

DO YOU REMEMBER

And all those different ways we raised money for the Botley Skate Bowl...



First, the **non-uniform day at Botley School** on 15th December 1989, which raised £46.17? Oh, the excitement of putting our first deposit in the new bank account!

Next, the **Botley Sk8 Fete** on April 1st 1990. About 200 teenage skaters came to Botley School for the first serious fundraising event. The weather was gorgeous and Bill Heine came along with Radio Oxford to open it. There were wooden ramps courtesy of SS20, a thrilling sound system, drinks and light refreshments supplied by a seamless rotation of families and friends. There was a hamburger stall and a tabletop sale. Friends and supporters' ages ranged from 7 to 70.



Skate Fete '90 in the grounds of Botley School

Then there was the **Litter Blitz**, that same Easter. Everybody helped, especially some little sisters, and it raised over £100. 'it was really good at the time' remembers Laura Alexander (who was just nine) 'everybody campaigning together. It was *very cool* to be involved in that!'

When we'd finally managed to get the bowl more or less built, there was a **jumble sale in January 1991**, followed in April by the **Grand Opening of the Bowl**. It had actually been in use by the local boys (mainly) since January, but the mud was like a second skin and made it very hard to get a grip anywhere. In early Spring we had been contacted by the National Association of Boys Clubs who asked if they could sponsor the Grand Opening. With their help and further input from SS20 (the Oxford skateboarding shop whose young owners had been the original designers of the bowl and who had been so helpful all along) **Skate Fete '91** was even more of a success than Skate Fete '90.

Enough was raised to pay back NHPC most of what we still owed them, and it was great that Norman Mansfield, our staunchest supporter on the Parish Council was able to cut the tape as his last official duty before he retired as chairman. The launch was attended by skaters from all over the country, and was covered by the two main skateboarding magazines as well as the local press. Hundreds of people came and there was a wonderful sense of achievement among all us parents who had worked so hard to make it happen. Avril Alexander remembers 'it was fantastic to have a safe place at last for the kids to skate – they'd take a picnic and stay there all day. Before, down at the parade, they'd keep getting their skateboards confiscated.'

Later that year we entered the Skatebowl Project into the Oxon Village Ventures Competition for Community Projects. It won a Certificate of Merit .

Of course we couldn't have done it without the grants from the County Council, the Vale, and Cumnor Parish Council and various charitable trusts. Local businesses like Jewsons, Goldgales (architects) and Llewellyns (builders who ordered up the materials for us) also helped. It was a massive joint effort, solidly backed by North Hinksey Parish Council who supplied both money and the site. The bowl cost just £6,500, to build, but if we'd done it on the open market it would have cost £25,000



So it was a bit of a shock, just two years later, when the idea was raised in the Parish Council that the bowl should be filled in. It was felt to be under-used and a hazard to dog walkers! And vandals had somehow managed to smash up the concrete bench beside it which was going to cost £200 to repair. It did seem a shame that something which had cost so much effort should be lost so quickly. Lots of people wrote letters to the council and to the papers asking for it to be kept open. Were you one of them? Do you remember the **exhibition in the Library** showing how much effort had gone into getting the bowl built in the first place? Were you one of the 759 people who signed the **Petition**?



In the light of such strong local feeling, the Council wisely agreed on 10th November 1993 to keep the bowl open and maintain it in a usable condition for the foreseeable future. Sighs of relief all round ... And it is still used – Maureen Ford, who takes her little grandsons up there to run around remarked that a couple of skateboarders were there just the other day, having a happy time exploring the bowl's different contours.

Ag MacKeith



Another Sk8 Fete '90 pic – recognize anyone?