

## Sections 1 and 2

### FROM BRITISH SETTLEMENT, THROUGH FEDERATION (1901), TO WORLD WAR 2

There was little interest in Billiards at all until the discovery of gold in Australia. Snooker had not yet been invented. After WW1 Snooker was rarely played and seen largely as an amusement. Few tables existed and only in the homes of the wealthy and the residences of the senior government officials, much as in the British Isles. The cost of tables was, of course, extremely prohibitive. The 150 pound purchase price represented approximately 75 weeks of average earnings for other than the wealthy and would represent a cost of some \$60,000 in \$2016 Au. (*ABS Average weekly Income Ref 6302.0*)

With the gold rush (circa 1850's) the game of Billiards arrived with some force over Australia, as well as the gambling derivatives such as the various forms of "pin" pool. These required a licence, as for public **bagatelle tables**. Bagatelle was a Billiard oriented, cloth covered table, of varying sizes (up to about 3 metres). These used small balls to be struck into holes guarded by pins and other obstacles. The holes had different values to compose a winning score for money. The owners and staff ("markers") were deemed to be professionals. P

This remained so until the 1960's when our QBSA was the then Qld *Amateur* Billiards and Snooker Assn. and prior to, The Amateur Billiards Assn. or ABAQ, but more of that later.

#### Settlement Timelines

- 1795 First Billiards match Sydney (*Ayton.id.au*)
- 1886 "The Referee" Sports Newspaper founded in Sydney
- 1886 " Sydney Oxford Hotel Advertises new billiard room
- 1887 " Burroughs and Watts, Table Maker, opens, Little George Street Sydney
- 1888 " A Billiard Room advert for Billiards, pins and "pyramids"
- 1889 " Alcock & Co (Est Vic1853) open an agency (Chas Dobson & Co), Sydney

In those days Billiards in Australia was dominated by Harry Evans, professional, who held the Australian title for several years. (*Lindrum Billiards Phenomenon, by Andrew Ricketts*)

Early on, almost all public billiard tables were housed in hotels. The public billiard parlours sprang up in major population centres later, as well as on, or near to, the Australian goldfields. In Qld, at places such as Gympie, Cairns, Townsville, Charters Towers, Rockhampton (*Mt. Morgan, Cracow*) and Kingaroy to name some.

Train travel was the best transport by far and virtually all connecting towns had billiard tables in one place or another. Liquor Licenses in Qld. were prohibited for some time within 8 kilometres of a train line, except within about a kilometre of railway stations at connecting settlements.

It's interesting to note that **Bingo** also required licensing, but some Qld. Councils (*such as Maryborough, Torquay and Redcliffe for instance*) actually banned Bingo "Joints" and the "Gambling Carnivals". Government legislation also enforced that as the Bingo prizes, chocolates, rather than cash is used, to mitigate gambling.

In 1898, at Kalgoorlie, **Walter Albert Lindrum** was born, to Harriett and Fred, professional billiard player. Walter's father and uncles had dominated Billiards professionally until his birth, but not ever such as he would later on the world stage. He learnt to play on one of the above-mentioned hotel tables. Lindrum died at Coolangatta in 1960. Later his nephew Horace Lindrum (formerly Morell), also dominated in both Billiards and Snooker, and spent many years of his retirement giving exhibitions all over the place, in a specially erected structure, at large agricultural shows such as The Royal Sydney and Brisbane "Ekka". Some may remember?

**2. From 1918 to 1949** Slow commercial development of the sport continued around the major centres and goldfields, until, as would be expected, the Second World War saw the growth of Billiards stagnate, for obvious reasons. However, aside from those years, things were really starting to happen.

**Ivories, Composites, Rubber and Slate** In the early 1800's Ivory balls were still in use and slate beds had been introduced. In 1835, John Thurston patented "India Rubber Cushions" of his design, which endure largely unchanged to this day. Much debate developed whether the "strip" rubber, preferred for Billiards being slower, or the "solid" rubber, either of which were in use for matches for some time all over the place.

Ivory billiard balls were banned by the English Amateur Assn. In 1925 and were well on the way out by 1927. The professionals changed over in 1928. Notwithstanding, some wonderful breaks were made with ivories. *(Smith 516 off the red, 1913. Inman 894 v/s Newman. Stevenson 919. All world records.)*

**Coloured plastics** had been discovered in 1868 with the invention of a "composite" billiard ball in USA by John Wesley Hyatt. This could be pressed into a sphere more accurately than ivory being turned; it kept its shape; and did not require bleaching. Ivory, however, had to be stored for up to two years in a warm room, to allow drying and shrinkage, before being turned, bleached and hardened. However, with use, ivory tended to develop an irregular shape and cracks. Imagine the arguments over which to use as each type had different playing characteristics.

A photo exists of a well known English table maker sitting on a stock pile of 20,000, (yes, read it again), ivory balls valued at 10,000 pounds in the early 1900's. *Only **five (5)** balls were made from each trunk thus representing 2,000 Elephants.*



PHOTOGRAPH OF BURROUGHS & WATTS STOCK OF IVORY BILLIARD BALLS  
Balls, 20,000. The caption reads in part: "The man sitting on the pile of ivory billiard balls is John Wesley Hyatt, the inventor of the composite ball. The balls are valued at 10,000 pounds. Only five balls were made from each trunk thus representing 2,000 elephants."

Just imagine this with today's animal liberation cap on.

Ivories were reportedly heavier and faster, but composites more elastic, with a different angle of "throw" after collision. *Crystallite* and *Bonzoline* composite balls were first mentioned in the Qld. press in 1913, much earlier than the author had expected.



African Ivory Traders



Ivories



Trunk Core used as "spot"



Composite Balls

## Queensland



But not exactly everything was happening down South.

Queensland had produced a “Boy Wonder”. Young George, son of Brisbane professional Billiards Champion Harry Gray. He raised the eyebrows at the age of 14 years with a 513 off 171 consecutive red losing hazards (in-offs) in Brisbane in 1906. He was whisked off to England in 1910 by John Roberts, contracted for five years to tour with the leading and famous professionals who were well known here from pre-Lindrum days. He was described as a Boy Wonder and a Prodigy, by the British Billiards establishment. He came home in 1913. He was sued by his sponsor for a breach of contract, for the loss of a claimed 10,000 pounds per annum. This represented enormous amount of money in today’s currency. Gray lost (2,000 pound settlement) and was declared insolvent. However, he continued to tour with his father as a professional player. Gray made more than 20, 1000 breaks off the red ball only, the best being 2196 in an unfinished break.

At that time also, young Melbourne lass Ruby Roberts, accompanied by her mother as chaperone, also toured for quite some time with the professional circus. This was truly ground breaking, novel stuff for feminist causes. Cue sports were very much games for men in those days.

In wagers of the day 100 pounds was common and 1,000 pounds for a week’s match sometimes evident. In London, Sept. 1914, using ivories, Gray (v/s Falkner), made a 964 break (unfinished), then a world record.

**The Development and Growth of Snooker** Today’s incredible world popularity of Snooker would amaze players of last century and before. Whilst most popular nowadays in the former and present nations of the British Commonwealth, Snooker has spread to other parts such as Asia and the Americas as well. Today’s enthusiasts would be bemused at the virtual disdain with which Snooker was held early in the last century and before. Role reversal in a big way!

Snooker was rarely mentioned in the Qld. press then, with little comment about it at all. It was a bit of a novelty until around the 1880’s when brought back from India to England allegedly by the British Armed Forces amongst others. However, a game called “**Pyramids**”, with more than two players sharing a cue, potting away at 15 reds, scoring one point per each, was becoming popular. The reds were placed in a pyramid, where they are placed even today. Black was added later, then other colours. Could this have been the beginning of our present Snooker game? The origins are clouded, however. Even Neville Chamberlin made claim for it at one stage. He had, after all, been in India, but the claim is considered unlikely. Later it was used as a time-filler between and after sessions of Billiards, it is understood. This was around the late 1800’s and there were several Snooker varieties. Confusing!

**Snooker arrives in Australia** Also confusing! Could it have been Fred Shorter, who arrived in Melbourne from England, around June 1885? Possibly also Frank Smith, a leading Billiard player who was contracted to Henry Alcock, a well known billiard table manufacturer. The Alcock name survives today. Smith had been to India (the suspected starting place of Snooker) and also claimed to have invented the game apparently. Anyway, Shorter played a number of exhibition matches for Alcock and may have given him a copy of the rules, which had recently been composed in England and possibly had arrived with Smith. It seems generally accepted that Shorter and Henry Alcock were most likely responsible for its introduction. But let’s see what else was happening here.

In 1914, the first mention made of **Snooker** was by the name “Billiards Snooker”, with a handicap match at Royal Qld. Yacht Squadron (RQYS) but no further action appeared until the 20’s. The name stuck for some years until it became simply “Snooker”.  
*(Courier Mail, Jan 1914 ref 179284439)*

Clubs, with billiard tables, players and competitions also started to appear. There seems to have been two distinct groups. "Clubs", provided for gentlemen and businesses and centres for staff recreation purposes. The two seemed to be quite separate, members not joining in the green conflict until a major or regional competition cropped up. Dare we rake a chestnut out of the coals at this early stage to reveal an anomaly, discrimination perhaps, which existed until the 1970's. There was still also a very clear line between amateurism and professionalism in virtually all sports including Billiards and Snooker, for pretty much the same period. The split remained until the '70's as well. This brings the late Robert (Bob) Marshall to mind. He had to fight for his amateur status for the sin of giving billiard exhibitions with a professional.

The "strongest" Billiards clubs in the early days seem to have been **Qld Tattersall's Club, Royal Qld Yacht Squadron, Qld Irish Association and the Qld Commercial Travellers' Association.**

**Tattersall's Club** "Tatts" is one of the state's iconic institutions, founded almost 150 years ago. Tatts was founded in 1865 (Qld official web site) by prominent Queensland business men and horse racing industry figures and is almost as old as the state itself. Tatts is affiliated with the QBSA now, over 150 years later. The building's design was based on the design of London's original horse auction rooms. The Queen Street front was not acquired until 1935, cementing the Club as part of the Brisbane CBD footprint.



(With thanks to Tattersall's Qld club site billiard tables in background)

**The Commercial Travellers' Assn (CTA) Qld** The CTA was formed in 1884, for commercial travellers (travelling salesmen), employed by both wholesale and retail interests and started forming clubs. By 1907, CTAQ had erected a fine building, for its 500 members, at 283 Adelaide Street, Brisbane. Club facilities, accommodation and a billiard room were provided. Reps were big users of those hotel tables mentioned earlier. Such clubs still exist in Sydney, SA and WA, but in Qld the CTA here now is just an employees' union. Many State Championships were decided at the CTA and at "Tatts". The club was relocated to Spring Hill in 1967. The intention to develop this site into a CTA residential club was never realised. Its affiliation with the QBSA ceased. The building was later sold and may be recalled as Bjelke Petersen House, National Party HQ. The original Corbett House is



building,  
now heritage listed.



(As a personal aside the author purchased one of the tables in 1976, which he still owns.)

**Royal Qld Yacht Squadron (RQYS)** The Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron was 'born' in 1885 when a group of gentlemen interested in water sports formed the Brisbane Sailing Club. In 1902 His Majesty, King Edward VII bestowed the title 'Royal' on the club and, in 1961, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II approved a change of name to the Royal Qld. Yacht Squadron.

The club occupied various premises in and near the centre of Brisbane prior to moving to Manly.  
(Text from RQYS official web site with thanks)

**Qld Irish Association (QIA)** Another great contributing club was QIA, in terms of players and as a Billiards venue, formally established on March 23rd, 1898. Businessman, architect and politician James Cowlshaw, financed the QIA's purchase of a building later known as Tara House,



on Elizabeth Street in Brisbane in 1919. The club was plush with remarkable panelled ceilings. QIA was affiliated with the QBSA until the late 1970's.

(With thanks, QIA Official Site)

So who were the great amateur cueists?

**Sam Ryan** (No bio or eulogy available)



Sam Ryan (L) v Horace Lindrum 1933 (neg36133).

Sam (on left) was deemed to be the best amateur player in Qld in the 30's and a major adversary of Albert Sakzewski. In 1930 the Courier mail ranked professional and amateur **Snooker** players separately. Ryan, No.1, led Sakzewski with newcomer Fox also getting a good mention because of his recent activities. However, Ryan presently held three concurrent Snooker Championships, while Sakzewski had the distinction of being a "dual" champion (both codes in the same year). By today's standards, one can only guess how they would compete under our conditions.

**Sam Ryan - a Unique Billiards Incident** *"Testament to his skills is an incident which is unique in the annals of Billiards throughout Australia and happened at Coolangatta on Saturday evening. The Australian amateur Billiards champion, Sam Ryan, was playing an exhibition match, when his opponent accidentally fired his own ball into a pocket. Ryan then proceeded to play the red, and after he had exceeded the maximum number of consecutive hazards (25) allowed by the new rule, he had his opponent's white ball replaced on the centre spot on the baulk line and continued his break. He broke the sequence of consecutive hazards by scoring a cannon and then continued the break".*

*Courier Mail Dec 1930 – Author's note: Rule presently 15 hazards (in-offs and pots) before cue ball retrieved*

In Billiards nursery cannons were in common use along with drop cannons and top of table play. Snooker was in its infancy and somewhat maligned. Beaks of over 50 were seldom produced. Ryan was acknowledged for successive breaks of (only) 42 and 43 in the one match.

In fact, here is a Snooker comment from the Courier Mail Newspaper in December, 1930, which will no doubt raise the hackles of today's Snooker fanciers. But don't tear out your hair, as we are aware that Snooker will dethrone Billiards in the years to come!

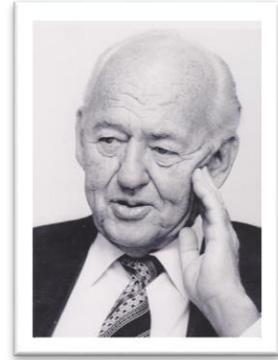
***"SNOOKER, of course, differs somewhat from its contemporary, the three-ball game, due to the fact that Dame Fortune plays a very prominent part. In fact, the coloured ball game may be described as being 50 per cent winning hazard striking, 25 per cent positional play and the remaining 25 luck".***

### NOTEWORTHY ACHIEVEMENT

### Sir Albert (Bert) Sakzewski (1905-1991)

Sir Albert circa 1984

The earliest reference found is that in 1928 Sir Albert Sakzewski won the his first of 7 out of 8 of the next Queensland Billiards and Snooker championships. (The Referee Sydney) and was also runner-up 8 times between 1928 and 1940. He won the Australian Billiards Championship in 1932 with a record break of 206. He won 8 Qld Snooker and 6 State Billiard Titles. In 1936 he became President of the ABAQ, forerunner of our QBSA today. He is undoubtedly our most famous cueist. He was runner-up to the great Bob Marshall in 1939 and was granted Life Membership of the QAB&SA in the same year. His "run" of State titles was interrupted by Sam Ryan, who went on to win an Australian Billiard Championship in 1930. Sam Ryan was a major adversary of Sakzewski's. Sakzewski excelled as an administrator too and was QBSA President for some years. He also made a lot of money as an accountant; was a noted philanthropist; the first ever Chairman of the Qld TAB; and, of course, he was knighted for his great efforts. Sir Albert was QABASA Patron for many years.



It is only recently that Sakzewski's Billiard record has been exceeded by Qld's own **Danik Lucas**, with 14 straight Billiards Championships

In those days, The Courier Mail, every week in a column, mentioned the name of the player (together with his club) who had been successful in compiling breaks of 50 or over at Billiards or 25 or over at Snooker. This was irrespective of whether they made the breaks in tourneys or practice games. it was mentioned in a column of the Courier mail. *In December 1930, the week's list was:*

Billiards QIA S. Ryan 115, J. Lynch 83; W. Watts 71; A. Hardy 64  
Snooker CTA P Leggo 40, P.M Fox 32; E. S. Smith. 31; H. Bailey 27

According to these reports, Billiards was still well on top, going by the size of breaks.

The Name **Oswald (Ozzie) Pitman** cropped up in the newspapers for Billiards. This included a recorded session total of 964 including a 124 break. OzzieHis first Qld Amateur title was in 1954 on his third attempt. No doubt our grey beards will remember him as Qld champion several times in the 1960's He was National runner-up in 1956 and '58. Ossie dominated in Qld from 1954 to 1972 amassing 12 Qld State Titles, was runner-up on four occasions, in a strong field containing great players of the time such as Rahilly, Lyons, Young and Thompson. He was also runner-up in the Australian Billiards Championships in '56 and '58. Ozzie was a cab driver from Ipswich, won the Ipswich title and many local events in the day when Billiards was played everywhere. He spent his retirement at Nerang on Qld's Gold Coast

**Charlie Mansfield** was the top "pro", undefeated in any Qld tournament he had entered when the Courier Mail rated players in 1930.

Some Other leading cueists of the era were: (QBC = Qld Billiards Champion, QSC Qld Snooker champion)

H Smith QBC Qld Billiards Champion	
L P Simmonds QBC 1922/23	M Fletcher.**C Klinger
R Kidson QBC 1921/1924	R Kidston
R E Zeigler 1925/26/27/28	*** Jack Ross
H D Noyes QSC 1925/27	**** Jack Booshand
* H Titcomb	*****C L Thompson
J Toms	

In the 1970's, \*Hughie Titcomb , Qld Labour League , \*\* Cec Clinger , Wynnum manly RSL; and \*\*\*\*\*Charlie Thompson, Toowong RSL were still playing and may be remembered by others.

\*\*\*Jack Ross was a very competent Tatts player.

\*\*\*\*Jack Booshand, 200 break man at Billiards and leading jockey, the first, reportedly to actually fly to a meeting. He was later a Billiard room owner in Toowoomba, who taught the writer to play Billiards in the 60's. His son, Jack Jnr, ran the room, made many Snooker century breaks, but could not play in the Qld Champs because of his professional status. He was a regular target for QBSA amateur players, but most left town literally without their money, including a recently crowned champion and another former runner up witnessed by the writer in the 60's.

In terms of the affiliated clubs, there were many and as before-mentioned seemed to have played in divisions. There appears to have been a "club" as well as a warehouse division,

discrimination, perhaps as has been said. Anyhow the club competition certainly contained the major, above mentioned clubs, and may have also contained all, or some of the following: Qld Masonic Club, Royal Standard Insurance, Postal Institute, McQuarters (Myer Valley), Eagers Recreation (car manufacture/sales still in business), Brisbane City Council (tables then in basement used by all manner of assns and for title matches), Brisbane Mirror Co (formerly Adelaide St, Grey St S/Bris and a company by this name still operates at Coorparoo), T C Beirnes (retailer), Finney Isles (retailer), State Insurance, Hellenic Assn, (possible forerunner of today's Greek Club) as well as Qld Police and Fire Brigades, almost all of which had tables in those days and some of which competed against their peers interstate.

But there were other leagues of cue sport competition as well.

**Brisbane Tramways** had their own league, comprising Paddington, Light Street and Ipswich Road Depots. Later Toowong and Mt Gravatt joined, the latter of which was with QBSA into the 1970's. There are still billiard tables in operation at the Toowong (bus) Depot. Most, if not all of these had their own tables and competitions. Members of such, not usually being members of the big clubs, probably only met those Club's members in the state championships. Tramways also held inter-state competitions with NSW and Vic Tramway members. (It is recalled, though, that **Frank Stafford**, from the Mt Gravatt depot, was state Snooker runner-up in 1975).

**Brisbane Warehouse Amateur Billiards Assn Championship** Is it possible that the "Warehouse" Division (Snooker at last) was a bit of reverse discrimination against the businessmen's Clubs? Perhaps the following patronage of the assn will reveal just who might not have been allowed to join the Clubs. E.g. In this notice, Brisbane Telegraph, Wed 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1939.



**Brisbane Warehouse Amateur Billiards Assn Snooker Championship** *The entry fee is 2/6 and the event is open only to registered association players, who may lodge their nomination with the secretary, Mr. M. Russell, care of the Queensland Irish Association. The Snooker semi-finals in No. 2 division are to be played tomorrow, the draw being: McWhirters (who hold the right of challenge) v. Brisbane City Council (No. 2); Eagers v Brisbane Mirror. The former game takes place tomorrow night at the QIA rooms and the latter in the City Hall basement [photo 1920's] (Trove 191598265 WABASA first Snooker Champs, 1939)*

**Qld Railways Institute QRI** In 1937 the Telegraph announced that the QRI, long time members of the QABA, had their own facility.

*NEW TABLES AT RAILWAY INSTITUTE. - The council of the Queensland Railway Institute has arranged exhibition matches in Billiards and Snooker between Sam Ryan and Hugh Tiltcombe in the Institute's new premises at Railway Reserve Edward Street, on Tuesday night, at 8 p.m. The event will mark the opening of the spacious and well-equipped room, with its two fine tables. (Brisbane Telegraph Feb 1937)*

The older readers will recall many Association championships being decided in the QRI hall in Turbot Street, so one can only assume the closure of the former club at some time prior. However, the QRI still competes in interstate Railway Institute Billiards and Snooker matches on an annual basis and we are ably represented nowadays by **Trevor Mortimer, John Osterman, Peter Warwick and Jim Wicks**.

Other Matches were regularly held in the showrooms of the table makers such as Heiron and Smiths Showroom (Ann Street), S C Scales Tournament Hall (Edward Street), and Bert Winston & Co, but all would erect their championship table on request to an independent venue for special matches and finals. All three were in operation until the 1970's, when a Snooker boom occurred and other local makers appeared. Trevor Scales (son of founder), held the bulk of club business then, but we'll come back to that bye and bye.

So, 1939 brings us close to the end of the snooker activities (WW2) and digitised newspapers available through **Trove**. Trove has made things so easy thus far that I feel it worth promoting in case you have not discovered it yet. Trove helps find and use resources relating to Australia. It's more than a search engine. Trove brings together content from libraries, museums,

archives, repositories and other research and collecting organisations large and small. A list of contributors and partners whose collections are included in Trove can be viewed online.

In closing, there are a few matters considered worth the mention.

**Federal Billiards Council** *“During Melbourne Cup week in Melbourne, delegates from the several States' amateur billiard associations will meet in conference to discuss the wisdom or other wise of forming a Federal Council for the purpose of controlling Australian and international billiard carnivals. Queensland is to be represented by a Melbourne resident formerly an amateur billiardist in Brisbane. There is much to be said in favour of such a controlling body.”* (Telegraph 23 October, 1923)

The meeting comprised only NSW, Victoria and Queensland. A constitution was framed, considered by the states and in late 1925 a meeting set down to establish the federal council in April 1926, under the auspices of the Billiards Control Council in London. Participants were New South Wales Victoria, Queensland and South Australia.

In 1930, the Courier Mail reported as follows: *“The Australian Amateur Billiards Council, the existence of which is to the credit of the **Queensland Association**, which brought about its formation in Brisbane in the year 1926, when Mr C. O. Thompson (Sydney) was appointed secretary.*

*“Mr. C. McCathle, hon. secretary to the Victorian Association and a keen devotee of the game, was recently appointed hon. secretary in Mr. Thompson's stead. A change was also made in the position of president, this being in accordance with the rules, the president of the State Association where the next championship is to be played, being automatically appointed president. Therefore, Mr. Justice Schutt, president of the Victorian Association, is president of the A.A.B.C. for the ensuing 12 months”.*

The major advantage would be to gain entrance for Australian champions to the British Empire Games. It is not known if any such competed, although Bert Sakzewski qualified, but declined through business pressures.

**QBSA Forerunners** The QBSA was originally, simply, the Amateur Billiards Association. The word “Qld” was soon added. It failed in the early 1900's but was successfully revived in 1922. By 1927 it had become the Qld. Amateur Billiards and Snooker Assn. and the Federal body was then the Australian Amateur Billiards and Snooker Council. From memory, these names were retained until incorporation of both bodies in the 1980's.

**Junior Championships** The first recorded Junior Championship, Billiards, was played at the Commercial Travellers Assn 1932. This was a fairly regular event thereafter, apparently.

**Snooker** As mentioned earlier, Snooker had little following before 1925. A mention of a cueist Mr Cullen was found in 1923. Participation grew slowly into the 30's. In 1937 the QBSA attempted an “open” Championship which failed with only 4 entries. Handicapped Snooker “pairs” was becoming popular in the lunch hour in the city. First evidence of Snooker inter-club (pennants) was in 1939.

### **An Ominous Prediction for Billiards**

Billiards enthusiasts were starting to note a falling off of entries in Championships which was blamed on the domination of a couple of players as well as the high level of entry fees. There also seemed to be an increase in the game of Snooker.

## **Closure - 1788 to 1949 Period**