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BOWLS

PLAYED BY ROYALTY

"AN ANCIENT GAME"

For hundreds of years the pleasant pastime of bowls has been played by kings, queens, princes and princesses, and has an incontestable claim to the title of the "Royal and ancient game." Incidentally, it has been the object of prohibitive legislation by various monarchs.

Bowls, according to Shakespeare, was played in King John's reign (1199-1216). Some writers support the claim from the Acts of Edward III (1327-1377) and Richard II (1377-1399) by which the game (*iretre de pere*) was prohibited to the common people, since it interfered with training in archery—then the backbone of the defence system in England. In the reign of Edward IV., (1461-1463) bowls was still classed among the unlawful games, but despite the law it was played in alleys and the gardens of the nobility.

Henry VIII. was the first monarch to play bowls. When he turned Wolsey out of Hampton Court he laid down in the grounds a "close bowling alley." Later there were one open and two close bowling alleys at Hampton Court. Henry also added bowling greens and alleys to Whitehall. He was devoted to the game, and his Privy Purse expenses show that he backed his prowess with bets. On January 29, 1530, Mr. Fitzwilliam, the Treasurer, won £4/10/- from the king at bowls, and on April 19, 1552, Henry lost £9 in a game. He lost £35/5/- a few days later. Anne Boleyn also played bowls and she, too, backed herself to win. On one occasion she lost £12/7/6 to the sergeant of the cellar.

While Henry liked the game himself he did not like the "lower classes" taking part in an unlawful game, and *licers, laborers, apprentices, servants licier, laborers, apprentices, servants and the like* from playing bowls at any time, excepting at Christmas, and then only in their master's house and presence. Any person possessing lands producing revenue of £100 a year

could obtain licenses to play on his own private green.

In Mary's reign, the licenses were withdrawn in 1555, since her advisers considered the game an excuse for "unlawful assemblies, conventicles, seditions and conspiracies." James I. recommended to his son, Prince Henry, a moderate indulgence in "palle maille," and such-like other "faire and pleasant field games," which is interpreted to include bowls. Prince Henry followed his father's advice for when the Court of James left Hampton Court early in February, 1604, for Royston, Henry went to reside at Hampton Court.

Charles I. was, perhaps, the keenest bowler of the monarchs, and like Henry VII played for stakes. When Charles was interned at Caversham Park he visited the old inn at Collin's End, near Goring Heath in Oxfordshire for a game and while staying in the Northamptonshire village of Holdenby (or Holmby) he frequently rode over to Lord Vaux's, at Harridean or to Lord Spencer's at Althorp, for a game. According to accounts he was playing on the latter green when Cornet Joyce came to Holmby to arrest him. While interned as a prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle, he also played, and it was on the green that his daughter, Princess Elizabeth, when playing against her brother through a heavy shower, contracted the illness which ended in her death. A monument to her memory was erected by Queen Victoria.

Charles II. was even more fond of bowls than Charles I., and there is in existence at Windsor a manuscript record of the cost of constructing a green for Charles II at the east end of Windsor Castle for £13/12/-. He was also a frequent visitor to Tunbridge, where the game was very popular with royalty, the nobility, the clergy and the well-to-do.

In Queen Anne's reign a reaction set in. Bowls went on the downgrade, and continued going lower and lower in England until its descent was arrested by an incident arising from the visit to England of the Australian cricket team of 1890, under the cau-

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the visit to England of the Australian cricket team of 1899, under the captaincy of Joe Darling.

Reference to the game of bowls in the reign of George I. is found in an Act of 1715 prescribing that "If a man be convicted of the crime of bowling he shall be made to work with his brains as it is a sure sign he hasn't any." George II. is said to have made love to Mrs. Howard and Mary Bellen-den in the pavilion of the bowling green at Hampton Court.

In 1845 in Queen Victoria's reign an Act was passed which repealed the action of Henry VIII's Act which had declared bowling an unlawful game. On January 2, 1868 the Duke of Edinburgh visited the St. Kilda (Melbourne) Bowling Club about 1 p.m. in an open barouche drawn by four grey horses which the Prince himself drove. He intimated his desire to become an honorary member of the club, and rolled a few bowls. The committee then resolved that the club should be known as the Prince Alfred Bowling Club and it remained as such until 1882 when the original title of St. Kilda was reverted to. In the reign of Edward VII. the English Bowling Association was formed (1903).

King George V. has played bowls. He had a full size six rink bowling green made at Frogmore in the grounds of Windsor Castle and on the evening of June 18, 1921, opened it in the presence of a large number of members. Queen Mary is a bowler, in fact bowls is the only game she has ever played. The Prince of Wales is president of the Royal Household Bowling Club, and is a generous supporter of it financially. The Duke of York has played more than one exhibition game.