual balances of between £50-£70, and the number of teams participating within the association around 36-44. We were also experiencing some annoying and irritating behaviour by a few teams not honouring their scheduled league matches, principally being caused by members signing-on with insufficient dedicated interest to treat the game with the respect it deserves, such as competitiveness, sportsmanship and socialisation, but despite these irritations the league always managed to enjoy excellent Finals evenings.

Our A.G.M.'s were always lively with expressions of opinions, constructive observations, and finally adoption or rejection of the varied propositions that always came forward on these occasions. A certain Brian Lacey's name was now regularly appearing in these minutes, and I must say an A.G.M. without Brian's name appearing in the minutes then, and in the ensuing years, was a very rare event. His comments, questions and general involvement always added sparkle, discussion and debate to these meetings. Attendances were improving and our meetings were switched to Abingdon British Legion where we were able' to accommodate a much larger number than had been possible at the Horse and Jockey. Alan Drover, landlord of the Kings Arms Steventon, was elected Chairman in place of our sadly departed friend Bill Barnet. 1974 also saw an increase of competition fees, introduced at the princely sum of ten pence per person for any competition, but there had been abstentions and votes against this proposition but Eric Buckingham's proposal on this occasion was carried.

1975

1975 A.G.M. was moved to the M.G. Club, and due to increased petrol cost and travelling expenses, the meeting decided that condensed games at specified venues would be an advantage to offset these costs, and this policy was of course adopted and has continued until this present day. Our bank balance was showing a marked improvement at this stage, with a figure of £195, and I indicated that with 16 years of the League behind me from an administrative point of view, the time seemed right to hand over to a younger man, an appeal for a volunteer for this post was made but with no response.

The 1974 season had experienced the League's first handicap system, the teams who had been involved expressed a willingness to continue the system' for another season, but this was by a very close vote of 6-5 against. The meeting was also informed that Mr John Lake from Morlands Brewery had chosen to stand down from office. I was instructed by the meeting to approach Mr Jim Dymore-Brown head brewer of Morland and Co. to fill the vacated Presidents office, which I did and he accepted, much to the League's advantage for many years as I previously mentioned. Congratulations and thanks were often expressed at these A.G.M.'s to Phyl my wife who was playing an increasing involvement, with the numerous inquiries etc. that. she was able to deal with during the times I was at work or out during the evenings, and as the years rolled by her interest and knowledge of the Aunt Sally scene was being accepted by phone inquiries from many areas of the League's Aunt Sally district.

Another member who had chosen to stand down from committee during 1975 was John Smith, but with no replacement coming forward, he thankfully, expressed a willingness to continue with committee duties.

Up until now, names on everyone's lips with regard to Aunt Sally stars were Sid Green, Frank Watson, Frank Sanders, Barry Parker, Bill Boswell, Jim Dixey, Jack Sanwell and Eddie Cross, whose ability was envied by all of us, but of course there were many good players maturing throughout the League, in fact far too many to mention, but the Abingdon League was now making its mark as an Aunt Sally force, and in fact a few games were arranged with a strong representative Oxford team, and Abingdon always gave a very good account of themselves.

During this period of the League's life we were not without problems I can assure you, protests, non payment of fines, failing to play scheduled games, bad calling, on one occasion a punchup, a threatened resignation of seven committee members, a depleted team not calling dolls for the opposition once their equal numbers had thrown, playing of unregistered players, you name it and seemingly the league had experienced the situation. Thankfully the introduction of a disputes committee was able to deal with these extenuating situations, in most cases very successfully.

One lighter amusing episode coming to mind was during the association's earlier life prizes were purchased from Colbourne's of Trowbridge and annually four or five representatives made the journey to select prizes and return cups for engraving. Of course we also had to have our Landlords Toucan base engraved, this award stands at least 2ft 6ins high with a projected beak of 15 inches. This item and cups had to be carried from the car park to Colbourne's premises some 200 yards down the High Street and Sid Green was always nominated to carry our pet Toucan through the streets to the amusement and interest of shoppers in the area. Obviously Sid always remarked, "Why me?" but as we said he was the League's most prominent player and deserved this highlight to his career.

1976

Moving along to 1976 the League was striving forward financially and membership wise, new committee members including Jim Taylor, Wally Barrett, Ken Howieson, Geoff Langley, Bob Turner, Pete Mulford and Ron Purbrick, quite-a few of these people serving on the dispute committee and doing a very fine job indeed. The fabric of the league was also changing to the degree that new names were appearing in Finals programmes, a few examples such as Dave Rowlands, Pete McDonald, Bambi Alsworth, Owen Gill, Edgar Ponting, Terry Hutchins, Dave Sawyer, Geoff Langley, Tommy Barrett, Mick Griffiths, Ron Hamblin and Bob Turner. This was good for the League in general, and improved the overall interest and attendance at Finals.

1977

1977 brought our largest A.G.M. attendance to date, 100 people in all, discussing and debating a very comprehensive agenda, regarding competition procedures, stewards participating in the Landlords K.O., the eligibility to change teams of 3 and 4 to include the reserve at a designated venue. A very interesting and democratic meeting that determined policies regards the previously mentioned competitions. Also Alan Drover our chairman for the past two years chose to resign for reasons of business problems. Sid Green our Vice-Chairman for quite a few years, accepted nomination as successor to Alan, Dick Bennett and Dave Wilson joined the committee ranks, and our balance sheet indicated a bank balance of £420 and assets of £600, namely cup valuation and portable equipment.

Ron Parker and Doug Califano were new names appearing in our Finals programme, as were Martin Sheridan and Mick Griffiths, again these names were to become well known in the Abingdon area over the next few years. Five Sections successfully operated within the League's framework with the Cross Keys, Abingdon United, Flowing Well, Royal Oak and Three Horse Shoes taking the honours of Section Winners with Abingdon British Legion, Marlborough Club, Wheatsheaf, Abingdon Town F.C. and Long Wittenham F.C. successful teams in the runner-up positions. Eddie Cross of Abingdon British Legion, once again was Singles Champion beating the renowned Ron Parker from the Cross Keys.

1978

1978 saw the continuation of five sections operating, with Abingdon United Social Club very kindly hosting our A.G.M. now that the M.G. Club was no longer available. Changes were taking place with committee members annually, Geoff Langley chose to stand down this year, and Joe Patterson Landlord of the Machine Man Long Wittenham was his very reliable replacement. The Singles Champion for 1978 was the evergreen Martin Sheridan, playing for the Crown Harwell, a public house which in those days always gave a good account of themselves in the A.D.A.S.L.

1979

1979 stood out as an outstanding year of individual achievements for the League, and probably memorable to a few players still participating in the Aunt Sally World today. It was on the 4th July at the Royal Standard Wallingford when Doug Califano, playing with the Abingdon United 'A' side, achieved the magical desire of all Aunt Sally players by registering the complete 18 dolls with his 18 sticks, yes, 6-6-6 to the great delight of

himself and those whose pleasure it was to witness this achievement. He is the only player to achieve this goal in the Abingdon League to date, although in recent years some newer players have come very close with 6-6-5. I'm sure on the occasion I have just mentioned the following players will still remember that magical evening as they were playing in the same match, and I speak of Brian Orton, Ken Fenemore, Alan Mee, Bob Symonds, Ken Atwood, Les Almond, Eric Buckingham and Mike Prescott for the Standard, and Doug's team mates Tony Thompson, Sid Green, G. Saxton, Mike Gilligan, Barry Parker, Bob Turner and Mick Griffiths. To complete his evenings Aunt Sally satisfaction in the second leg he scored 3 dolls with 3 sticks to determine the leg point, which in those days legs were always determined by using 3 or 1 stick situation, and just for good measure he removed 4 dolls in the beer leg.

The season was also memorable for the Cross Keys Hinksey who were represented in 7 of the 10 Finals Competitions, winning 5 of them and their man of the evening was Ron Parker, who during the evening threw 36 sticks and scored with 32 of them, finally disposing of a very much in form Den Carter in the Singles final, setting Ron a 3 and a 4. Ron replied with a perfect 5 and 6, but oddly enough Doug Califano met Les Foster in the Secretary's final and really struggled to take the honours of that particular final. Aunt Sally to use Jimmy Greaves expression is a 'funny old game', and famous last words from Ron Parker,"you are only as good as your last throw".

Also during 1979 we lost a great Aunt Sally player in the Abingdon League, our very dedicated Tom Simmons from Dean Court who tragically died on May 24th, he was a great loss to the League for many reasons, a good sportsman, player, friend, and a very helpful person. I don't think there was any Final at Elms Court where Tom would not arrive on Finals day afternoon and offer his services for any job that needed to be done. We were very appreciative to Dean Court for providing the Tom Simmons Memorial Cup to the league, and to this day competition for this trophy remains very competitive. I personally was very pleased when his son John captained a Dean Court side to win this Memorial Cup, an achievement realised after coming so close for many years.

You will by now appreciate why I mentioned 1979 as an eventful year, one I will always associate with loss and records for the League. My one regret was that I never witnessed Doug Califano's throw, but Phyl and myself were on holiday in Torquay celebrating our 34th wedding anniversary on that very day July 4th.

1980

During the past years we had experienced a reluctance on some teams parts to' settle their accounts on time and a decision was implemented that all teams wishing to compete in League and Competitions, must pay their dues with application forms. This had a two fold effect, monies were deposited during March, and appropriately interest was being accrued during the current playing season. Why we had not adopted this procedure in the past was beyond my comprehension but as familiarity breeds contempt, so does time point to the errors of one's ways. As you know this procedure is still in operation today to the advantage of the League's finances.

Committee changes were still taking place, Pete Mulford and Derek Smith standing down, Mick Griffiths and Jack Greenoff volunteering as replacements. This year produced 4 teams withdrawing from the League, 8 teams failing to report for scheduled matches, 1 team being dismissed from the League and 4 disputes, and to add insult to injury I was requested to organise a Supper Dance to celebrate the League's 21st anniversary. With a band and hall booked, admission tickets printed, contacts made with a company for a fish and chip supper, the response from 52 teams was a request for 21 tickets, you can imagine my embarrassment with so little support when I implemented cancellations for all the preparations I had made. I remember quite well thinking," What ever can happen next in this very disturbing Aunt Sally season?"

Thankfully the season was completed without any further disruptions, although there was every indication that this would be our last Finals evening to be held at Elms Court as plans were afoot to demolish the building and replace the site with offices. Nothing definite mind you but a niggling thought at the back of my mind was telling me that you had better start thinking of another venue for the 1981 Finals, which seemed to me at the time a rather eccentric thought considering we were only just completing our 1980 Finals, but as the saying goes,' All's well that ends well'. We enjoyed a good Finals evening, incidentally 6 sections had operated in the associations framework and our President Jim Dymore-Brown had a very busy evening presenting the 200 trophies and prizes that were being awarded this evening.

1981 A.G.M. saw a good attendance of 96 people at Drayton Labour Club. A constructive discussion highlighting the unsatisfactory behaviour of a few teams during 1980 resulted with a united committee appeal for all teams to display an improved attitude of sportsmanship and tolerance towards the game and to make the weekly match an enjoyable social evening. The handicap system was presenting problems for the committee who were constantly receiving criticism and opinions as to its best method of operation. In fact at this meeting a proposition of nullification was withdrawn on the committee assurance, that future handicaps would be assessed on individuals 1980 averages whereby when 2 teams met, individual's cards were totalled and subtracted from the opposition, the dolls balance to be the handicap. Anyhow our appeal for more team co-operation obviously had the desired effect, there was not a dispute or protest during the whole 1981 season which I can assure you was a very comforting situation to me reflecting on the happenings of the previous season.

Confirming my previous suspicions that Elms Court would not be available for our Finals in October 1981, we returned to Abingdon's Abbey Hall for this occasion sited 100 yards from our first ever 'finals of 1960 which had been held in the Corn Exchange. The new surroundings were a little difficult to adopt to, but our Finals evening was very successful. Although the Cross Keys were unable to land the League Honours, they featured in seven of the ten finals, Ron Parker winning the Singles title for the third year in succession. Wootton British Legion were 'A' Section Champions and the Kicking Donkey runners-up. Ted Goodenough from the Spread Eagle Hagbourne took the honours in the Landlords Final against Peter Mulford of the Wheatsheaf Hendred.

1982

Our attendance at A.G.M.s seemed to be attracting more people each year. Whether or not this was due to the registration applications being co-ordinated on these nights or could it be the Aunt Sally League was becoming more and more established' each year? I would like to think it to be the latter, as now 121 people attended this particular meeting at Drayton Labour Club on a very cold February evening. The bank balance stood at £565, and with a trophy valuation the League indicated a very solvent situation, with a total valuation of £1500.

There was to be a drastic change in the committee fabrication this year as we were losing 4 committee members who had chosen to stand down, Sid Green Chairman, John Smith, Ron Purbrick and Pete McDonald. Appropriate trophies were presented to them all for recognition of services rendered to the League, but Sid and John were founder members and I now found myself as the only surviving founder member of the committee. I wouldn't say I felt stranded but to know you are the last full founder committee member tends to jolt the system to some extent, but replacement members were forthcoming. Ken Howieson as chairman, Graham Brown and Wally Barrett all from disputes committee joined us as full administrative committee and were joined by Bob Carter and Ron Parker. A vote also decided on a new system of point scoring during league matches, a majority of 5 votes decided the issue which determined that 2 points be awarded for each leg played, in the event of a drawn leg 1 point would be awarded to each team. An observation by Graham Barguss suggesting that the Singles final should be best of 5 legs was discussed but no positive adoption made. The Eights K.O. had until now been played on a handicap basis but Peter Biggs proposed that all teams should go in the hat irrespective, and after a vote resulting in 47 for 42 against the Eights K.O. was now opened up with no handicap involved. This was a very constructive meeting, discussing states of some pitches, lighting etc., and closed quite amicably, but as I said before I felt a little high and dry at losing my 2 founder member mates.

Cyril Foster informed me that an old M.G. Cup had been won and held by the Bowyers Arms and considering the M.G. Car Company had long since closed down, maybe Dave Jefferies the Landlord would like to make the cup available to the Abingdon Aunt Sally League for a Mixed Licensee K.O. Competition. Approaching Dave he gladly forwarded the cup for this competition, and Mervyn Taylor from the Red Lion Drayton provided a second cup which would be played on a K.O. basis and the final played on Finals evening each year.

The League once again enjoyed a trouble free season, all teams honouring their scheduled fixtures, and apparently enjoying the sociable meetings that Aunt Sally matches can offer during a pleasant summer evening. This year was also our first year involving 8 Sections with some 1120 registered members. I think I must have known most of them by sight but many's the time I have been spoken to in the street, only to be

lost for a name to that face usually remarking," Hello my boy, how are you ?", but it was nice to be recognised and been able to have a friendly word. We had two new faces also this year in the Singles final, Graham Barguss and Dougie Califano, with Dougie taking the edge in this final of Finals, which lets face it every player dreams of reaching every year one enters. Cross Keys Hinksey were still edging into a few finals each year, but new names were appearing on the horizon who in the next few years were to be very well known, to name a few Brian Clapton, Dave Dix, John Simmons, Barry Parker, Tony Ward, Dave Hudson, Martin Sheridan, Mick Griffiths, Owen Gill, Dennis Lines, Eric Buckingham and Gwillam Hoskins, blending these names with those of Sid Green, Jim Dixey, Frank Watson, Tony Thompson and Eddie Cross, I always felt that Abingdon Aunt Sally League could always be relied on to give a good account of themselves with the people that I have just mentioned, and no doubt a few more that have escaped my memory for which I apologise.

1983

Moving on to the 1983 season my thoughts were concentrating on the Silver Anniversary, which would fall due next year, and also wondering how much longer I would be able to continue with the roll of Sec./Treasurer of the League, but firstly we had this 1983 season to complete. Phil Solis a committee member of many years chose to stand down from committee, his replacement being Terry Hutchins. I questioned many people on their assessment of the new points scoring rule and the consensus of opinion was quite favourable, and the continuation of the new system had not presented any problems. A proposition from Brian Lacey for an individual personal handicap in all competitions be considered but the work involved looked like presenting a mammoth administration task, and was temporarily shelved.

Certain competitions were allocated to 'D' Sections and below, enabling the lower section teams to compete on Finals evening with their friends who were participating in the higher sections. Many constructive opinions and suggestions have been forthcoming at our A.G.M.s, debates on the why and wherefore's, votes, and the discussion of relevant business has always been conducted in a democratic manner, and generally speaking I feel very satisfied to have been involved with such an association. Eight Sections have continued to operate successfully within the structure of the League. Trophies are annually awarded to the highest Dolly scorers of each section, and vary from 230 in the top section to just under 100 in the lowest section. Long Wittenham Athletic took the 'A' section honours this season with the Kicking Donkey in the runner-up position, the Singles winner was Dave Wilson of Wootton British Legion, who defeated Martin Sheridan of the Crown Harwell.

1984

Silver Anniversary year was to see yet another change of Chairman, Ken Howieson reluctantly vacated the chair due to shift work commitments but continued on committee in the role of a disputes member, which was not quite so demanding. Our new Chairman was Michael Griffiths and one of his first duties was to conduct a vote on a proposal that was carried, to form a Premier and 'A' Section to replace a handicap system that had been operating in the 'B' and 'C' Sections for the previous year, and that had been condemned by myself as a failure and utter disaster. John Simmons successfully appealed to the meeting for the Tom Simmons Trophy to be re-introduced for competition for all sections instead of the lower sections, where it had been previously competed for. In exchange the Fours K.O. Trophy and the Red Drive were allocated to Sections D' and below for annual competition, retaining the lower sections a share in the Finals limelight each year to offset the many trophies that were available of being won by teams from the higher sections.

I was talking to Ron Parker who had been working at the book shop in the 'Turl' Oxford and he mentioned a book that had been given to him with an illustration and information of the game of Aunt Sally. He offered me the opportunity to borrow it for a while which I readily accepted, and thoroughly enjoyed reading. It would seem that at one stage of history, Royalty and Cabinet Ministers had participated in playing this great game,. Of course conditions and rules were very different to those that we know today. Cudgels were apparently removed from hedgerows by servants of the day, a Dolly's head with appropriate dress was positioned on an upright pole, and from a given distance the gentry and sundry hurled their cudgels in the direction of the Dolly's head. This pastime dated back to somewhere during the 1850-1860 period. I was also informed that an Army Officer residing in Drayton-St-Lenards area introduced the game as we know it today to the Oxfordshire area, but this information was verbal, but no doubt an element of truth somewhere back down

the line. I was very impressed with the Aunt Sally illustration and suggested to the committee that we try to use this in some form of a trophy in the future which was readily agreed.

Our immediate concern for 1984 was to prepare for our Silver Anniversary Finals and decided that the theme of Silver would be very appropriate for this our silver year. I'm sure those of you who were present at the 1984 Finals will remember the impressive range of miniature silver cups on display, for presentations this evening the silver theme extended to all trophies that were being played for during our Finals which added the final touch to our anniversary year, and although Jim Dymore-Brown had expressed a wish to retire as from last year he reconsidered and extended his presidents office to coincide with the leagues special anniversary. John Weller took the honours of Singles Champion with Martin Sheridan a very close second and in addition to our other finals a game was played between two teams formed from founder members, which added to the evenings nostalgia, each participating person receiving a plaque commemorating 25 years consecutive membership of the league.

With the presentation completed Mick Griffiths took me by surprise by inviting my wife Phyl and myself to come centre stage and with the music of "Congratulations" Jim Dymore-Brown made a presentation to both of us which I just could not believe was happening, a lovely bouquet firstly to Phyl followed by a very nice microwave and a set of bowling woods, accompanied with a framed coloured picture of the initial illustration of the Aunt Sally Scene I had described earlier in the book Ron Parker had loaned me. Jim Dymore-Brown explained that the complete presentation was a gift from our many friends, playing in teams throughout the League who had donated cash to a self formed committee within the League committee, who had secretly organised this surprise for Phyl and myself. You may well imagine that trying to express our thanks to some 400 people in attendance left me practically speechless but somehow I was able to find a few appreciative words in response to this very unexpected gift from our many friends.

1985

With this memorable and exciting anniversary season left behind us the 1985 season was looming up with preparation for our 26th season, Jim Dymore-Brown confirmed to me that he intended to resign from Presidency of the League and suggested I write to Mr Charles Brookes managing director of Morlands brewery regarding a replacement for the Presidents post. Acting on his recommendation I contacted Mr Don Bracher of Morlands Brewery with an invite to become the Leagues new President. I was very pleased to receive a letter of acceptance from Don making him the third president from the local brewery, an association the League had enjoyed from its inception.

The year 1985 was also adopted for renovation of many original donated trophies, to maintain them in pristine condition as a memory to the generosity of those well respected presenters from many years ago. With the expense envisaged to re-dip and update many of these trophies the A.G.M. confirmed a recommendation that the team annual membership subscription be increased to £20 per team, to help the additional expense that the service would involve. Brian Lacey was fully supportive, also with his proposal that the leagues future team membership subscription should be £20 per season. Looking back to the initial membership fee of 1/- (5p) per person plus 6d $(2\frac{1}{2}p)$ for every game played I will leave this conversion to you to estimate the percentage increase that had gradually taken place over the last 26 years.

Also in 1985 a new team name was indicated in Finals programmes that was 'Penlon' a combination of players who to this day are able to give a very good account of their ability, just eleven players who have been in the frame at the end of each season in one final or another, and in some cases have been represented in many finals on one evening.

During the end of the 1985 season a few teams were defaulting regarding scheduled League matches, which is always a matter of concern to the committee as points adjustments sometimes present an unfair situation to teams in the respective section, but to counteract this situation a rule was introduced to fine the offending team £10 as a deterrent, at some stages one wonders why teams have to act in this way as unpleasant decisions have to be made and implemented. I have often thought to myself that teams uncertain of support on a regular basis would be better advised to arrange friendlies with other teams for a year or so, to estimate their perspective ability and prospects before applying to join an organised League.

Moving on to 1986 my first shock to the system was that when questioning the committee as to their intentions standing for re-election, Mick Griffiths our chairman notified me he intended to stand down, as did committee members Jim Taylor, Ron Parker and Bob Turner. Ron and Bob were members of the Cross Keys Hinksey team who for some reason had chosen to return to the Oxford League for the ensuing season. With my wife Phyl's anticipated admittance to the Nuffield Orthopaedic for a knee replacement I can honestly admit I didn't know if I was on foot or horseback. I endeavoured to put my brain in top gear to compensate for the loss of these invaluable members that had chosen to stand down for committee electoral purposes. My thoughts firstly concentrated on an appropriate chairman as quite frankly I was very concerned by the number of Chairmen that had held office from the beginning of the League, some seven in all and I was aiming to find a chairman with the required prospective stability, which I considered the League was in need of at this particular time. I myself was having thoughts of retiring at some stage when I was convinced that the League had at the helm a reliable conscientious and dedicated person, supported by an adequately reliable hard working committee to protect, improve and extend if possible this Abingdon and District Aunt Sally League, in which I had been privileged to have served, enjoyed and played a very active part from its inception.

Contacting a friend of mine I invited him to my home one evening for a chat which was to discuss the feasibility of my proposing him for the vacant position of Chairman of the League, I shall never forget his immediate reaction of the proposal I put to him, it was" Why have you chosen to approach me", to which I replied "Because I think you are the right person for this position, you have an enterprising mind, you re ambitious, you are right age, and finally Graham I think you have the makings of a good reliable Chairman." Thankfully my predictions were correct as Graham Barguss has displayed all the qualifications required of the position he has held so successfully since his election on February 13th 1986. With Martin Boswell and Bernie Stimpson joining the committee of Graham Brown, who had now accepted the position of assistant match secretary, Brian Clapton the Dolly recording secretary, along with Bob Carter, Dave Cogdell, Ken Howieson, Dick Bennett, Wally Barrett and Dave Rowlands and myself our Committee was once again complete.

Finals for 1986 were delayed until a Thursday in late October due to roof repairs to the Abbey Hall, we had to accept the first date available. Teachers Whiskey sponsored their Knockout Competition within the League structure for the first time. The White Hart Harwell and the Hare being successful finalists, Gwillam Hoskins from Berinsfield Social Club was the Singles champion beating Peter Guntert by 2 legs to 1, registering 2 fives on the way. Due to the number of finals being played it was decided that for the first time in 26 years that no dance should be held in conjunction with finals, due to the time factor, which with games and presentations would take somewhere in the region of 5 hours leaving very little time for any other entertainment.

1987

1987 was to see two new members joining the committee namely Geoff Langley and Nigel Hawkins now making an overall membership of 14 plus a President, this seemed to be the ideal number of persons to cover representation for disputes and administrative duties at designated venues where competitions take place. Another stride in the right direction had been the increase in competition fees, principally to enable individual competitions to be self supporting, and not having to be subsidised by the general account. Also at this time in the League's history, the financial status was better than it had ever been with assets of approximately £2,000 and a sensible working balance that any organisation would be proud of. The only disturbing factor within the confines of the League was the continual disregard by a minority, to not forward result cards, failing to appear at venues for competitions without even a phone call to the venues M.C.'s indicating their intentions, and of course the age old problem of not arriving on time, but regrettably with all the appealing from the League's officers to eradicate these happenings, I think every league unfortunately have to endure these situations.

This season was acceptable with good weather but with the exception of problems indicated in my previous paragraph another Finals evening came around when we once again skipped the dance item, but witnessed some very competitive finals. Pete Broad and Tony Ward completing an entertaining evenings play in the Singles final and with Pete Broad eventually taking the honours.

During preparations for the 1988 season I was reflecting on my years of office in the capacity of Sec./Treasurer of the League and realised I was about to stand for re-election for the 29th consecutive year which seemed, and obviously was, a very long time and mentioned to Phyl my wife that I was seriously considering retiring at the end of a 30 year term, as I felt that embraced in the committee now was a person who would be a candidate for the position that I would vacate should I decide to retire. At a pre-A.G.M. committee meeting I made my intentions known and intimated I would convey this information to the A.G.M., in the hope that my person who considered applying for nomination may be able to some extent become involved during this and next season to 'acclimatise themselves should their nomination be adopted. Once again 1988 saw changes in committee. Bob Carter, Bernie Stimpson, Wally Barrett, Dick Bennett and Ken Howieson not seeking re-election and in their places came Tony Ward, John Sky, Terry Furze, Nigel Chadwick and Paul Stimpson.

During this season teams were still defaulting scheduled league fixtures. The response from teams in the lower sections to compete in the Teachers K.O. competition was very low, and caused me some concern considering Teachers were injecting a very appreciable sum of cash sponsoring this event, and monitoring the 1988 situations was a priority in my diary.

After a very weather favourable season, our Finals produced a very good standard of play, with a noticeable dominance of Penlon players participating in six finals, apart from winning the Premier Section. Singles Champion, Brian Clapton of Abingdon United resting the coveted honours against his own team-mate, Barry Parker during an exciting final.

1989

The League's 30th anniversary year was now with us, what a memorable year this was to be for Phyl and myself. There was a slight tinge of sadness as we prepared the 1989 registration forms for distribution realising this was to be our last year of preparatory administration. The A.G.M. had a very interesting agenda for debate and determination, the Premier and 'A' Section had experienced a no handicap situation prior to this meeting. A proposal for the re-introduction was put to a vote and carried leaving the committee to re-instate the handicap for 1989. Two committee members were standing down and with no replacement nominations being proposed the committee were empowered to co-opt willing candidates at a later stage. I informed the meeting that as no name had been forwarded to me as a prospective replacement of Sec./Treasurer for 1990, Geoff Langley from committee had offered to understudy the position with myself during 1989, with a view to succeeding to the Sec./Treasurers office for the future.

On behalf of discussions within committee I presented a suggestion to the meeting whereby Finals evening be replaced by Finals week. Final games played on Monday, Presentation and Buffet Dance to be held the following Friday, the basis of the proposal was to accommodate the finals in an unhurried manner regarding the time factor, and use the following Friday as a social gathering, Buffet and Dance involving wives and lady friends for the conclusion of the season. This suggestion was unanimously approved and my hope was that the success of this new format would be a precedent for the years to come, and retain the ladies interest in Aunt Sally with this anticipated annual event.

My work during 1989 was considerably escalated due to the additional arrangements needed to accommodate this extra evenings presentation event, but I was pleased that in my final year of office I was involved with a forward step with the Aunt Sally Finals presentation week. I planned a special programme for our 30th anniversary on similar lines to our silver anniversary version incorporating a section for people wishing to attend the finals only, or alternately to attend finals and presentation, with an incorporated meal voucher. My biggest problem was finding enough time to determine finalist teams and clubs, co-ordinated with every participating persons names, and transfer this very relevant information to the printers, still leaving myself time for distribution. Luckily there were few problems during the leagues fixture programme, which allowed me time to concentrate on competitions and finals preparation in general. With 12 teams expected to receive league trophy awards, and a wide variety of teams represented in the finals, in fact 15, in all making a total of 27 teams, ensured a good attendance for our presentation evening.

The hall was packed with friends from far and wide, congratulations and good wishes were showered on us from every direction, and with the presentations completed I returned to a seat in the hall where Phyl and our family were seated listening to our President and Chairman's praises, for what I remember they described as

a job well done. Then Graham called us both to the presenting dais remarking there was just one other thing before the dancing commenced. That one other thing was to our great surprise a holiday voucher, and as he mentioned, was a thank you from your many friends and contacts throughout the League wishing us well for the future. To complete the surprise Don Bracher presented us with an engraved silver salva from the Directors and staff of Morlands Brewery.

The holiday we chose was a coach tour of France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy and Switzerland and I think that was the best holiday of our lifetime, and most certainly a lifelong memory of our Aunt Sally life because it really was 30 years of living Aunt Sally. I don't think a day in all that time went by without some item of Aunt Sally being mentioned or discussed in our household. How does anyone begin to thank people for such splendid appreciation of ones services, at that presentation I remember saying "What can I say?", no doubt some of you have had that choked up feeling, for on that occasion I certainly did.

I hope you have found something in these pages to have interested you, or reminded you of way back when we first formed our league, a few original founder members are still playing. Sid Green, Jim Dixey, John Smith, Eddie Cross, Bob Brind, Bambi Alsworth, Den Westbrook, Frank Watson, Dick Cox, Harold and Ron Purbrick, Martin Boswell, Bill Boswell, Tony Thompson and myself, those names plus Les Holmes and Vic Hills who still keep an interest in the game they once played and enjoyed. Now 30 years and possibly some ninety committee members later one of my final involvement's, together with Geoff Langley, was to successfully negotiate an agreement with Morlands Brewery whereby the leagues printing programme was financed by their company. I am now on the outside looking in at what was achieved during that space of time.

One year has elapsed since I chose to resign from the Aunt Sally League but a very comprehensive look at the continuing orderliness, progressive and enthusiastic attitude that my successors have injected into the league leaves me in no doubt that the efforts of many people, and myself in the past, will be protected, preserved and improved upon for the Abingdon and District Aunt Sally Association for years to come.

Sand

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1960 - Present Day

