

International Women's Day – Interview with Yvette Gregory, British Crown Green Bowling

1. What first got you involved in bowls, and what has kept you passionate about the sport?

I was promoted to assistant bank manager when I was 25. Every week, a lady would come into the branch with a lot of change. Trying to get to know my customers, I asked her if she was collecting for charity. To my surprise, she told me it was for the subs, raffle, and collections from a game called Crown Green Bowling. She invited me to come along and have a go – which I did, 40 years ago!

My passion comes from taking part, playing for several teams, and being involved with great people at my county, Cheshire, and at the BCGBA.

2. Can you share a standout moment or achievement in your bowls journey?

Several moments stand out:

- Being asked to be Cheshire County's Safeguarding Officer
- Being offered the role of BCGBA Competitions Officer
- Representing my county team
- Becoming a Senior County Referee

3. How has bowls impacted your life outside of the sport?

It's not just a job, it's a passion. Bowls has given me the ability to help others and the opportunity to keep learning. Plus, having been in banking for 40 years, I still get to utilise my professional qualifications in different areas.

4. You wear many hats – how do you balance your involvement in bowls with other commitments?

Fortunately, I took early retirement, which helps, and I have a great team around me. It keeps my mind active, and I ensure I maintain a balance. However, sometimes I need to be very flexible, especially when it comes to safeguarding.

5. What challenges have you faced as a woman in bowls, and how have you overcome them?

I haven't really had any major issues. I believe it's important to be diverse, open, and honest and to ensure you listen to others. Keeping up to date with policies, practices, and procedures is mandatory.

6. What advice would you give to other women looking to get involved in the sport, whether as a player, coach, or volunteer?

Get involved! It keeps you fit, you meet fabulous people, and I am always willing to help and advise.

7. How do you think we can encourage more women and girls to take up bowls?

At BCGBA, we have appointed a National Development Officer, whom I invited to Cheshire. Her work with juniors and schools has been instrumental in encouraging more young players. Being proactive is the key – making the game fun will help attract more girls to the sport.

8. Who has inspired you the most in your bowls journey, and why?

My team players, especially Irene Reardon, who still plays county bowls in her 80s. She encouraged me, taught me an all-round game, and gave me invaluable advice and guidance. Irene has won everything in her 60-year career – a true inspiration.

9. What message do you have for young women looking to make their mark in bowls?

Start at the bottom and work your way up. Practice, play at every opportunity, and don't be afraid to ask for help. Look into courses we offer in refereeing, coaching, or safeguarding.

Our development plans at BCGBA are exciting, and guidance is available – so get involved!

10. What changes would you love to see in bowls to make it even more inclusive for women?

The women's game has come a long way in the past five years. Our most prestigious competitions now offer equal prize money, and women have equal opportunities within BCGBA as we are now one organization.

I hope to see more women progressing to Board Member roles when opportunities arise.

11. What's next for you in your bowls journey? Any exciting plans or goals?

To continue doing what I love and working alongside some great people – for as long as my health allows!