

# **A History of Newport Club**

**1871 – 1983.**

Compiled by W. R. Nicholson

## **Foreword**

Men of the world over enjoy telling stories about themselves, and this is our story – an account of the members of Newport Club and their activities over a span of more than a hundred years.

The Committee had decided that this was an opportune time to publish such a history, as there is at present a feeling of stability and confidence in the Club. The membership is increasing, and the premises have been enlarged and refurbished. It is, of course, interesting to compare this present situation with that of, say, a hundred years ago, or fifty years ago. Such facts as are available to us come mainly from the Minutes of past Committee Meetings, but older members with long memories have also contributed. We are indebted to Mr W. Nicholson for the considerable amount of work he put in, in compiling this history : he was able to draw on previous accounts by A. Forrest and A. Hood, but it is his style which has made an interesting and readable story.

My hope is that the current members will find something of interest and appeal in reading about this small part of our local heritage, and will perhaps pass it on to friends who were previously connected with the Club, or with Newport.

**Gordon Russell**

Club President

MCMLXXXIII

## History of Newport Club

In 1871, Newport was still merely a fringe village nestling along the south bank of the Tay. A reliable ferry service had developed however, and as well as being an increasingly important ferry terminus, the village was steadily expanding as a new suburb of Dundee. A guide published as late as the 1940's said, "The whole town has an air of prosperity and refinement about it; there are elegant villas, stately mansions, and handsome houses on the terraced hills".

The scene in 1871 would certainly conform to the rigidly conservative pattern so fashionable in the late mid-Victorian middle class society. The Newport Hotel, the only licensed premises, would be little more than a coaching inn, unlikely to be frequented by the staid and seemingly upright gentlemen of the village. Entertainment and conviviality there certainly would be, but it would tend to be discreet and enjoyed behind closed doors and curtained windows.

In that year the first foundations of the Tay Railway Bridge were laid, and the placidity of Newport must have been rudely shattered by the influx of engineers and workmen from out-with the area. Many of these men knew that necessarily they would be away from their normal domestic environment for some considerable time. They would be involved in shift work. Naturally, therefore, they sought to find some way to pass any leisure hours, and to make their own entertainment.

A. Grothe, The Resident Engineer, and about a score of his associates decided that the answer to their problems was to form a private club, and they very quickly secured the lease of the top flat above the shop at the junction of West Road and Cuthbert's Brae. The rooms were quickly furnished and the West Newport Club was formally constituted with its members as shareholders.

No Minutes of the first period of some months have ever been found, and in fact it is doubtful if any were recorded. The Club however was widened and properly constituted with a printed constitution in 1872. It is surmised that the first Newportonians joined. The members of the new club bought the assets of the original members for £93. This

included furniture, fittings, billiard and card tables, etc. There were to be 31 shares of £3 each, and then dividend was to be 5%. Any extra profits were to be divided equally, one half to be used for Club improvements and one half to be shared among the shareholders. From now on the membership was divided between shareholders and ordinary members. The New Club was established.

This New Club continued till 1894 when, as will be seen later, it became the Newport Club. Throughout the years it has been known by various names and nicknames, as, for example, the *Gentleman's Club* the *Private Club*, and even called the *Den of Vice* by the wife of one of the secretaries. The Club was even accused at one time of usurping the powers of the Burgh Council, because so many of the dignitaries, councillors and officials were Club members and it was suggested, erroneously, that Council business was decided over a dram in the more relaxed atmosphere of the Club lounge.

The first Minutes of the Club are very brief, perhaps deliberately so, but from hearsay, and by reading between the lines, a fairly true picture can be seen to emerge. The club opened at 8am and no closing time was set. There were facilities for billiards and snooker. Pool was permitted after 10.30pm. Cards, draughts and dominoes were played and a reading room was available. Lighting was by 'incandescent light' – later called gas – and heating was by open coal or log fires. There was of course facilities for a member to have refreshment at any time of the day or night.

Types of membership were confusing and required disentangling and regulating in the early 1900's. Various committees and the Sheriff clerk took several years to resolve the problem. There were at one time, shareholders, original members, ordinary and extraordinary members, with, finally, honorary members. The extraordinary members were gentlemen spending the summer in Newport. The village must have been developing as a summer resort. The confusion continued till 1984 when the Club was moved to it's present rooms. Shareholders were bought out, extraordinary membership was dropped, and the only privilege the original member had was an asterisk at his name in the membership roll.

Each member had to be proposed and seconded and balloted on at a Special General Meeting specifically called for that purpose. At first one black ball in eight excluded the candidate, but in 1886 this was reduced to one in five. There is no written record of any candidate being black balled. These general meetings continued to 1906. There-after a

ballot box was left in the Club from 8am – 10pm on a specified day and the committee were responsible for counting the votes and deciding on the candidature. It was not until 1940 that this was made official. Finally in 1958 the present rule of a proposer, a seconder and eight sponsors was approved.

The reading room seems to have been used extensively. At one time, as many as twelve magazines were available and the list makes interesting, and to many older members, nostalgic reading. A list of the magazines introduced is given in Appendix 3. A morning paper and the Evening Telegraph were also purchased.

An interesting historical note is revealed in a decision to send used papers and magazines at the end of each month to the Mars Training Ship. This practice continued till 1885 when, at the Annual General Meeting, a system of auctioning the magazines for the forthcoming year was inaugurated. The successful bidder took possession of his purchase at the end of the each month. This practice continued till 1965 when, in a period of financial stringency, and when a lack of interest in reading was obvious, the magazines were discontinued.

The early members must have been a hardy and jovial gathering of men. They seemed to have enjoyed their leisure time to the full. Back in 1874, the neighbours lodged a complaint about the 'ongoings' of the members. They claimed that the noise was excessive and that it continued into the early morning. After long discussions, the committee finally persuaded the members to agree that the Club should close at 11.30pm on a Saturday. This was not much of a concession and the neighbours could hardly have been appeased.

The late hours must have led to some forgetfulness, because the members were sternly warned by the committee that the last person out was to be responsible for ensuring the the gas was extinguished, and the fire was safe and the door was securely locked. A warning had been previously given that at times, members seemed to be confused and were putting money in the wrong boxes, causing some difficulties for the Treasurer.

Perhaps, however, the members have not changed to any marked extent, for in the 1950's, a member was reprimanded for falling asleep in the Club and not awakening till breakfast time.

Early conditions must have been fairly primitive. There were, of course, many pipe smokers, and cigars were more popular at that time. The smoke laden atmosphere caused so many complaints that ventilation had to be installed above the lights on the billiard table in 1886. Later a resolution was passed that a joiner be employed to ensure that one window in each room could be opened when required. In 1874 it was agreed that a partition be erected in the urinal.

The facilities were either extensively used, or used in a somewhat cavalier way, for in 1873 the table had to be recovered and new cushions provided at a cost of £12. Repairs seem to have been necessary at regular intervals of about two years. Today, the Treasurer knows to his cost that this is a continuing item of increasing expenditure. In the history of the Club the balls have been renewed four times. There was general dismay when the suggestion of composition balls was first mooted.

The standard of play must have been fairly high for in 1876 it was agreed that the charge for billiards be 4d for 150 up and it was 1925 before the 150 was reduced to 100 and charges were increased to 6d for 50 up and 8d for 100 up. How many games a night could be squeezed in at 150 up with today's standard of play?

The first billiards tournament was held in 1878 and an annual competition has been held every year since that year. Most of the committee faced the same problem as committees face today – the never ending struggle to have the ties completed before the Annual General Meeting. Exhortations, threats and disqualifications abound, but there was only one year in which the prizes were not awarded. In that year the semi-finals had not been completed by May,

Draughts and dominoes were favourites in the early days and card playing was a Club feature. It can be noted that there was more argument about the charge for cards than there was for the use of any other facility. Solo was and continues to be the main game played. Various efforts were made to organise a parallel competition to that of the snooker, but to date no workable solution has materialised.

The playing of Bridge has fluctuated. In the first 40 years Auction was enjoyed and the first tournament was held in 1904. Popularity increased, and in 1909 the committee had to introduce a new bye-law regulating a procedure for 'cutting in'. Interest waned. The development of Contract may have been responsible for the falling off, and it was not until about 1945 that interest seems to have been revived, and to have been maintained till the 1960's when once again Solo reigned supreme. During that period there were matches with outside clubs and these evenings were highly successful.

1879 saw the first Annual Dinner and for several years members journeyed to Dundee, St Andrews, and as far afield as Falkland for the function. No mention is made of the transport, but at that time travel would not have been too comfortable by today's standards. It is intriguing to picture a horse drawn coach with a load of roistering gentlemen who had naturally fortified themselves at the Club before facing the rigours of the journey in front of themselves. The revelry would continue round the dinner table. They would have had no fears of losing a driving licence. At one period, they even arranged to go for a picnic, but there is no indication of how this outing was organised.

In 1874, members were allowed to introduce visitors to the Club and a Guest Book was started. The next year, one humorist signed in as his guests, the Prince of Wales and the Empress of India, evidently on a hilarious evening. Such frivolity would be actively discouraged today because of the ever increasing strictness of the Licensing Regulations, but at that time there was no need to even register the Club.

The Visitor's Books (still preserved) make interesting reading with many notable names appearing. Guests came from all walks of life. All the professions, parliament, the judiciary, the press and businesses were all represented.

The early minutes draw a discreet veil over the provision and consumption of liquor. This first reference merely stated that the price of whisky was to be 3/- per bottle. In 1906, this was increased from 3/4d to 3/6d, but soda was reduced from 2d to 1d and in 1909 whisky again rose to 3/10d.

In 1885, a stern warning was issued to members 'that the practice of buying liquor other than through the Club must cease forthwith'. Members had been discovered stocking up with a favourite proprietary brand not stocked by the Club with a consequent loss of profit.

From these items and similar references it would appear that the Club purchased bottles and sold to individual members. They may of course have started with the method, which was at least established by 1895. Each member had his own locker where he kept his own bottle or bottles and the necessary glassware. He was therefore free to and did use the Club at any time of the day or night, either on his own or, more often, with a crony or two.

Whisky was bought in bulk (so many gallons of proof spirit of one or two blends, e.g. Watson's, No 10 or Mountain Dew) The proof spirit was diluted to 70% proof at special committee meetings with the aid of a hydrometer, specially lent for the night, and bottled in whatever bottles were available. Each member was expected to supply his own empty bottles, but at times members became careless and a bottle shortage made itself felt, and in 1926 the committee were forced to levy a charge of 3d for each bottle supplied, the price now having risen to 11/6.d

The price of whisky rose slowly. By 1915 it had reached the astronomical figure of 15/9d. There is no need to dwell on the rocketing prices since the 1940's. Members are painfully aware of the fact. It is worth noting that when the bar service was established in 1940, whisky was 1/2d per nip, and that nip was the full quarter gill. In 1965, the one fifth measure was introduced, leading to many complaints from the members of the Club.

Beer was first mentioned in the minutes when a bottle could be purchased, and in 1909 lager and ginger beer appeared. Sales however were meagre and various beers were tried, and there were many arguments about the quality of the different brews. At one committee meeting it was announced that six dozen bottles of stout had soured and had to be poured away. The suppliers refused to replace the stock because it had been kept too long.

Gradually the demand grew, gathering impetus during the 1939-45 war, when spirits became scarcer and scarcer. Draught beer was made available in 1945, the charge being 6d for half a pint. Today, the pint is more in evidence than the nip.

Unusual beverages unknown today are mentioned, for example the price of what was called Potash, was under constant review for many years before 1900. The price varied around 1/- per dozen. What was it? Perhaps a cure for a hangover.

Cigarettes went on sale in 1943 for the first time, but they caused some concern to many committees because of poor sales and a consequent low profit margin – and this was before the cigarette-cancer publicity had been highlighted.

The entrance and membership subscriptions have varied considerably. In 1891, the financial position was very sound, so to attract new members, the membership subscription was reduced to 25/-. This caused a heated discussion at the Annual General Meeting and it was even proposed that in the event of dissolution, members admitted at the reduced rate should receive a smaller share when the Club's assets were realised.

The subscription gradually rose to two guineas in the early 1900's and was still only three guineas in the 1950's. Later, at a time when major alteration to the premises was necessary, a proposal to raise the fee to five guineas was heavily defeated 'as it might lead to too many resignations'.

The membership also fluctuated. Before 1900, a number in the region of 30 was considered very satisfactory. It was only about 1909 that concern was felt when the numbers threatened to fall below 25. The reason for this decline is explained later. A strange and seemingly inexplicable reluctance to admit country members was evinced, and it was 1908 before this type of membership was formally recognised. There was of course a strong insular feeling among Newportonians, and even today the 'incomer' is regarded as an inferior being. In the middle 1950's the argument continued till finally it was decided that to be a member, residence in the Parish of Forgan was essential. Country membership was abolished in the 1970's, but candidature is now open to all.

Up till 1940, the financial reports, with very few exceptions, were pronounced satisfactory with annual balances of between £5 and £10 until about 1900, and between £15 and £17 in later years. The only hiccup was in 1878, when due to the failure of the City of Glasgow Bank, the Club lost £31. In the early 1940's, the Club was able to transfer a Building Fund of £150 to War Loan.

For the first twenty years, the Club prospered, but in 1893-94, the first of several major crises confronted the members. The reason why is not clear, but the news was suddenly broken that the lease of the premises in West Road was not to be renewed. It may have been due to the antagonism of the neighbours, or to a necessity to sell. Frantic efforts were made to find a solution. It proved impossible to purchase the rooms. Consideration was given to building on a central site, but this proved to be impracticable. The Provost was approached to explore the possibility of securing accommodation in the Blyth hall, but this was declared to be *ultra vires*. Finally, a provisional committee was set up to make the necessary arrangements for establishing the New Club.

It is not recorded how the present Club premises at 1 St Philan's Place were obtained, but in 1894, the New Club, or the Newport Club was formed with a formal printed constitution. The property of the West Newport Club, valued at £76 was transferred to the Newport Club. This included the old billiard table at 18/-, as well as the new one. £85 was shared among the old members and 25 received £3.8s each.

The Club, as it is now known was born. Certain selected gentlemen of Newport were invited to join and by 1896 the membership was 30, and the Club was running smoothly. The membership was now that of Newportonians. It is perhaps remarkable that in spite of the Club's bridge origin, no mention was ever made of the Tay Bridge Disaster. In addition to the billiard, card and reading rooms, there is a reference to a canteen. A Club Keeper was engaged at a wage of 30/- per month. In 1899, the lease of the adjacent house came on the market at a rent of £18 and the Club took possession. Two of the rooms were adapted and a new improved card room was welcomed. The remaining part of the house was rented to a Club member – a cycle agent – later to become the garage proprietor, and ultimately an honorary member, at a rent of £10 per annum, but very shortly after, the lease was transferred to the caretaker at a rent of £5. Gas fires were installed in some rooms.

About this time, a safe was purchased for £8, a safe still in use today. Also purchased was a patent Wilson stove, which gave excellent service until fairly recently. It was decided to try cleaning the carpets with 'one of these new fangled cleaners'.

Other highlights of this period were minuted, one drawing attention to the disgraceful and disgusting condition of the brush and comb in the toilet, one when complaints were raised about the use of the communal midden. It was reported that 'the butcher was in the habit of depositing shop sweepings or offal, which decomposing raised an offensive effluvia,' and one drawing attention to a particularly virulent epidemic of scarlet fever in the Burgh and asking members in whose families there was any infection to refrain from using the Club.

In 1903 the Licensing Acts were felt for the first time. The Club had to be registered and alterations made to the constitution tightening some rules. At the same time Sunday opening was abolished and the playing of games for money was forbidden. A rule was passed which decreed that liquor could not be supplied for consumption outwith the premises and on the premises only for his own consumption. This would seem to have the effect of banning any form of treating.

This can be regarded as the second crisis in the Club's history, for the next few years saw a battle being waged between the 'goodies' and the 'baddies'. The douce conventional party had won the first round. At the Annual General and Special General Meetings motions and amendments abounded. Attendances fell away, resignations were handed in and membership fell to a dangerous level. The 'goodies' led by the then Provost held out for about four years before the unpopular rules were dropped, and the Club once again prospered.

Thereafter the main cause for concern was the renewal of the lease. The committees till 1949 were regularly taking legal advice, and arranging legal representation in the negotiations for renewal. Threat of closure was always looming. At the time consideration was given to the taking over of the Unionist Club's property but this idea had to be dropped when that Club renewed its lease.

There then ensued a slow but steady improvement in the Club's facilities. In 1922 the Licensing Act introduced permitted hours and all day opening was supposed to stop. The Club now was to be open from 12 – 4 pm and 6 – 10 pm from Monday to Friday and from 2 – 10 pm on Saturdays.

In 1924 major alterations and redecoration was subsidised by a £2 levy on the members and in 1931 electric light was installed to the delight of the members.

The First World War passed without any reference in the minutes except for one. At the Annual General Meeting of 1919 the President welcomed the return of five members who had been in the Services, especially one who had been a prisoner of war. The Club did however grant honorary membership to all officers in the Service who were stationed in the district. This pattern was repeated in the Second World War. A motion was passed in 1940 that the first toast at Guest Nights should be extended to 'The King and the Imperial Forces'. Sunday opening was restored for the duration and funds in the Clydesdale Bank were transferred to War Loan. Two collections were made, one to the Red Cross and to the Forces Benevolent Fund.

The question of donations to charities was deliberated and the decision was that each member preferred to support his own personal charities. The seemingly comparative oversight of both wars is perhaps not too surprising due to the fact that a gentleman, by and large, had to be fairly mature before being considered for membership and would most likely be above the age for either voluntary service or conscription.

An external Guest Night was held in 1939 and proved an outstanding success and the nights have been held annually since that date. At the Guest Nights the bar was free and a light supper was served. In the mid 1950's the cost was only 10/- per member, so naturally it showed a loss financially, but as at first this loss was about £3 it was considered to be very well worth while. This continued till soaring inflation made the expenditure completely uneconomic. As an example of the standard of these early evenings in the 1950's a treasurer submitted a cost analysis of each evening, and the average consumption of drinks per head worked out at 7.2. The form of the evening remained and still remains unchanged with corky, snooker, cards, darts, and above all good fellowship.

The Tayport Guest Nights started in 1948 and were immediately established as an annual event. Each year the Tayport Club visited Newport and Newport returned the visit. The nights followed the same pattern as the Guest Nights and the enjoyable evenings continued till the Tayport Club closed in 1969. Incidentally, some men had the best of both worlds, being a member of one Club and a county member of the other.

Bar service with a steward and a new bar lounge was introduced in 1940. Lockers were removed except for a few belonging to the old guard who would have sorely missed the convenience. The office bearers were allocated a locker, ostensibly for official papers, etc. but many had their bottle as well. A second steward was appointed in 1945.

The next crisis in the Club's history began to loom in 1943 when the supply of whisky began to dry up. At first to the horror of the members a 'no treating' ban was imposed but by 1945 the position had deteriorated so rapidly that strict rationing had to be accepted, stoically. The ration was: Monday and Thursday – no whisky, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday – one glass, Saturday – two glasses. The supply position grew even grimmer, and the all time low was reached in 1948 when the ration was one glass on a Saturday. Gin however appeared and one glass was permitted on Wednesday and Friday.

On entering the Club at that time a member could be well forgiven for imagining that he was entering a scene so well described in 'Whisky Galore'. A glum faced group of members would be sitting with a beer in their hands. They would look up expectantly in the vain hope that the newcomer would order beer forgoing his own ration – a hope seldom realised. Gradually gin and rum appeared and the gloom lifted although only slightly. A secretary at one Annual General Meeting during this period highlighted his difficulty. To secure 20 bottles of whisky he had to order 35 bottles of gin, 53 of South African brandy, 6 of rum, and 15 of sherry. The well educated and experienced palates suffered heroically. The crisis began to ease in 1949, but it was the middle of the 1950's before secretaries were able to relax their efforts in finding supplies to suit the members. In 1959 the position was declared normal. It was several years before the supply of rum was finished.

An amusing minute at the height of the trouble stated that 50,000 cases of vodka were reported to be coming into the country. The committee felt it would be unpatriotic to order any of this consignment.

A profitable side line developed in the late 1950's. Members were able to order wines and certain spirits at Christmas, and indeed throughout the year. The Club charged cost price plus 20% for these orders. At Christmas time especially the present card room would be full of members' orders awaiting collection. This source of income continued till cut-price shops began to appear and the supermarkets supplied cheaper liquor, making the Club's prices uneconomic.

The next crisis to hit the Club was in 1949 when it was suddenly informed that the lease of the property was not to be renewed. The committee decided quickly that the property should be purchased, and a purchase price of £1,500 was finally negotiated, and the members now owned their property. A period of financial stringency naturally followed. The War Loan was cashed, the small building fund raided, and a loan obtained from the Clydesdale Bank. The Annual Financial Report showed a continuing overdraft which fortunately fell slowly but steadily. A further drain followed immediately when a severe storm badly damaged the roof. By 1963 the position had stabilised and the Treasurer's Report was regarded as satisfactory.

Some interesting 'happenings' emerged during this post war period. After much argument the telephone was installed in 1906 by the National Telephone Co., but it was unanimously agreed that it should be removed in 1908. Now after several years of debate it was decided to install it again, only to find there was a two years' waiting list. Once installed however, in spite of opposition, it is still in use. Many members are still jealous of the privacy of their evenings in the Club, and would prefer not to be contacted by wives or even business associated.

The question of a ladies night was mooted, but was immediately rejected out of hand. It was raised again in 1963 and several times since, and in 1982 a motion for permitting use of a section fo the Club on one evening per week was once more rejected but the opposition is growing less fierce. It has even been reported, perhaps light heartedly, that certain militant feminists may be considering invoking the Sex Discrimination Act.

The first occasion when ladies entered the hallowed rooms on invitation was a the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner Dance in 1972. They were invited to partake of a sherry before

proceeding to the function – a very successful one indeed. In 1981 the same invitation was issued to inaugurate the modernised Club.

On only two occasions did a lady have a drink in the Club. In the 1950's a member defying precedent brought his wife in and ordered drinks. Naturally there was an outcry and the member was severely reprimanded and shortly after resigned. On the other occasion an embarrassed secretary with an appointment to meet an official for a routine inspection of the Club discovered the inspector was a lady. The members present faced the ordeal in the to be expected gentlemanly manner, offering unbounded hospitality.

The Club prospered and various social evenings were enjoyed including snooker exhibitions by Sydney Smith, photographic evenings, member's nights, talks (e.g. on the new Road Bridge), wine tasting nights, film nights, etc. In 1958 the members amused themselves by forming a male voice choir.

The membership was not large but friendliness abounded. When a member introduced a guest he had to warn his guest of the pitfalls awaiting him because many of the members in the lounge tried to insist on ordering drinks for the guest to make him feel welcome.

In 1967 major alterations were once again undertaken, the main cost being met by interest-free loans of about £400 given by members. Loans were refunded by a ballot at Annual General Meetings till all were repaid. Electrical heating by night storage heaters was installed in 1963, but complaints about heating continued. Later radiators were tried but there continued to be complaints until gas central heating was found to be the satisfactory solution in the 1970's.

By popular demand two fresh towels had to be supplied in the toilet daily. The Fire Regulations began to press on the Club. Extra fire extinguishers had to be fitted and regularly maintained, adding to the ever-increasing costs to the Club. In 1955 a coal shortage made the secretary search desperately for logs until the supply resumed. In 1957 the offer of a television set was courteously refused and there is still no demand for the installation of a set.

In 1963 the first reference is made to the writing of a history of the Club and the suggestion was welcomed enthusiastically. Since that date the subject has been referred to on many occasions. Progress was slow, but finally two senior members produced a first draft in 1971, one which was a very complete historical survey but which they claimed lacked human commentary.

Sad experience underlined the necessity of a new office in the Club and the position of Vice-President was officially established in 1963.

A decision was made lately on the subject of dress. At the start of the Club the brush and comb were important topics, but now members were warned about required standards. Too casual evening apparel, e.g. jeans and denims were out, and collar and tie had to be worn.

The inflation rate was booming at the beginning of the 1970's and today is still galloping on. Annual subscription and the price of liquid sustenance seem to leap inexorably. The committee have continuing headaches as far as maintenance costs are concerned.

It is worth commenting on the very fine work carried out by all committees since the premises were purchased in 1949. Meticulous attention has been paid to the maintenance of the property and improvement of facilities. Seldom has a year passed without some major expenditure. This has necessitated much careful thought and supervision. Since 1949 four major schemes have been carried through successfully. The last decade has seen two such schemes, the first in 1970 when, after improvements had been agreed, there was an additional sum of £600 to be found for repairs to the roof.

The last crisis was in 1978 when once again officialdom stepped in. Modest plans for improvement had to be scrapped when the Fire Service insisted on an emergency exit, rewiring, auxiliary lighting, etc. At the same time the Public Health Authority condemned the bar. The Club would lose its licence unless the demands were met. Very wisely the committee proposed and the members agreed to an extensive scheme of modernisation. The caretaker's house was incorporated. A large new lounge with a proper bar resulted. A new card room and a games room were provided and a complete redecoration undertaken

and an extremely comfortable Club is emerging ensuring a very high standard for the members now and in the future.

It has been a costly process (in the region of £5,000-£6,000) and once again the cost is being met by interest free loans from members and by a bank loan.

The Club remains in good heart. Membership rises steadily and now stands at 78. The last Annual General Meeting agreed to a temporary standstill in the recruitment of new members. New functions have been added to the programme, e.g. the Christmas Party, Burns' Nights, Old Fashioned and 'Two for' Nights to name but some.

The Guest Nights continue and a relationship with the Western Club of Dundee has been established. A very successful Annual Supper Dance is being held, well patronised and very enjoyable. Golf tournaments have been organised and skittles and curling matches played. Much work goes into the organisation of all the events and it is important that members should support them even more than they do, because these functions are the very essence of club life.

The one armed bandit has been provided and it is striving successfully to augment the Club's funds, although perhaps not the members' pockets.

The research of the minutes of 111 years has been a fascinating study, and allows observations to be made which may prove of some interest. The handwriting of the early secretaries was copperplate, gradually turning to neat and legible, finally descending in some cases to an almost indecipherable scribble.

By far the most lasting impression is made by the long list of illustrious names that appear as office bearers and honorary and ordinary members. (see appendices 1 and 2). Many of these can still be remembered by the older members but many are legendary. These men came from all walks of life and many played important roles in the life of the community. To name any would be invidious, the number is so great. At least two

members are noted as having been honoured by the then reigning monarch – and MBE and an OBE.

There were also the 'characters' whose activities always made the headlines. One typical example was the member who, after his nights out in Dundee always ordered a taxi to meet him at East Newport Station and to convey him to his home in Albert Crescent, all of 30 years away. Several insisted on their own seat in the train, and were enraged and refused to sit if any intruder dared to take their particular seat on the 8.10 or 8.35 am trains.

Will the present generation of members produce such figures? Characters – yes, perhaps, but unlikely to be of the same stature or grandeur.

One of the outstanding features is the almost exemplary conduct of the members as Club members. Out of the many hundreds in the history of the Club only one has been expelled and only three warned by the committee about their behaviour – a truly remarkable record.

The firm loyalty of the members to the Club and to its committees comes out strongly, yet there was always a fierce independence of spirit and any carelessness on the part of the committee would be sharply questioned and, if necessary, rebuked at the Annual General Meeting.

The work of the committees has already been mentioned but its value cannot be overstressed. Committee meetings however were not always all work. The secretary in 1956, in his report to the Annual General Meeting, said of the meetings that after a meeting of two-and-a-half hours 'the brilliance of the repartee, and the clear sightedness grew as the atmosphere of the room became more and more polluted.' The study of the minutes becomes almost a study of the social history of the period. The slow development can be traced; from the open coal and log fires through patent stoves and heaters, to night storage, to gas central heating; from incandescent light to strip lighting. From partitioning of the toilet and supplying a light to be able to find it, to the modern facilities; from a faucet and basins to sink with hot and cold water; from complaints about

middens to today's efficient services; from the wages of 30/- a month to the Club's first servants to present day payments.

The developing control of the Public Authorities is seen from the first intervention of the Sheriff Clerk in 1903 demanding the first changes in the Club's constitution followed by more and more demands for change. Fire regulations were increasingly tightened.

The Public Health Authorities continued and continue to demand improvements. The caretaker's house as has been noted was first let to a member who later became an Honorary Member for £10 per annum. Gradually it became to be regarded as very sub-standard and had to be modernised to an acceptable standard.

On a lighter note the change in drinking habits is worth noting. Whisky was the main if not nearly the only stimulant until recently. A certain brand would remain 'the brand' for a number of years, and then suddenly it would become almost undrinkable. One ploy of Secretaries was to supply the first couple of drinks as requested on Guest Nights, thereafter to unload some of his unsaleable stock onto his unsuspecting members. There were only one or two real connoisseurs and the stewards were told to give them the drink requested. Some of the whiskies had names now long forgotten. Mountain Dew was popular for a very long time. Strangely malt whisky was little favoured and was only tolerated during the period of scarcity. Indeed some bottles had finally to be sold over the counter at reduced price. Bottled beer followed a similar pattern. One day's nectar was the next day's poison. With the upsurge in the demand for beer in the last fifteen years, one committee at one time was seriously concerned and even went to the length of reducing the price of a nip.

The popular nights for attendance at the Club have varied. For over 70 years Saturday night was *the* night followed by Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Mondays and Thursdays were the least patronised. Sundays were well supported till Sunday opening was stopped by the Licensing Acts.

Today the pendulum swings erratically and weekends seem to be less popular. Is this due to the rapid development of television, to the advent of the car and the weekend, or to the rise of the feminist movement and the ladies' demands for entertainment?

The Club's character has changed. First of all there were the engineers, followed by engineers and the selected gentlemen from Newport, and followed by Newport gentlemen with a very strong accent on 'gentlemen' – who, as already stated, tended to be mature, established citizens.

Over the last decade the membership has altered and now the Club is fortunate to be able to welcome a good portion of younger members, who will ensure its future continuity. Changes in membership there must be due to the mobility of the present age, but unexpectedly the minutes show that, despite a general belief to the contrary, this mobility was always evident. There are repeated recordings in the early years of members transferring to a different part of the country or going abroad and returning and being re-admitted after a number of years.

Finally, it is pleasing to report that, at a time when so many clubs are closing down, the Newport Club is continuing to expand and its future indeed looks bright.

The members come from all occupations and professions, and they cover all age groups. The only criterion is that they will be good Club members, maintaining the standards and traditions first established in the nineteenth century. That tradition is that above all else, good fellowship shall prevail.

## Appendix 1

### List of Honorary Office Bearers

#### HONORARY PRESIDENTS

A. Grothe	1871 - 1872
S. W. Watt	1872 - 1873
I. Coughboy	1873 – 1876
W. Cunningham	1876 – 1878
D. Durham	1878 – 1885
W. N Walker	1885 - 1888
G. Mitchell	1888 – 1894
D. Cunningham	1894 – 1896
W. N. Walker	1896 – 1898
-	1898
J. Durham	1900
F. W. Young	1900 – 1901
W. Smith (d)	1901 – 1902
A. M. Meldrum	1902 – 1903
A. Thomson (r)	1903 – 1903
G. Rollo	1903 – 1906
D. Dickson	1906 – 1909
G. R. Thom	1909 – 1911
R. Leitch	1911 – 1913
C. B. Allen	1913 – 1914
W. B. Morrison	1914 – 1916
J. Allison	1916 – 1918
C. J. Allen	1918 – 1922
W. Mackay	1922 – 1923
Capt. Simpson	1923 – 1925
D.S. Mitchell	1925 – 1928
D. L. Miller	1928 – 1931
C. Skinner	1931 – 1933
C. M. Hunter	1933 – 1935
J.D. Lawson	1935 – 1937
G. Little	1937 – 1939
A. S. Lowson	1939 – 1942
T. W. Robertson	1942 – 1944
Dr J. B. Salmond	1944 – 1946
J. F. Irvine	1946 – 1948
T. Taylor	1948 – 1950
J. Meldrum Smith	1950 – 1955
A. D. Forrest	1955 – 1958

W. Robertson	1958 – 1960
A. Hood	1960 – 1963
Dr A Inglis (d)	1963 – 1964
H. Lindsay	1964 – 1966
C. Bowman	1966 – 1969
F. Watt	1969 – 1971
F. Scott (d)	1971 – 1972
J. Morton	1973 – 1975
J. Paterson (r)	1975 – 1976
C. Bowman	1976 – 1978
S. Zimmerman (d)	1978 – 1979
T. Rodger	1979 – 1982
Dr W. G. Russell	1982 – 1984
A. Wilkes	1984 – 1986
H. G. Strachan	1986 – 1988
I. Boath	1988 – 1990
J. Morton	1990 – 1992
W. Clark	1992 – 1994
J. S. Don	1994 – 1996
R. Graham	1996 – 1998
J. King	1998 – 1999
E. McCabe	1999 – 2000
J. Finnie	2000 – 2003
J. Murray	2003 – 2004
R. Wood	2004 – 2007
N. Wade	2007 – 2009
J.S.Don	2009 -

Notes d – died in Office

x – combined posts of Secretary and Treasurer

r - resigned

#### HONORARY SECRETARIES

G.R.Jones (x)	1872 - 1876
T.P. Peacock (x)	1876 - 1880
R. Smith (x)	1880 – 1894
D. Anderson	1894 – 1897
-	1897
J. Gold (r)	1900
J. Beattie	1900 – 1903
M. Alexander (r)	1903 – 1904
T. Thomson	1904 – 1906

S. L. Baxter	1906 – 1907
R. Lawson	1907 – 1908
J. M. Low (r)	1908 – 1909
G. Rollo	1909 – 1914
D. S. Mitchell (x)	1914 – 1923
A. B. Duncan	1923 – 1925
J. Cramond	1925 – 1928
J. F. Phillips	1928 – 1929
A. B. Duncan	1930 – 1933
W. G. Allison	1933 – 1938
B. Howard	1938 – 1939
T. W. Robertson	1939 – 1940
W. B. Anderson	1940 – 1943
N. Duncan	1943 – 1944
T. Taylor	1944 – 1948
Dr A. Inglis	1948 – 1955
W. R. Nicolson	1955 – 1960
D. Napier (r)	1960 – 1960
H. Lindsay	1960 – 1964
F. Watt	1964 – 1967
J. R. Paterson	1967 – 1969
J. Halliday	1969 – 1971
T. Rodger	1971 – 1973
S. Zimmerman	1973 – 1974
T. Rodger	1974 – 1976
L. Mclver (r)	1976 – 1976
T. Rodger	1976 – 1977
P. S. Gilmore	1977 – 1978
A. Wilkes	1978 – 1980
H. G. Strachan	1980 –

#### HONORARY TREASURERS

G. Rollo	1894 – 1896
N. Moir	1896 – 1897
-	1897
G. Rollo	1904
G. Methven (r)	1904 – 1904
C. P. Young	1904 – 1907
G. R. Thom	1907 – 1909
D. S. Mitchell	1909 – 1923
A. B. Duncan	1923 – 1925
J. Cramond	1925 – 1926
G. Milne	1928 – 1932

S. Milne	1928 – 1932
W. G. Allison	1932 – 1933
W. B. Edward	1933 – 1936
J. Cramond	1936 – 1939
B. Howard	1939 – 1940
J. F. Irvine	1940 – 1946
A. D. Forest	1946 – 1948
J. D. Mackintosh	1948 – 1953
A. L. Anderson	1952 – 1953
J. A. Pearson	1953 – 1954
J. Graham	1954 – 1960
T. Currie	1960 – 1961
J. Morton	1961 – 1973
J. Halliday	1973 – 1976
A. Peggie (r)	1976 – 1976
A. Allan	1976 – 1977
J. Morton	1977 –

## Appendix 2

### HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

The awarding of Honorary Life Membership was approved in 1934.

C. B. Allen	1934
W. C. Leng	1940
Dr P. Campbell	
W. A. Allen	1942
D. S. Mitchell	1948
J. T. Young	1952
T. W. Robertson	1954
W. Robertson	1965
A. Forrest	1966
A. Hood	1970
C. Bowman	1978
J. Morton	1982

## Appendix 3

### CLUB MAGAZINES

The magazines are listed in order of introduction.

The Graphic  
Illustrated London News  
Black and White  
Punch  
Nineteenth Century  
Westminster Budget  
Strand  
Sketch  
Sporting and Dramatic News  
Weekly Times  
Pearson's Monthly  
Scots Pictorial  
The Wide World  
Windsor Magazine  
Harnsworth's Magazine  
Century Magazine  
Harper's Monthly  
Scribner's Monthly  
The Sphere  
Spectator  
Scottish Field  
Chamber's Journal  
Rapid Review  
John Bull  
London Opinion  
Country Life  
John O'London  
Blackwoods  
The Scots Magazine  
Pictorial Post  
Sport and Country  
Life

In addition for the first 25 years there was a morning and evening newspaper.  
The Evening Telegraph has continued.