

# PRETORIA CLUB at Pretoria Country Club

## *Pretoria Club – Social centre of Pretoria Country Club*

Most of our PCC members are aware of the Pretoria Club. Many have popped in to have a look at our Club rooms, packed with interesting memorabilia and an extensive library. How many of us ask what the Pretoria Club is for? What reason would I have to join this section of PPC? Allow me to give you some insight into the history and present value of this venerable institution.

Clubs exist all over the world and are usually formed to provide an environment for people to pursue a common interest or objective, be it sport, charity, or social interaction. The British are usually credited with having 'invented' the Club. This is not strictly true, as organisations that meet the definition of clubs can be found in literature as far back as ancient Greece. That said, there is no doubt that the Club, as we know it, was a creation of the British Empire. With officials and businesspeople ending up based in strange locations all over the world, the local Club became an anchor for social and cultural interaction and activity. (Read the novels and stories of Somerset Maugham – the 'Club' plays a prominent part in many of his writings.)

The decades after the Restoration saw a proliferation of clubs and societies in London and the main provincial cities, many of them meeting in taverns or coffeehouses. Though the most famous club, to which Johnson, Burke and Gibbon belonged, was literary, the majority were dining clubs, or political or gambling clubs. The Athenaeum, founded by JW Croker in 1824, was literary; the Carlton Club (1832) was established to restore the fortunes of the Tory Party after its shattering election defeat in that year. The Reform Club (1836) was a Whig and Radical riposte to the Carlton's success.

The heyday of gentlemen's clubs was late-Victorian and Edwardian England, with clubs offering overnight accommodation and libraries, as well as good dining facilities. At the other end of the social scale were working men's clubs, where the drink was beer and the entertainment a local comedian, sing-song, or dominoes.

*The Pretoria Club was founded in 1885 in a house on the edge of Church Square. Almost everybody of any position or stature in Pretoria society were members – including Oom Paul Kruger, whose statue graces our mantelpiece to this day. After some years, the Club moved to a more palatial building – also on Church Square, and later to a third on the corner of Vermeulen Street. In 1910, members of Pretoria Club played a significant role in facilitating the establishment of Pretoria Country Club, on the estates of Carl Jeppe.*

So the years passed, and in the eighties the Pretoria Club, following the new enlightenment, abandoned its archaic 'men only' rule and welcomed ladies as members. Also, and sadly, society seemed to lose interest in the valuable advantages that can be enjoyed as a member of a club, and attendance began to dwindle away. And so it came to pass in the early nineties that the creative role played by Pretoria Club in the founding of Country Club was reciprocated when PC was welcomed as a section of the now well-established PCC, and moved into the wonderful rooms that we now enjoy. The synergies are abundant, with PC now playing a significant role as a social section of the main Club.

Membership of Pretoria Club offers extensive benefits. Over the years, PC has become known for relaxed sociable lunches, frequently with interesting speakers, and regular monthly 'draws' in which prizes are won and which are themselves most congenial social occasions. Other attractions that have been very popular over the years include events such as Burns Nicht, celebrating the life and work of the Scottish

Bard of Ayershire, musical soirees, French evenings, film evenings, and many more.

Of course, the membership of Pretoria Club includes professional people from all walks of life and so the old concept of 'networking' remains a valuable spin-off from participation in the activities of this venerable institution. Functions and events are published in the

Country Club news media and you will be made very welcome if you venture to join us and attend one of these gatherings.

See you at the next Pretoria Club function!



Pipers at the annual Burns Nicht function



Members enjoying the Club rooms on a cold winter's evening



Cheerful gatherings at Pretoria Club functions