

A HISTORY OF NORTHUMBERLAND TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION

BY

AUBREY DRAPKIN

CHAPTER ONE

The Beginning

In the beginning a meeting of a small band of enthusiasts, none of whom had very much knowledge of the game, decided to introduce the sport to the district.

Those pioneers were the convenors Mr. F.A.Constable and Mr. Ken Nicholson of Saint George's Presbyterian Church together with Miss D.M.Davidson of Saint George's Church of England, Mr.J.H.Jackman of Ministry of Labour, Mr.S.P.Brown of Evening World, Mr.Cook from Friends Meeting House, and Mr. N. Hudspith of Saint Stephen's Church of England. The convenors' nominee, the Reverend W.MacNichol had been unable to attend the meeting.

Mr. Constable was elected to the chair and Mr.Nicholson was appointed as Acting Honorary Secretary.

A full discussion of all of the items on the agenda took place and the following proposals were adopted as recorded in the minutes of this Preliminary Meeting:

1.That a Table Tennis Association be formed in Newcastle, the question of affiliation to the English Table Tennis Association to be brought up at the first Annual General Meeting.

2.That the Acting Honorary Secretary obtain an exact estimate of the expenses to be incurred by the proposed Association in its first season.

3.That the subscription be five shillings (25p) for each Gentlemen's team entered by a club.

4.That a Ladies' Section of the Association be formed, and that there be an additional subscription of two shillings and sixpence (12.5p) for each Ladies' team entered by a club.

5.That the 'Tema' ball be approved for all Association matches; the indulgence of the meeting being, however, extended to the Ministry of Labour, who were desirous of using a heavier ball for all their home matches.

6.That a fixture list be prepared by the Acting Honorary Secretary, and submitted for confirmation at the next meeting; the following nights being stated as suitable to the respective clubs for their home matches:

a. St George's Church of England: Tuesdays and Saturday afternoons.

b. Ministry of Labour: Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.

c. Evening World: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

d. Friends' Meeting House: Mondays.

e. St.Stephen's Church of England: Tuesdays and Fridays.

f. St.George's Presbyterian Church of England: Mondays.

7 That five players constitute a team; that each player play two games of twenty-one points up, and in the event of the score twenty all being reached, the player who thereafter succeeds in obtaining a clear lead of two points to be the winner.

That matches be decided on aggregate points, two league points to be awarded for a win, and one league point for a draw.

8.That the question of liability to the English Table Tennis Association did not arise until the question of affiliation was decided.

9. That a suggested Exhibition Match by players of the Sunderland Association be deferred until a later date.

The representatives promised to acquaint their clubs with the proceedings, and to report their decisions at the next meeting to be held on 19th November, 1930.

This meeting, minuted as the Inaugural Meeting of the Association was duly held at 24 Nuns Moor Crescent, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne being the home of Mr. Ken Nicholson. with the same persons apart from Mr. Cook present and being joined by a Mr.T.H.Johnston.

At this meeting it was decided that the Association be called the Newcastle upon Tyne Table Tennis Association. Mr F.A. Constable was appointed as Chairman with Mr. J.H.Jackman as Vice-Chairman. Mr Ken Nicholson was appointed as Honorary Secretary and Treasurer. He was to hold the position of Treasurer until 1950.

Miss D.M.Davison and Mr.N.Hudspith were appointed as Honorary Auditors.

The proposals made at the preliminary meeting were agreed except that the Friends Meeting House intimated that it would not be possible for them to engage in any home fixtures at that juncture.

The estimated cost of buying the Books of the Association and of other necessary supplies was presented, the total cost being one pound thirteen shillings and three pence (£1.66p) which included the cost of Score Books. The purchase of all items except the last one was approved it being agreed that the Score Books should be provided by the clubs.

A letter had been received from the Secretary of the English Table Tennis Association regarding several points that had been raised at the previous meeting and the Honorary Secretary was instructed to reply thereto, stating that the question of affiliation would appear on the Agenda of the first Annual Meeting.

No formal rules and regulations were drawn up but it was agreed that in the event of any complaint arising as to the discourtesy or mismanagement on the part of any club, notice of such complaint should be sent by the Honorary Secretary of the Association to the Secretary of the alleged offending club.

The minutes do not say, however, how any such matter was to be dealt with.

It was also decided that meetings of emergency could be convened on written notice being given to the Honorary Secretary, such notice to bear the signatures of at least four Club Secretaries and to be in the hands of the Honorary Secretary at least one week before the proposed date of the meeting.

The Honorary Secretary was instructed to supply each Club Secretary with a list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all Club Secretaries.

So the very first season of competitive play got under way, albeit on a fairly relaxed basis with very few rules and regulations.

The mens section was made up of teams from the six clubs who had been represented at the Inaugural Meeting together with L & N.E.Railway Engineers whilst four teams, Saint George's Church of England, Friends Meeting House, Saint George's Presbyterian Church and Evening World competed in the Ladies Section.

Whilst no record was made of a committee being formed a summary of the first season was given at a committee meeting held on 6th May, 1931 at which the chairman, who was also representing his club, the secretary and representatives of four other clubs were present.

This meeting was also attended for part of the time by a Mr. Bart Kinnair who made an application for a team from Blyth Young Mens Christian Association to join the Association.

In view of the difficulties that had been encountered in the first season of the Association gratification was felt at the way in which all concerned had tried to carry out their obligations.

It also appeared that there was some misunderstanding as to whether the home or visiting team was responsible for the final arrangements for playing of matches and it

was agreed that in future each club secretary communicate with the other by letter or telephone to confirm the final details.

The playing of ladies on gentlemen's teams created a lively discussion with the Vice Chairman proposing that this should not be allowed in future and being seconded by Miss Davidson. On the other hand the Chairman spoke at length for the idea and moved an amendment that one lady be allowed to play on a gentlemen's team which received a seconder but was dropped on being put to the vote.

The very first champions of the Gentlemen's Section of the League were Ministry of Labour who completed the season without being beaten although there is no record as to whether or not they did indeed use the heavier ball. L.N.E.R. Engineers were the runners up.

Saint George's Presbyterian Church were victorious in the Ladies Section with Evening World the runners up.

The first Ordinary General Meeting, as it was called, was held on 2nd September 1931 when the retiring Officers, F.A. Constable (Chairman), J.H.Jackman (Vice Chairman), Ken A.Nicholson (Honorary Secretary and Treasurer) were all re-elected and Mr.Bart Kinnair was appointed as a second Vice Chairman.

This was to be the start of a long involvement with the Association by Bart Kinnair who was appointed as Chairman in the following year, a position he held until the end of the 1954/55 season after which he was President up to and including 1985/86.

It was agreed that the 'Tema' ball, match weight would be the ball to be used in all league matches and that Mr. Stan Seymour, the former Newcastle United footballer who had a Sports Goods business in Market Street in Newcastle, be asked to supply these.

The first Receipts and Payments Account of the Association was approved which showed income of £2.5.00 (£2.25) and expenditure of £1.9.6 (£1.47)

The production of a printed handbook was discussed and left in the hands of a Mr.Oakley and the Honorary Secretary.

However the major item was the adoption of a complete set of rules which had been prepared by Mr. Ken Nicholson, the first of which stated that the Association would be called the Northumberland Table Tennis Association and would be affiliated to the English Table Tennis Association.

The object of the Association was to administer and to advance the interests of the game in Newcastle upon Tyne and the County of Northumberland and the Association would consist of individual players residing within, and bona-fide Table Tennis Clubs playing within these areas.

The Association was to be divided into such district Leagues or other divisions as deemed necessary.

The subscriptions (including the fee to the English Table Tennis Association) was five shillings (25p) in respect of each club together with an additional two and six pence (12.5p) in respect of each team entered by such club. The registration fee for individual players was one shilling and sixpence (7.5p) but would not confer voting rights at meetings.

Any club that did not pay the current subscription by the date of the first committee meeting to be held in the second week in September would be deemed to have withdrawn.

The voting rights at each meeting of the Association were to be that each club in membership had one vote only.

The financial year end was to be 31st March and a statement of income and expenditure to be circulated with the Agenda for the Annual General Meeting.

The Honorary Treasurer was empowered to discharge any debt of less than £1. The previous sanction of the Committee being required in all other cases.

The Officers of the Association would be elected at the Annual General Meeting and would be a President, a Chairman, not more than four Vice-Presidents and/or Vice Chairmen, an Honorary Treasurer, and Honorary Secretary, an Honorary Editorial Secretary, at least two Honorary Auditors and two Honorary representatives to the English Table Tennis Association. The Executive Committee of the Association was to consist of the Officers of the Association together with the duly authorised representatives of each club and would meet in September and subsequently on the request of the Chairman and Honorary Secretary. This committee would have the power to elect such sub-committees as may from time to time be deemed necessary.

The committee also had the power to recommend the expulsion or suspension of any member of the Association on account of such member's continued neglect or breach of any rule.

The Association was also entitled to admit to membership a limited number of clubs playing in the Gateshead district until such time as the said clubs were in a position to form their own district league. Affiliation to the Durham County Table Tennis Association was to be a condition precedent to the right of membership of this Association of clubs playing in the Gateshead district.

Playing regulations were listed separately but with a note that they were to be deemed to be part of the Rules of the Association.

They stated that the official rules of the English Table Tennis Association would be observed in all games, teams in each division or district league would play at home and away to every other team unless otherwise sanctioned by the Committee, the make of ball approved from time to time by the Association to be used in all matches, and the result of each match to be sent to the Honorary Secretary on the day after the match, with the card typewritten when possible.

They also stated that clubs were expected to provide adequate lighting and playing room although there was no indication as to what was deemed adequate. Combined with this was a request that players did not to wear any article likely to unsight an opponent.

The home club was to communicate with the visiting club to make final arrangements for each match and non fulfilment of any fixture would involve the loss of points at the discretion of the Committee. Players not present when required were liable to a penalty of two points.

No player was to play for more than one club in one season, clubs or individuals holding trophies of the Association were to be responsible for their safe keeping and return when requested, and the first and second team in each division to be promoted to the next higher and the last and second last to be relegated to the next lower division.

The regulation relating to teams and match play stated that five players were to constitute a team and two reserves to travel when possible. Each player of the one team to play each player of the other team two games of 21 points up, in the event of the score 20 all being reached, the winner to be the player who thereafter obtained a lead of two clear points. Matches to be decided on aggregate points, two points being awarded for a win and one for a draw. No player was to play twice in a match and no lady was allowed to play for a gentlemen's team or vice-versa.

Several of the draft rules and regulations drawn up by Ken Nicholson were rejected such as the refund of subscription to any withdrawal by a club if notice had been given by 31st August, that one representative from each team be entitled to attend a

General Meeting, and that Committee meetings be held in specified months of the year.

He had also suggested that all matches should be played on a Tuesday as far as possible and should start as early as possible. His other ideas which were not taken up included the appointment of two umpires and two line judges to officiate where possible and team players not to umpire until they had played and also regulations that catered for the playing of individual and team tournaments.

There is no doubt, however, that the tremendous amount of work that he had done in drawing up these regulations was a major factor in the early development of the Association.

CHAPTER TWO

The Thirties

Now that the Association had been put on a more formal basis the second season in operation was greatly looked forward to and it saw an immediate increase in the number of clubs and teams involved.

The Gentlemen's Section increased to eighteen teams and was divided into two divisions whilst two additional teams took part in the Ladies Section. One of the new entries was from London and North Eastern Railway Divisional Accountants Office, in later years known simply as Revac, who were to remain affiliated to the Association until 1993.

Although there is no record in the minutes of it being agreed to, the Association also affiliated to the English Table Tennis Association.

Apart from the now organised League play thoughts turned to the playing of matches against other Associations. A suggestion was made on behalf of the Sunderland and District Table Tennis Association that a Newcastle team should meet a team from Sunderland Y.M.C.A. with a view to finding out whether the former were strong enough to oppose with advantage a team drawn from the Sunderland League.

This was agreed to but before it could be arranged a request was made to this Association by the English Table Tennis Association that a match be played with the Sunderland and District Table Tennis Association to ascertain whether this Association had any player or players strong enough to justify inclusion in a team to visit Whitby for the Northern trials in December 1931.

This was agreed to provided that the Sunderland and District Association also agreed and would be played at Sunderland on 25th November. The team selected for this, the very first representative match played by the Association, was Messrs. B. Kinnair, C.S.Jessitt, J.N.Bovill, W.Milburn, C.N.Chowdary (or failing him, I.C. MacConachie), J.H.Henson and W.Nealings. Reserves selected were N.S.Hudspith, L.Ruddock and F.A.Constable.

Unfortunately there is no record as to the result of this match, or indeed, as to whether or not it was actually played.

There was obviously a feeling that the players of this Association be given the opportunity to play against players from elsewhere as it was also decided to invite the Durham County Association to oppose Northumberland in Newcastle. Again there is, alas, no record as to the result but the match was played as in February 1932 arrangements were made for a return match.

With regard to the playing of League Matches Bart Kinnair asked the committee whether it would be possible for visiting teams to be allowed the use of the table for a half-hour prior to a match and whether smoking could be prohibited during play but it was felt that the Committee had no jurisdiction over this.

What was to be, at least throughout the thirties, an annual match between the holders of the Championship of the Gentlemen's Section and a team representing the Rest of the League was agreed to in January 1932 and L.N.E.R. Divisional Accountants Office kindly offered the use of their premises and the Chairman undertook to arrange for ladies to assist with refreshments.

This was eventually played on 11th February 1932 together with two ladies singles matches and two Gentlemen's singles matches.

At the same time, to assist with Association funds, it was agreed to run a singles tournament at an entry fee of sixpence (2.5p), games to be forty points up. There were only two events, Gentlemen's Singles and Ladies Singles.

A cup was purchased from Cottam Bros. at a cost of ten shillings (50p) for the Ladies event which became known as the Ladies' Singles Association Cup. An offer, which was accepted, was received from a Mr.G.W.Cottam (presumably of Cottam Bros.) jointly with a Mr .J.C. Metcalf to donate a cup for the Gentlemen's event. This was to be held by the winner for a period of one year and to be known as the 'Comet' Cup and to be returned to the donors each year to be inscribed with the name of the winner.

The final of the Gentlemen's event was an all Blyth affair with W.Cooknell becoming the first Northumberland Gentlemen's Singles champion by defeating G.R.Brennand whilst Miss M. Kay of St.George's beat Miss Sinclair of Ministry of Labour to become the first winner of the Ladies Singles.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. won both divisions of the League and Saint Georges' Presbyterian Church retained the title in the Ladies Section.

As some of the clubs in membership were in the Gateshead District it was not long before the Durham County Table Tennis Association stated that they desired all of those clubs to be affiliated to them but that they had no objection to such clubs having the benefit of membership of this Association for the purposes of match play. This was agreed to by the Executive Committee in May 1932 and at the following Second Ordinary General Meeting it was proposed and agreed that the affiliation to the Durham County Table Tennis Association would be a condition precedent to the right of membership of this Association of clubs playing in the Gateshead district.

The very first President was appointed at the Second Ordinary Annual Meeting in May 1932 with Mr.I.C.Maconachie being elected to the position. Three people were made Vice Presidents - Mr. Arthur Heron, Mr. F.A.Constable who had been unable to offer himself for re-election as chairman, and Mr. Andrew Donaldson of Sunderland. The latter was a Scottish school teacher who had founded the Sunderland Table Tennis Association on 3rd March 1910 and who had also been the English Open Champion in 1921.

Mr Bart Kinnair became chairman with Mr E.V.Gardiner and Mr J.Curley as Vice Chairmen whilst Mr J.J.Brennand eventually took over the secretarial duties from Mr. Ken Nicholson leaving the latter free to concentrate upon the job of Treasurer.

After the experience of playing for a season under the first set of proper rules, several amendments were thought necessary and it was decided that each player would play each of the opposition only one game of 21 points up and that matches would be decided on aggregate games. A fixture meeting was brought into being and it was decided that all matches should commence at 7.00 p.m.

It was also agreed that the ball adopted by the English Table Tennis Association should be used for all matches.

In September 1932 the Executive Committee confirmed that in accordance with the English Table Tennis Association approved ball, the one to be used for the 1932/33 season was the Villa ball and Mr. Seymour offered to give special terms of two shillings and sixpence (twelve and one half pence) per dozen to members of the Association.

The question of whether players be allowed to play for two teams was discussed but as there was no printed rule against this it was decided to leave the question to the good sportsmanship of the clubs.

Over the years it has never, of course, been possible to keep every member happy and even as early as May 1933 sections of a letter of criticism were read out at an Executive Committee meeting although details of the criticism or of the response of the committee were never recorded.

As the Association grew quickly over the next few years the rules and regulations were gradually refined and the requirement to have the score cards typewritten soon disappeared. Other changes saw the Honorary Officers of the Association listed as President, Chairman, General Secretary, Treasurer, Match and Tournament Secretary, Editorial and Publicity Secretary, Record Secretary, and E.T.T.A. Representative with the affairs of the Association being managed by an Executive Committee. This committee was made up of the Officers and Vice Chairmen together with one representative from each affiliated autonomous League.

More flexibility was given to the date on which the Annual General Meeting was held as long as it took place in April or May. The voting at the Annual Meeting was changed to give each team rather than just each club one vote and also gave the representative of any affiliated league one vote for each club in such league.

The subscriptions for clubs and teams remained unaltered throughout the thirties but the charge for individual membership was changed to five shillings (25p) per year.

After the introduction of a handbook it also became a requirement that each club had to subscribe for a minimum of five copies for each team that it entered. The cost of each copy amounted to sixpence in old money being equivalent to two and one half pence.

The League regulations changed to state that the Laws of Table Tennis as adopted by the International Table Tennis Federation would be observed in all matches. The requirement for teams to have reserves was dropped as was the requirement that the secretaries of home clubs confirm the fixtures with the visiting clubs.

By the 1938/39 season there was no reference in the League Regulations to ladies not being able to play in Gentlemen's teams.

A specific end of season date was fixed with any postponed fixtures unable to be played after 31st March without the permission of the Executive Committee.

Postponements were only allowed in exceptional cases and opponents were to be notified at least four days before the scheduled date of the match.

Players were not allowed to wear light coloured clothing and it was recommended that all members of the same team wore similar clothing.

In order to avoid long and tedious matches a rule was made that stated that an umpire was empowered to declare void any game in which both players were guilty of continued unenterprising defensive play.

Promotion and relegation was brought in with the top two teams in each division below the first being promoted and the bottom two in each division being relegated to the next lower division but being allowed to apply for re-admission if circumstances permitted.

The home clubs were requested to observe regulations regarding the staging of matches with the playing area to be not less than twenty five feet by fifteen feet and free from all obstructions and spectators.

Adequate lighting was to be provided so that the table should be lit by electric lamps of total wattage of not less than 180, or equivalent gas light, reflected downward and that the light was evenly distributed and should not be in the players' eyes.

Home clubs were also requested to provide such umpires or end-umpires as were necessary.

The rule relating to the ball to be used was eventually changed to read that the make of ball should be one of those officially approved by the International Table Tennis Federation and that a sufficient number of samples be made available for selection of a specimen satisfactory to both players.

Clubs were initially allowed to play matches against unaffiliated clubs provided that the unaffiliated club intended to seek membership but this was changed and the new rule stated that registered players or clubs were forbidden to take part in competition with any player or club, or in exhibition at any club, or under any auspices not registered or affiliated to the International Table Tennis Federation, without the sanction of the E.T.T.A. Executive Committee.

There was obviously a lot of interest in the Ladies game and Miss Jean Young was nominated to act as representative on the Northern Regional Womens Committee of the English Table Tennis Association.

On the playing front in 1932/33 season representative matches were played against Carlisle and Sunderland and District Table Tennis Association with a team of twelve players representing the Association in the former match whilst a team of seven played against the Sunderland side.

W.Cooknell, G.R.Bennand, A.Willis and J.H.Parsons of Blyth Y.M.C.A, together with T.Wight (L.N.E.R.Accountants) J.N.Bovill (Ministry of Labour) and C.N.Choudary (College Road Presbyterian) were selected for both matches.

B.Kinnair (Blyth Y.M.C.A), E.V.Gardiner and J.Gibson (L.N.E.R.Accountants), W.Nealings (Ministry of Labour) and A.Gettins (St. Stephens Church of England) all were also selected for the match against Carlisle.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. retained the titles in both the first and second divisions of the League with College Road Presbyterian Church coming out on top in the Ladies' Section.

W.Cooknell was again the winner of the 'Comet Cup' Gents Singles and Miss Jean Young took the Ladies Singles Association Cup title in the tournament.

The Annual Meeting in May 1933 saw a new President in Mr Arthur Heron being elected as Mr. I.C.Maconichie had moved to London. It was decided to create the post of Honorary Editorial Secretary and Mr. T.Wight was duly elected to that position.

It was agreed to appoint two E.T.T.A. representatives and these positions were filled by Mr. Ken Nicholson and Miss J.Young.

A change in Honorary Secretary was, however, made before the 1933/34 season started as Mr.J.J.Brennand was unable to continue on account of his business activities and Mr.A.E.Stapleton took over.

Mr.Wight, the new Editorial Secretary, made enquiries regarding the printing of a handbook and after reporting his findings to the Executive Committee it was decided to go ahead and have one printed. This was done by a firm called MacDonald of Newcastle upon Tyne and was very compact, measuring 11cm by 7.5cm and had twentyfour pages.

The contents were a list of Officers and Past President, Club information (premises and secretaries of sixteen clubs), Rules of the Association, Fixtures for season 1933/34 for 'A' Division (Men) comprising of nine teams, 'B' Division (Men) comprising of ten teams, and Ladies Section of six teams,. It also included the Rules of Table Tennis as adopted by the International Table Tennis Federation and mistakenly described on the contents page as the Rules of English Table Tennis Association, Honours List, Special Events page (Details and date of the Champions v The Rest of Northumberland fixture and date of the Singles Tournaments), and a Notelets page which gave details of the local newspapers which would print table tennis topics and the days on which they would appear. That page also had a list of advertisers recommended to members

and notes regarding a request for details of any suggestions on the game or of any prospective new clubs to be given to the Publicity Secretary (presumably the Editorial Secretary) as well as an appeal to members to attend the special events. A blank page was left for notes.

Six full pages of advertisements were included and the advertisers were J.Rose & Son of London (Ball and table suppliers for whom Mr.J.J.Brennand was the sole agent for Northumberland) who were selling the balls at £1.63 per gross or specially tested balls at £2.40 per gross, Tables at either £6.50 or the higher price of £8.93 for Villa or Jaques ones, whilst a R.D.Jones bat was 22 pence. Spalding Table Tennis advertising the 'Villa' ball, John Jaques & Son Ltd. of London advertising the 'Tema' ball at £1.12 per gross, tournament posts costing 15 pence and nets at a cost of 5pence each, Stan Seymour of Market Street, Newcastle advertising a full range of Table Tennis Requisites and other Sports Goods, Lenglens Limited of London selling Lenglens 'Starred Club' balls at £1.43 per gross, and 'The Finest Table Tennis Table - Lenglens 'Vivax' which cost £6.87.

The other advert was for The Newcastle Journal stating Table Tennis Topics would appear on Wednesdays throughout the season, the best Paper for all Sports and Particular attention devoted to amateurs.

The Annual Singles Tournament was held in December 1933 at the L.N.E.R. Central Institute, Forth Banks, Newcastle upon Tyne with the number of points played being 40 up in the rounds, 50 up in the semi finals and 100 up in the final.

The Handicap Singles tournament was held at a later date but there is no record of how the handicaps were fixed or, indeed, the format for play.

G.R.Brennand of Blyth Y.M.C.A. was the Mens singles winner with Miss M. McBride of L. & N.E.R. Accountants Office being successful in the Ladies. The first winner of the Mens Handicap Singles was J.Bradley of Wallsend and the first Ladies Handicap event was won by Miss E.M.Kay of St.George's Presbyterian Church, High Heaton.

County matches at home and away were played against Durham but requests to visit Carlisle and London were turned down on the grounds that the County was not in a position to send a team to either.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. provided five of the Men's team that entertained Durham on 31st January 1934 at Vickers-Armstrong-Whitworth Badminton Hall on Scotswood Road in Newcastle. They were G.R.Brennand, A.Willis, W.Cooknell, T.L.Kinnair and B.Kinnair. E.V.Gardiner of L.& N.E.R. Accountants and N.Hudspith of St.Stephen's Church of England, Scotswood Road completed the side.

A return match in Durham was played on 8th March 1934 when W.Frost and H.Grainge (both Blyth Y.M.C.A.) replaced E.V.Gardiner and N.Hudspith.

There is no record of the results of these matches.

The Ladies County team that played Durham at Sunderland on 6th February 1934 was Miss M.McBride, Miss J.Young, Miss D.Hunter, Miss R.Hall (all L.N.E.R. Accountants Office) and Miss M.Kay, Miss H.Wilson, and Miss S.MacNichol (all St.Georges Presbyterian Church, High Heaton).

The home match was played at the L.N.E.R. Railway Institute on 7th March 1934 when Miss E.Sanderson (Reyrolles) replaced Miss R.Hall.

As with the Men's matches there is no record of the results.

All players who represented the County were awarded County badges, a practice that continued for many years.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. continued to dominate the League with their 'A' and 'B' teams again finishing on top of the Mens Section First and Second Divisions respectively.

L. & N.E.R. Accountants Office Ladies won the Ladies Section.

The administration of the League was not without its problems with complaints being dealt with by the award of points in nine cases and three matches being declared void. Arising out of these complaints it was agreed that St. Stephen's Church of England, Scotswood Road be expelled from the League following their continued breach of rules unless a satisfactory explanation and apology was received. Although not recorded such explanation and apology must have been received as St. Stephen's were in the Mens First Division the following season.

It was also agreed that unless St. Georges Presbyterian Church, High Heaton Mens team were better conducted in arranging matches that drastic action would be taken against them. It was not made clear in the records as to what such action would be.

In April 1934 Mr. Arthur Heron intimated that he did not wish to stand as President again and he seconded a motion that Mr. Henry Laird be elected President in his place which was agreed.

Mr. J. Curley was appointed as a Vice President and Mr. Parkin replaced him as a Vice Chairman.

The 1934/35 season saw another increase in the number of teams playing in the league with once again two Mens divisions and one Ladies division. Handbooks were not replaced but inserts were printed and available to clubs at a small charge of sixpence in old money (two and one half pence) but new clubs were also issued with copies of the original handbook.

Local press interest in the Association's activities continued to grow with regular articles now appearing in the Evening Chronicle, Journal, South Shields Gazette, North Shields Daily News, Blyth News, Hexham Courant and the Whitley Bay Seaside Chronicle.

Three players, G.R. Brennand and A. Willis of Blyth Y.M.C.A. and W. Skeoch of Armstrong Whitworth's, were nominated to take part in International Trials.

County matches were again organised with Durham but no record was kept of the teams selected or the results of these matches.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. were once again top of the Mens Section First Division and they were certainly the outstanding team in the league going on to win the title in every year up to 1938/39 season which was the last one before the hostilities of World War II brought about the cessation of competition. The second division was won by North Durham.

Like Blyth Y.M.C.A., L. & N.E.R. Accountants were the dominant force in the Ladies Section and they too were top dogs right up to and including 1938/39 season.

On the tournament scene Blyth's G.R. Brennand retained the Mens Singles title, Miss E.M. Kay, now of L. & N.E.R. Accountants was successful in the Womens Singles and the Ladies Handicap Singles whilst another Blyth player A. Wedderburn came out on top in the Mens Handicap Singles.

The following year saw a change in Vice Presidents with the appointment of Reverend F. Baker, Stan Seymour and W.S. Bell. A. Heron and J. Curley stood down. Sam Boyd replaced Mr. Parkin as a Vice Chairman. A new position of Assistant Secretary was created which was filled by H. Conyers Walker but unfortunately he had to resign part way through the season because of ill health and was replaced by Mr. Bill Archbold.

The title of Editorial Secretary was changed to Publicity Secretary and two Official Umpires were added to the list of Officers, the first to be appointed being J.J. Brennand and Johnny Waugh.

The latter was to become a driving force within the Association in the future.

The number of teams for the season 1935/36 rose dramatically with fiftyone competing in six divisions, four Mens Section, one Ladies Section and a new Blyth League. A knock- out competition was also arranged for the first time.

County matches with Durham again took place as well as an Inter League match with Seaham. An exhibition match was also staged at South Shields at their Association's request with Blundell, Miss Young and Miss MacNichol of L.N.E.R.Accountants, Skeoch of Armstrong Whitworth's and Frost of Blyth all taking part.

The Mens Section Second, Third and Fourth Divisions were won by Dunston Saint Nicholas, Benwell Presbyterian Church and Bitumastic Sports Club respectively, Blyth Y.M.C.A. 'C' team winning the Blyth Divisional League. The new Teams (Knock-out) Championship went, unsurprisingly to Blyth Y.M.C.A.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. supplied yet another Men's Singles champion in A.Willis who also won the Men's Handicap Singles. Miss E.M.Kay retained the Ladies Singles title and Miss L.M. Sharp was successful in the Ladies Handicap Singles.

It was common practice at the time for the English Table Tennis Association to encourage County Associations to stage Exhibition Matches in conjunction with themselves when top International players would take part. The highlight of the season was the staging of such an event at the St. James' Boxing Hall in Newcastle upon Tyne on Wednesday 27th November 1935 when a top squad of Hungarian players who had won the world championships were the attraction.

It was decided that Northumberland players G.R.Brennand, A.Willis, Miss E.M. Kay and Miss M McBride would take part along with Edgar Reay and T.E.Ewbank of Durham. Contact was received from a Mr. Robinson of Hull & East Riding who had secured the services of an English International player, Hyman Lurie who was prepared to come to Newcastle if required. It was agreed to ask him on the basis that he would play doubles with the Hungarians. The Hungarian squad was Szabados, Bellak, Leibster and Erlich and arrangements were made for them to stay at the Royal Station Hotel in Newcastle.

Johnny Waugh and Arthur Heron were appointed as the Official Umpires and F.Ashworth was the Announcer for the night.

Steps were taken to make sure that the event was well advertised with posters being purchased including a hand written one which was placed outside of the hall. Adverts were paid for to be published in the Chronicle on the Monday and Tuesday before the exhibition as well as the Wednesday on which it took place.

The boxing ring had to be extended and a local firm were paid £5.50 to do this, 3000 programmes were purchased, twelve stewards were needed and it was agreed that Arthur Heron would arrange this with preference being given to the unemployed. The stewards each received a complimentary ticket. It was arranged that four turnstiles would be open with two for ticket holders and two for those who would pay on the night and the services of two policemen to be on duty outside the hall from 6.30p.m. until 10.30 p.m. were acquired. All of the officials turned out in Evening Dress.

It turned out to be a great success with an attendance of two thousand and ninety one spectators.

The following season 1936/37 saw a new Vice President in Mr.M.C.Robson as the only change in the Officials although two changes had to be made during the season with Mr.Parkin resigning his position of Vice Chairman and the Publicity Secretary, Mr.T.Wight also resigning. They were replaced by Arthur Heron and Mr. Johnny Waugh.

The General Secretary, Mr. A.E.Stapleton, saw out the season before he, too, resigned. The deep appreciation of the members of the Association were recorded in

acknowledgement of the valuable work done by him since the formation of the Association and as Secretary since September 1933.

Only one County match was played that season with A.Willis, W.Cooknell, A.Wedderburn, B.Kinnair and M.Wake of Blyth Y.M.C.A. together with Messrs Leeson of L & N.E.R Accountants and Mincoff of North Durham selected to play against Durham.

As well as winning the Men's top division, Blyth Y.M.C.A. won the Team Knock out Competition and their 'C' team took the Blyth Divisional League.

Other clubs to taste success in the Men's Divisions were L. & N.E.R. Accountants whose 'B' team won the second division with their 'C' team finishing on top of Division Three South, and Newcastle Postal Clerks who won Division Three North.

L.& N.E.R. Accountants, of course, took the Ladies Section title.

In the Individual Competitions A.Wedderburn of Blyth won both the Men's Singles and the Men's Handicap Singles whilst Miss J.Young of L.& N.E.R.Accountants regained the Ladies Singles title with Mrs. J.R.Waugh gaining success in the Ladies Handicap Singles.

By season 1937/38 the number of teams in the league had grown to sixty playing in four Newcastle & District Mens Divisions, one Blyth Mens Division and one Ladies Division. There were a few changes to the Officials with Mr. T. Wight replacing Arthur Heron who had left the district as a Vice Chairman, Mr.N.Proud appointed as Records Secretary (a new name for the Assistant Secretary), and Mr. Chris Clark filling a new post of Match and Tournament Secretary and Mr.J.Hall was added to the Official Umpires.

The Ashington Collieries Welfare League affiliated to the County.

During the season the Executive Committee agreed a payment to Mr.A.E.Stapleton for services to the Association in past years and agreed that in future honoraria would be paid to the General Secretary, Match and Tournament Secretary, Records Secretary, Publicity Secretary and Treasurer, the amounts to be decided at the Annual General Meeting.

It was agreed to support a proposal by the Yorkshire Table Tennis Association to the inauguration of a County Championships competition on a regional basis and this went ahead being the forerunner of the eventual national competition.

Matches were arranged for a mens team to play home and away against Yorkshire , Lancashire and Durham and for a ladies side to play home and away against Lincolnshire and Warwickshire.

The men who represented the Association in these matches were Blyth Y.M.C.A.'s A.Wedderburn, G.R.Brennand, W.Cooknell and G.Thompson, L.&N.E.R. Accountants' A.Bulmer, W.Skeoch and H.Blundell and T.Simpson of Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson.

Mrs. J.R.Waugh, Miss J.Young, Miss L.M.Sharp and Miss E.M.Kay, who all played for L.& N.E.R.Accountants, played for the Ladies team.

Following the success of the exhibition with the Hungarians in 1935 a similar event took place at the St.James Boxing Hall on February 9th 1938 with world champions Hungary again the visitors including Viktor Barna and Laslo Ballak. Durham's Edgar Reay and T.E.Ewbank again took part along with the top Northumberland players with Johnny Waugh acting as the Umpire.

Similar arrangements were made to those in 1935 and once again all of the officials wore dinner jackets.

It was an even bigger success than the 1935 event with the official attendance being 2554. It was also a financial success, contributing just over forty two pounds to the Association's funds which now stood at approximately fifty eight pounds.

Apart from the continued success of Blyth Y.M.C.A. in the top Mens Division and L.& N.E.R. Accountants in the Ladies Section, Postal Clerks 'A' team won the Mens Division Two having been successful in the Third Division the previous year and their 'B' team finished top of Division Three South.

Swan Hunters Staff Institute had a double success in winning Division Three North and also the Knock-out Cup whilst Blyth Y.M.C.A. 'B' team won the Blyth Divisional League.

For the first time the Individual Men's Singles was won by a player from a club other than Blyth Y.M.C.A. with A. Bulmer of L.& N.E.R. Accountants being successful.

He also won the Men's Handicap Singles.

The Ladies Singles was won by Mrs. J.R. Waugh with Miss Robinson of Alnwick Mech. Institute taking the Ladies Handicap title.

The Ashington Collieries Welfare League was won by Morpeth Y.M.C.A.

It would appear that the publicity given to the sport by the holding of the exhibition at St. James Hall had the effect of creating more interest in the Association as the 1938/39 season saw fifty seven clubs taking part, an increase of fourteen over the previous year. This meant that there were now five divisions in the Men's Section of the Newcastle & District League and two in the Ladies Section. The Ashington Collieries Welfare League and the Blyth Divisional League combined to become the North Eastern Mens League The total number of teams taking part was now sixty seven Mens and sixteen Ladies.

Nearly all of the Officials remained the same, the exception being the position of Publicity Secretary where Mr. F.Ashforth took over from Mr Johnny Waugh. The number of Official Umpires increased to nine who were J.J.Brennand, G.Dellow, T.N.Henderson, T.B.A.Hutchinson, G.Mitchell, W.A.Robinson, C.W.Hall, Rev.S.Bell and Johnny Waugh.

Miss J.Young ceased being an E.T.T.A. representative but was appointed to the National Women's Advisory Committee.

Mr.Ken Nicholson was appointed to the English Table Tennis Association Executive Committee.

It was agreed that Honoraria be paid to certain officials in future and initially the General Secretary received seven guineas (£7.35), the Match and Tournament Secretary five guineas (£5.25) the Publicity Secretary four guineas (£4.20) the Records Secretary and the Treasurer two guineas (£2.10) each.

In an effort to increase the performance of the leading players Hyman Lurie was hired for a coaching session with them that was held in July 1938 with approximately twenty five men and ten ladies taking part. Mr. Lurie was then asked to nominate the best six men which he did, the players being Bulmer (L.& N.E.R. Accountants) Brennand (Blyth Y.M.C.A.), Simpson (Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson), Wedderburn (Blyth Y.M.C.A.), Henderson (North Durham) and Whitney (Postal Clerks). These players were asked to practice together at least once a week under the supervision of Mr. Ashforth during the close season.

The services of Mr. Lurie for a week were again acquired later in the year in December when he helped the Northumberland squad in taking part in the National Fitness Exhibition which was held in Newcastle. Afterwards he stayed on to again coach some of the leading players.

It was later agreed to send, at the Association's expense, Messrs Bulmer, Simpson and Wedderburn to the Leeds tournament.

Men's teams were entered in the County Championships Regional Competition and in the Wilmott Cup (the National Club Competition) and Ladies' teams in the County Championships Regional Competition and the Rose Bowl, the latter being the National Club Competition for Ladies.

Another successful exhibition was held at the St. James Boxing Hall on 31st January 1939 with Hyman Lurie and another English International, Adrian Haydon being asked to augment the programme.

The season's honours, in what turned out to be the final one before the outbreak of World War II put an end to proceedings, saw Blyth Y.M.C.A. win the Men's Section First Division for the eighth successive year and L.& N.E.R. Accountants make it six in a row in winning the Ladies' Section top flight.

The other Men's Section Division winners were Newcastle Jewish Social Institute in the Second Division, West End Constitutional Club 'B' in the Third Division, Tynemouth U.A.B. in the Fourth Division North and North Durham 'C' in the fourth. West End Congregational Church were successful in the Ladies' Section second Division and Blyth Y.M.C.A. won the Team Knock-out Championship and their 'B' team finished top of the North Eastern Men's League.

The only Individual Tournaments held were the Men's Singles and the Ladies' Singles, the winners being G Thompson of Blyth Y.M.C.A. and Mrs. J. Fennell of L.& N.E.R. Accountants respectively.

The Annual General Meeting on 28th April 1939 saw a few changes in the persons running the Association with Sam Boyd, who had previously found it necessary to resign as a vice chairman although the reason is not recorded, being replaced by Mr.T.B.A.Hutchinson. Mr.S.H.Mincoff took over as Publicity Secretary from Mr.Ashworth and Mr.R.Thompson became Records Secretary. Mr.C.W.Hall and the Reverend S.Bell ceased to be official umpires but Mr.M.Freedman was added to the list.

It was agreed to organise an Annual Open Tournament and also an Annual Table Tennis Dance but unfortunately these were never able to be held in that year.

The Executive Committee proposed a new and full set of Rules and Conditions for the Knock Out cup which were adopted for both the Mens and the Ladies competitions. Most of the rules contained in them have remained in force up to the present time.

It was agreed to express the unqualified appreciation of this Association of the work done over the previous five years by the Honorary Officers of the English Table Tennis Association and it was also agreed to support a proposition to increase the fees payable to the E.T.T.A.

An agenda prepared for an Executive Committee Meeting on 5th September 1939 was marked 'Hitler Permitting' and included an item headed 'Arrangements in the event of Hostilities'. However another Agenda was subsequently marked 'Hitler not permitting'.

World War Two broke out on 1st September and the meeting on 5th September attended by Messrs Wight, Archbold, Clark, Mincoff, Thompson and Nicholson along with Miss Young agreed the minutes of the previous meeting and the payment of two accounts. The following minute was also recorded:

'Owing to the International situation, it is agreed, that the activities of the Association be left in abeyance until circumstances are more favourable.'

Although all league play had been suspended at an Executive Committee meeting on 1st March 1940 it was agreed to look at the possibility of holding the County

Tournaments. It was decided that if an exhibition was held on behalf of the Red Cross or Chronicle War Fund that the tournaments be advertised in the programmes after which the holding of them would be reviewed. The decision regarding the Red Cross or Chronicle events rested entirely with the Chronicle and there is no record of either having taken place.

The 1940 Annual General Meeting took place as usual on 3rd May, being attended by twenty two members.

A Mr. Buglass of North Durham complained bitterly about the conduct of the Executive Committee on its lack of initiative during the year. He maintained that they had done nothing to stimulate interest in table tennis since the outbreak of hostilities and had allowed the activities of the Association to lapse and doubted whether even after the war it would regain the ground lost.

The General Secretary read extracts from articles which had appeared in the local press asking club secretaries to contact him to enable some sort of arrangements to be made to which only two replies had been received including one from Sandersonians whose premises had since been taken over by the military.

However Mr. Buglass went ahead and proposed a vote of censure on the Executive Committee but as there was no seconder to this motion the matter was dropped.

The President and all of the existing Officers were re- elected with Mr.A.Read also being appointed a Vice President. It was recorded, however, that the services of the Publicity and Records Secretaries were not necessary under present conditions and their nominations were put forward on the understanding that they could be called upon if necessary.

It was agreed that only a nominal subscription of 5p per club be charged based on the application forms for season 1939/40 until further notice.

It was also agreed that the affairs of the Association be left entirely in the hands of the Executive Committee until further notice, but that an Extraordinary General Meeting could be called on the request of six clubs.

It was also recommended to the Executive Committee that they co-opted Mr. Buglass. Because of the war nothing at all was able to take place and the next meeting of the Executive Committee was not held until 18th December 1945.

CHAPTER THREE

Almost like starting afresh

On 18th December 1945 a meeting was arranged and attended by Bart Kinnair, T.Wight, T.B.A.Hutchinson, Ken Nicholson, Bill Archbold, Miss J.Young and Messrs Gibson and Chipchase who all agreed that the Association should recommence activities and they agreed to have a circular sent to all clubs and to ask the local press to advertise the fact that they wished to resume activities.

An Extraordinary General Meeting was called for 14th March 1946 which was attended by sixty representatives and it was agreed that a start would be made for season 1946/47.

It was also agreed to ask the Duke of Northumberland to be the Patron of the Association which he agreed to be.

As Mr. Bill Archbold had retired, Chris L. Clark was appointed to act as secretary.

The Annual General Meeting was duly held on 14th May 1946 when it was agreed to go ahead.

The former President, Henry Laird, had died and Mr. M.C.Robson was elected as President, a position he was to hold for the next nine years. Messrs Stan Seymour Senior and W.S.Bell were re-elected as Vice Presidents with A.Read and Bill Archbold also appointed.

Bart Kinnair (Chairman), T.Wight and T.B.A. Hutchinson (Vice Chairmen), Ken Nicholson (Treasurer and E.T.T.A. Representative) and R.Thompson (Records Secretary) were all willing to continue in their previous roles and were all re-elected.

Chris Clark was confirmed as the new Secretary with Johnny Waugh, who was to be highly involved with the running of the Association until season 1957/58, appointed as Match and Tournament Secretary and R.Chipchase appointed Publicity Secretary.

It was agreed to put on record the thanks of the Association to the Officials who had carried on under difficult conditions with the names of Mr.Chipchase and Mr. Quick being especially emphasised.

The season eventually got under way with fiftyone teams from thirtysix clubs taking part in five divisions. Unfortunately there were no Ladies' divisions. Numbers were down compared the last season before the war broke out but it was very gratifying when it was considered how many former clubs were just beginning to get going again after losing premises and equipment to service and Civil Defence requirements.

Because of the lack of divisions for Ladies it was decided that ladies could play on mens' teams, something which was to be the norm in future.

As the Secretary was to say in his first report to the membership it was almost like starting afresh.

Lack of equipment was a nightmare during the early part of the season and it was only towards the end of the season that bats and balls were becoming plentiful and tables were beginning to be manufactured again.

Apart from the League programme, the annual tournament was played with the introduction of Veterans Singles, Mens Doubles, Mixed Doubles and Youth's Singles events as well as the Mens and Ladies Singles and the Mens and Ladies Handicap Singles.

As part of the Anglo-Netherlands Sports Scheme it was agreed that four players who had agreed to pay £10 each would represent table tennis and take part in a visit to Groningen. They were very successful and all received medals for winning the match. Mr. Batley also received an extra medal for the best individual performance.

A return match was played at Rutherford Grammar School later in the season when A.Punshon (South Shields YMCA), A.Bulmer (L.N.E.R.Accountants), Johnny Hewitt (North Durham), and Leon Kertzman (Maccabi) proved to be too strong for the Dutchmen.

Durham were beaten in a friendly match that was played at Stanley.

Teams were also entered in the National K.O. Competitions for Leagues, i.e. the Wilmott Cup for men and the Rose Bowl for women.

A.Bulmer L.&N.E.R) J.Hewitt (N.Durham), H.Ions (Maccabi),L.Kertzman(Maccabi), J.Middlemiss(PostalClerks),R.Punshon(S.Shields Y.M.C.A.), and D.Wright(Swan Hunters) all represented the men for the County during the season.

Miss J.Purves, Miss D.Smith, and Mrs. J.R.Waugh (all L & N E R) also represented the County and were narrowly defeated in the semi final of the Rose Bowl.

As in the years before the war, an Exhibition took place when over 1000 spectators saw top players Victor Barna, Johnny Leach, Jack Carrington, England Lady International, Peggy Franks, and Scottish Lady International Helen Elliott at the City Baths Hall.

Following the success of that exhibition it was agreed to stage the first International Match to be held in Newcastle with England Women playing Scotland Women in the Western Zone Final of the European Ladies Cup. The English Ladies team of Vera Duce, Betty Blackbourne and Peggy Franks were successful.

Unfortunately the weather was atrocious, the day of the match being one of the worst winter days for years when Newcastle was almost cut off from civilisation. Even so many were waiting in the snow before the doors opened and the number of almost six hundred spectators amazed both teams.

Two of the Association's players, Hewitt and Kertzman, were invited to take part in International Trials in Liverpool and it was agreed to send them and to pay them £2.10.00 (£2.50) each towards the travel costs. It the transpired that two women had also been invited to the Trials and it was agreed that they should also go but would have to pay their own expenses!

The two men were later invited to the Final Trials in London and it was agreed that they should go and that the Association would pay half of their rail fare and half of their hotel costs. One of the women was also invited but this was not followed up.

As before the war there were clubs in membership that were based South of the River Tyne and the Durham Association were objecting to them playing in the Northumberland League. A meeting was held with representatives of the Durham Association with Northumberland proposing that any such clubs should affiliate to Durham but be allowed to play in the Northumberland League. Talks were ongoing.

Although not part of the Association's activities, top players Victor Barna and Alec Brook appeared at the Empire Theatre in Newcastle to give an exhibition when the well known comedian Arthur Askey was top of the bill.

Some of the teams in the league were there to stay for a long time, Blyth Y.M.C.A. who had been in the league from the start going on to complete forty years, L.N.E.R. Accountants (later to be called Revac) who joined in 1931 were to complete fifty four years, Postal Clerks fifty one years (joined in 1936/37), Newcastle Y.M.C.A. thirtyeight years (joined in 1936/37). Newcomers South Shields Y.M.C.A. were to stay for forty two years whilst another new club, Maccabi were to be in the League until 2013/14, a total of sixty eight years.

Before the war the First Division of the League had been dominated by Blyth Y.M.C.A.who had won it in each of the eight years up to 1938/39. After the fresh start the first winners were newcomers South Shields Y.M.C.A. with Blyth Y.M.C.A. 'B'

team being successful in the second division and Maccabi 'B' Team finishing top of division three. The winners of the two fourth divisions were both in the League for the first time, Thermal Syndicate taking the North Division and Murray House the South. The Knock Out Cup was won by North Durham and the experimental three a side knock out competition by South Shields Y.M.C.A.

The Official List of Umpires totalled seven, being T.A.B.Hutchinson, Johnny Waugh, S.Scatchard, F.Ashforth, D.W.Scarth, Johnny Hewitt and Sam Boyd.

There were new winners in all of the tournament events with A.Punshon (S.Shields YMCA) taking the Mens Singles title and Doreen Smith (L.N.E.R.) the Womens Singles title. Johnny Hewitt (North Durham) and Doreen Smith were both successful in the respective Mens and Womens Handicap Singles. The new Veterans Singles was won by J.Smalley (L.N.E.R. and N.F.S) with T.Armstrong (Blyth YMCA) successful in the new Youth Singles. Johnny Hewitt completed a hat trick of victories, winning the Mens Doubles with A.Percy (North Durham), and the Mixed Doubles with Joyce Purves (L.N.E.R.)

A few changes to the officers and officials were made for 1947/48 with three new Vice Presidents in Stan Seymour, Junior joining his father along with T.Wooding and T.Wight whilst W.S.Bell and A.Read retired. D.W.Scarth, who was to hold the position until 1955/56 when he became Chairman for one season, took over from T.Wight as a Vice Chairman. B.P. Bell replaced R.Chipchase as Publicity Secretary.

C.L. Clark moved out of the district during the course of the season and J.R.Waugh replaced him with A.Wilson taking over from the latter as Match and Tournament Secretary. A.Wilson was to hold this position until the end of the 1953/54 season and then be still involved on the Committee until the end of season 1959/60.

It was also agreed that the Executive Committee should have one representative from each division

An honorarium of thirteen guineas (thirteen pounds 65 pence) was given to the secretary at the A.G.M. in May 1947 of which three guineas (three pounds 15 pence) was to be given to the typists, Miss Smith and Miss Wright, who had typed hundreds of letters.

The method of play was agreed at four players per team who had to be numbered in order of ability, such order having to be strictly adhered to.

Each player was to play three best of three games of 21 points as follows: A v 1,2,3
B v 2,1,4 C v 3,4,1 and D v 4,3,2

Matches to be played strictly in accordance with the Official fixture list, i.e. commencing at 7.00p.m. prompt on the date shown in the handbook. Postponements would only be allowed in exceptional cases and notice of such postponement had to be in the hands of their opponents four days preceding the match.

The long standing disagreement with Durham regarding clubs situated in Co Durham being able to play in the league continued with Durham stating that they should form a League in Durham and not play in the Northumberland League.

It was decided to ask the E.T.T.A. to amend their rules to provide for affiliation through County Association as a unit instead of through League as a unit, but that clubs should play in Leagues on the most convenient basis.

For the current season entries from any clubs affected were still accepted.

With Table Tennis once again becoming popular the season started with an increase to ninety two teams from fifty six clubs divided into seven divisions as follows: 1,2,3,4A,4B,4C and North Eastern Division.

The experimental Teams of Three K.O. Competition was not continued with.

The County Tournament was held at North Shields Y.M.C.A. and the Ladies' Doubles event was introduced.

Of the new clubs in the league, Ashington Y.M.C.A. who had previously been in for one season in 1938/39 were to stay until 1994/95 season and North Shields Y.M.C.A. for sixty eight years until they were no longer able to use the premises in 2016.

One club is still there in 2018 although it has had many name changes. Starting out as Ministry of National Insurance, Longbenton it then became M.P.N.I., M.O.S.S., D.H.S.S., D.W.P., and then Newcastle Estates Sports and Leisure Club.

A very comprehensive fifty six page handbook was printed, of which clubs had to buy four copies at one shilling (five pence) per copy, and contained List of Officers, Honours List, Previous Season final Tables. N.T.T.A. Rules, The Laws of the Game, Club Information, the Fixtures for the Season, Dates of Special Events and Tournaments, Notelets, County Championships Fixtures and Extracts from Rules and other County Championship information and included a comment as follows:

' TABLE TENNIS is no longer a pastime but a game, an athletic game, and it can be a very spectacular game. Do all you can to foster this view by encouraging your friends to attend the events organised by the Association.'

It also included nine full page adverts despite supplies of equipment still not being freely available. Indeed the advert for John Jaques and Sons referred to limited supplies of equipment being available against Board of Trade buying permits. It also stated that Tables as used in the World Championships were still not available owing to the lack of suitable timber.

The first record of transfer of players between clubs was recorded with Harry Dignan going from North Shields Y.M.C.A. to North Durham and J.Everson from Newcastle Transport to West End Congers.

Two exhibitions to promote the sport were held during the season, one in Gateshead and one in Hexham which was attended by approximately two hundred people.

A team was entered in the new County Championships Competition and played in the Northern Division and were represented by Miss D.Smith, Miss Joyce Purves, Mrs J.R.Waugh (all L.& N.E.R.) Johnny Hewitt (N.Durham) Leon Kertzman (Maccabi) J.W.Middlemiss (Postal Clerks) and A.Punshon (S.Shields Y.M.C.A.).

Victories were achieved away from home over Cheshire 6 - 3, Yorkshire seconds 5 - 4 and Cumberland 9 - 0 with success at home against Lincolnshire 6 - 3. Unfortunately 4 - 5 defeats came in home matches against Durham and Lancashire Seconds and the team finished third in the division.

Highlight of the season came in the National Competitions for leagues when the Mens team of Johnny Hewitt, Kertzman and Punshon beat West Cumberland 9 - 0 in Newcastle, then won away 5 - 4 against the Sunderland League and by the same score against the Grimsby League to reach the semi finals of the Wilmott Cup.

Doreen Smith, Joyce Purves and Madge Waugh progressed in the Rose Bowl with a 5 - 0 win away to the Grimsby League, a walk over against the Sunderland league and success in Newcastle 4 - 1 over the Blackpool League to get to the semis.

The Semi Finals and Finals of both the Wilmott Cup and the Rose Bowl were staged at the same time in Willesden in London when all eight of the competing teams were accompanied by coach loads of supporters.

Unfortunately the men, despite giving a good account of themselves, failed to reach the final, going down 5 - 0 to the Manchester league who went on to beat North Middlesex and win the cup.

The women were up against the South Devon League in the semis and triumphed 3 - 0 to go into the final against a very strong Birmingham League side who had accounted for North Middlesex in the other semi.

A tremendous performance from the Northumberland Ladies saw them triumph 3 - 2 against all the odds to win the County's first ever trophy. A report in the English Table Tennis Magazine carried the line that players from the 'Far North' can produce players to rank with the best!

The tournament (known in those days as the Individual Championship) saw J.W.Middlemiss of Postal Clerks triumph in the Men's Singles and Miss Doreen Smith (L.N.E.R.) retain the Women's Singles title. The Handicap singles were won by A. Percy (North Durham) in the men's and Miss S.Kertzman of Maccabi in the women's event.

The South Shields Y.M.C.A. pairing of A.Punshon and S.Myers were successful in the Men's Doubles with Johnny Hewitt (N.Durham) and Miss Joyce Purves (L.N.E. R.) retaining the Mixed Doubles title.

Joyce Purves was also successful partnered by Madge Waugh (also L.N.E.R..) in the new Ladies' Doubles.

M. Wood of Blyth Y.M.C.A. won the Youth's Singles with J.Smalley of N.F.S. retaining the Veteran's Singles title.

In the League L.N.E.R. Accountants became the new First Division Champions and newcomers Ministry of National Insurance 'A' won the Second Division. South Shields Y.M.C.A. 'B' team won the Third Division. The three successful sides in the Fourth Divisions were Postal Clerks 'C' team in the A division, North Durham 'C' in the B division and Ministry of National Insurance C team in the C division.

Ashington Y.M.C.A. were the winners of the new North Eastern Division and South Shields Y.M.C.A. won the K.O. Competition.

The following season, 1948/49, saw the same set of officials looking after things with the exception that there was no longer a Publicity Secretary.

Of the Official Umpires, T.A.B.Hutchinson and F.Ashforth were no longer on the list but H.Irons was added thereto.

The growth of the number of clubs and teams continued with ninety eight teams from fifty eight clubs participating in the league which now had eight divisions. The set up was again changed with a First Division, a Second Division, a Third Division, a Fourth Division, three Fifth Divisions and the North Eastern Division.

The new clubs included BBC House Boy's Club of Gateshead who had previously been in membership in 1937/38 and 1938/39 seasons and were now to stay until the end of season 1977/78.

The rules had been thoroughly revised by a small committee and a complete set of rules drawn up for the knock out competition.

Regarding the question of players and clubs who were actually in the County Durham area and had to affiliate them it was decided that they could still play in the Northumberland league provided that they had the permission of the Executive Committee.

A rule was brought in that any player not present when his match was due to be played would automatically forfeit it except with the opposing captain's consent.

The rule regarding postponements stated that in the case of the Premier Division and subject to appeal to the Executive Committee either side unable to fulfil a fixture strictly in accordance with the fixture chart would forfeit the match to the opposing team. There was, however, no reference to a Premier Division in the list of fixtures and presumably it referred to the First Division!

The old rule whereby an umpire was empowered to declare void a game on the grounds that it constituted unenterprising defensive play was done away with.

The now usual entries were made of teams in the County Championships, the Wilmott Cup and the Rose Bowl. The Annual Tournament, now referred to as the Closed Tournament was arranged at North Shields Y.M.C.A. with the finals to be held at Rutherford College Hall in Newcastle which was also the venue for all of the home County matches.

Equipment was much more readily available after the shortage created by the war and permits for the purchase of balls were no longer required.

For the very first time the County fielded a Junior side that played a friendly match against Durham in Newcastle. R.Heslop (N.Durham), B.Donkin (West End Boys Club), B.Thompson (Blyth Y.M.C.A.), N.Gibson (Gateshead Y.M.C.A.) and L.Rose (Maccabi) were the youngsters to represent the County at this level.

Following the success of the Ladies in the Rose Bowl the E.T.T.A. decided to stage a match between the South of England Ladies and the North of England Ladies as a trial for places in the National team. This was held at the City Baths Hall but turned out to be disappointing and not as popular as had been hoped for.

The North of England team which lost 6 - 3 included Joyce Purves and Doreen Smith but they were below par on the night. Doreen Smith, however, had been named as a reserve for the England team to play Czechoslovakia.

The County continued to try to help the Hexham area to promote table tennis by staging another exhibition match in Hexham.

Following the success of the visits of Internationals to play exhibitions in previous years it was agreed to stage one against the touring Czechoslovakian squad that included the 1946/47 world champion Bohumil Vana and the most attractive stylist Ivan Andreas who had won the English Open Championship in the same year.

The exhibition was also held at the City Baths Hall but was not the great success that previous ones had been.

A. Punshon and Joyce Purves were both successful at the Hartlepoons Open Tournament winning the Mens and Womens Singles titles respectively and Joyce combining with Madge Waugh to also take the Women's Doubles crown.

The County Championships saw the Northumberland side once again in the Northern Section and they won three and lost three of their matches.

In the Wilmott Cup the Men beat the Carlisle League, Sunderland League, and Cambridge League but went out at the hands of the South London League.

The Rose Bowl side was the same one that won the trophy the previous year but they could not repeat the feat, losing out 7 - 2 away to the Manchester League after beating the Grimsby league at home.

On the domestic front North Durham became a force to be reckoned with and won the First Division, winning all twenty six of their matches as well a winning the Knock Out Cup.

Postal Clerks 'B' finished top of Division Two and Gateshead Y.M.C.A. 'A' triumphed in Division Three.

Newcastle Y.M.C.A.'C' team won Division Four whilst Gateshead Y.M.C.A.'B', Cullercoats Y.M.C.A.'A', and Ministry of Works 'B' were the victors in Division Five A, B and C.

Ashington Y.M.C.A. retained the North Eastern Division title.

The successful players in the Closed Tournament were led by Doreen Smith (L.N.E.R.) who won the Women's Singles for the third year in succession, the Ladies

Doubles with team mate Miss M. Elliott and the Mixed Doubles with another L.N.E.R. player, B.Moore.

B.Moore was the Men's Singles Champion whilst J.Smalley (now of Newcastle Y.M.C.A) took the Veterans' Singles for the third time in a row.

The Handicap Singles were won by J.Middlemiss of Postal Clerks in the Men's event and Miss E.S.Tully of Westonians in the Women's event.

At the other end of the age scale B.Thompson of Blyth Y.M.C.A. took the Youth's Singles title.

For some reason the Mens Doubles event was unfinished and despite a suggestion that it be completed the following season this never happened.

The Records Secretary resigned at the end of the season and R.Farrow took over for 1949/50 season and R.Littlejohn was appointed as Assistant Treasurer later in the season. W.P. Allen was added as a Vice President.

R.Farrow held the position of Records Secretary up to and including 1957/58, thereafter serving on the Committee until 1966.

R.Littlejohn, L.Kertzman, A.Percy and N.W.Boyd were all added to the Official Umpires list but Sam Boyd had come off the list.

When the war had brought proceedings to a halt in 1939 there were sixty seven teams from fifty seven clubs in membership when Mr Buglass criticised the Committee for allowing things to lapse and doubted whether the lost ground would ever be made up.

Now at the start of the 1949/50 season he was shown to be completely wrong as there were now one hundred and twelve teams from sixty four clubs and an extra Division Four was added making nine divisions in total.

A handbook was again produced which turned out to be the model for the next twenty seven years and contained sixty eight pages including ten full page adverts. The contents included List of Officials, Rules, Laws of the Game, previous season county match results and tables, fixture charts and club information, previous season final league tables, tournament results and records, world championship records and English championship results and records.

One change was made to the Club Match Regulations bringing in a rule that clubs operating more than one team must not under any circumstances play any of the numbers one, two or three players of a team in any lower team.

Teams were once again entered in the Northern Division of the County Championships, the Wilmott Cup and the Rose Bowl but were knocked out of both Cup Competitions at an early stage.

It was a successful season in the Northern Division, however with victories home and away against Cumberland, Yorkshire and Durham to finish top of the table with a one hundred per cent record.

On the Junior front several of the most promising Juniors were both gaining limited experience and improving generally but it was unfortunate that a proposed match against the Durham Junior team did not materialise. To offset this the Swedish Junior International team was invited to Newcastle to play against Northumberland's side of J. Hillyer (Newcastle Y.M.C.A.) L. Rose (Maccabi) and M .Armstrong (Whitley Bay Y.M.C.A.) at Rutherford College Hall in Newcastle. Though defeated the home side was certainly not disgraced.

As the Association was growing so too were the problems of running the League Competition with lack of discipline in conforming with the Rules, Club Match Regulations and Knock Out Cup Rules becoming more pronounced. In particular late starts to matches and incorrect playing order were becoming major problems together

with too many postponements. From the Records Secretary's point of view late receipt of score cards made his job more difficult.

There was a record number of entries into the County Closed Championships with the preliminary rounds staged once again in the Sir James Knott Youth Centre, home of North Shields Y.M.C.A. and the finals in Newcastle at Rutherford College.

A.Punshon of South Shields Y.M.C.A. won the Men's Singles and also the Mens' Handicap Singles. Mrs J. Hewitt North Durham) was successful in the Women's Singles and also won the Mixed Doubles with her husband Johnny who partnered A.Coffer, (also of N. Durham) to victory in the Men's Doubles.

The Revac pairing of Miss D.Smith and Miss M. Elliott retained the Ladies' Doubles title and another Revac player, N.Proud, won the Veterans' Singles.

Miss S.Rutherford of Ministry of Works won the Women's Handicap Singles and Newcastle Y.M.C.A.'s young player J.Hillier won the Youths' Singles.

There had still not been very much progress in having coaches although the St. Lawrence club had approached Newcastle Education Committee who had agreed to an appointment at their club and Mr. Ashforth had been appointed.

On the Social side of things it was decided to hold the first ever Association dance at the Brighton Assembly Rooms in Westgate Road, Newcastle. Unfortunately lack of support was most was disappointing and regrettable and it was decided that further efforts to extend the social activities would have to be carefully considered in the future.

By the end of the forties the cost of tables was in the region of £30 to £40, the cost of bats ranged from five shillings and eleven pence to ten shillings (thirty to fifty pence). Nets were three shillings (fifteen pence), and the posts twelve shillings and three pence (sixty one pence) whilst a sheet of bat rubber was one shilling (five pence). Balls were still expensive at approximately one shilling (five pence) each.

The finances of the Association were by now very satisfactory with an accumulated surplus from day one of £28. The Donation scheme introduced in 1947 had been a great help, raising £143 over three years.

The fees for entry into the league had been held for a few years at fifteen shillings (seventy five pence) per club plus five shillings (twenty five pence) per team and one shilling (five pence) for the K.O. Cup.

North Durham 'A' continued to be the strongest team in the league winning the First Division once again and retaining the Knock Out Cup whilst their 'C' team won Division Three. Newcastle Y.M.C.A. 'B' were successful in Division Two and their 'D' team took Division Five A.

Gateshead Y.M.C.A. also achieved two titles, their 'B' side taking Division Four B and their 'C team' winning Division Five C. Saint Anthony's House were successful in Division Four A, Whitley Bay Y.M.C.A. 'B' won Division Five B and Seaton Delaval Miners' Welfare took the North Eastern Division title.