

target ball called a Jack. Other games are "Pairs" - four players in two teams, each player having four bowls, "Triples" - three players with three bowls each and "Rinks" or "Fours" - four players two bowls each. Each bowl is less rounded on one side which results in the bowl being "biased" in one direction due to the extra weight on one side. The bias of a correctly rolled bowl ensures that it follows a slightly curved path as it rolls which accentuates as the bowl comes to a halt. The Jack is a smaller white ball without a bias.

Curling

The sport of Lawn Bowls is the forerunner of Curling, a tremendously popular winter version played in northern countries (including Canada and Scotland) on ice. It isn't clear if the Scots or the Dutch invented the game; the first written records on it are from the 1600's. At one time the stones that slide across the ice were pieces of granite weighing up to 56kg.

Gradually they evolved into plump stone discs with a handle protruding from the top surface. The target is a circle 32 metres from the thrower and the game is played by 2 teams of 4 players, each player sliding 2 stones per go. The slightly bizarre final aspect of the game is that each player is equipped with a genuine broom which is used to scrub the ice just ahead of the stone as it slides towards the target. The scrubbing warms the ice which creates a film of water that the stone slides over speeding it slightly. Skilful work with the broom will successfully deviate the direction of the stone or lengthen the distance it travels in such a way that it eventually comes to rest nearer to the target...

Crown Green Bowls

Crown Green Bowls is a game of arguably greater interest since it features an additional dimension. A Crown Green is a square lawn slightly higher in the middle than at the edges and play is conducted all over the lawn in any direction making for a great deal more variety than the flat green game.

The game has always been associated more with pubs and taverns than Lawn Green bowls and although it does not have the enormous popularity of the flat green game, it thrives very happily within its home base of the North of England and the North West Midlands.

Play is almost always singles and each player bowls just two bowls each end. The winner of each turn can play the jack in any direction and at any reasonable distance within the lawn boundary which is a ditch. Some players are best at bowling across the hump, others along the sloping side, some prefer short distances, others long and so many additional tactical complexities are introduced by the unusual lawn.

Watching the multiple games occurring in all directions at once across a crown green bowling lawn is an spectating experience worth seeking out. Somehow, the individual games manage to intersect and cross over each other without any adverse consequences!



The picture above shows the bowling green at the Warley Hospital Bowls Club, Brentwood in Essex. To the right, the captain's of each foursome are seen examining the position of the bowls in order to determine which strategy to adopt. The "skips" begin by walking to the "head" end from where they shout encouragement and advice to the rest of their team. They then bowl the final woods themselves

Crown Green Bowls is a well organised sport arranged on a county basis. Individual clubs, often affiliated to pubs form teams that compete in "midweek" leagues that are grassroots of the sport and, at the next strata up, counties hold their own competitions. Crown Green Inter-County bowls matches date back to 1893 when Yorkshire and the combined county of Lancashire & Cheshire began playing friendly matches and this tradition has carried on until the present day, with the British Crown Green Bowls Association taking over the organisation of the competition in 1908.

A complete history of this and other competitions can be found on the **BCGBA** site. In the year 2000, 15 county teams entered the competition. As can be seen from the following list, not all of the teams are, in fact, single counties and one team actually represents a country...



The picture above shows the Crown Green at Kings Heath, Birmingham. The two players walking from left to right are from separate matches being played in parallel. Meanwhile, the chap on the right is playing a leg diagonally from right to left towards a jack that can be seen next to the player in blue's head. The fellow in blue is bowling straight over the hump intersecting all three of the other matches shown and probably a couple of others that can't be seen as well...