

Patron: Lord Cobbold DL  
Ivry, Lady Freyberg

## THE MARGARET CATCHPOLE BOWLS CLUB

April 2019

**Charlie Sharp**, General Secretary of the thriving Margaret Catchpole Bowls Club, which is familiar to many as part of the pub located at the entrance to Holywells Park recently sent the Trust a substantial history of the Club which has taken its rightful place in the Trust archive.

We cannot possibly reproduce the entire history so it seems appropriate that we should focus on the early days when the **Cobbold** family was much involved. The Club is named after the heroine of **Richard Cobbold's** historical novel of the same name. This best seller was published in 1845 and immediately ran to 5 editions so it is little wonder that Margaret Catchpole is well embedded in Suffolk lore.

The first landlord of the pub was **Cecil George Farr** who had previously been on the staff of the **Duke of Devonshire** (#2452 on the web family tree) at Chatsworth; he took up his post on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1939 and in the spring of the same year **John Murray (Ivan) Cobbold**, as head of the Cobbold Brewery, agreed that a Bowling Green be laid and a pavilion built. Everything went on hold during the war and sadly Ivan was killed by a doodle-bug in the Guards' Chapel on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1944 just 12 days after the Normandy landings which he had been helping to plan. After the war **Alister Cobbold** (Ivan's nephew) #472 who had taken over responsibility for the Brewery honoured his uncle's pledge and became president of the Club; after a false start during which roses started growing through the green sward, an excellent green was established and the Club was able to start playing matches – friendlies at first but in 1952 the Club only narrowly lost a serious match against a Suffolk EBA Select.

The Club thrived. It founded the Suffolk Triples League and proceeded to win it in the first two seasons; **Derek Johnson** arrived at the Club, won countless matches and went on to play for England; a prefabricated pavilion was built in 1963 and, well ahead of the game, lady bowlers were admitted in 1964. Many more successes were achieved through the years as the membership grew and members' skills prevailed. Every member played his or her part but it is probably not unfair to single out **Derek Farr** (son of George) and **Derek Johnson** as of critical influence in the success of the Club in its first 80 years!



*The Margaret Catchpole pub near Holywells, Ipswich*



*Cecil (George) Farr, left, with Derek Farr & Derek's wife Olive*