

**A HISTORY OF NORTHUMBERLAND TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION**

**BY**

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## 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 unsight the players.

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 it's 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 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.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Fifties

The start of the fifties saw the Association continue where the forties left off with sixty five clubs in membership having one hundred and fourteen teams in nine divisions for season 1950/51.

There were two new teams who were to stay in the League for a long time in Saint Anthony's Old Boys, who were also to make a most impressive start, and South Shields Corporation. The former continued for twenty three years until 1973 whilst the South Shields outfit remained until 1972.

Changes in the Officials saw the appointment of Mr. R. Littlejohn as treasurer replacing Ken Nicholson who was made a Vice President. Johnny Waugh replaced Ken as E.T.T.A. representative.

A couple of changes were made to the Club Match Regulations with the the regulation regarding postponements being simplified to allow any team in any division to have permission to postpone in exceptional circumstances granted to them by the Executive

Committee. However, they had to apply in writing not less than fourteen days prior to the date of the original fixture.

The rule that clubs with more than one team could not play any of the players of a team numbered 1, 2 or 3 in any lower division was deleted and replaced by one that stated that no player may average more than one game weekly over the season or from his or her first game, whichever was the later.

This appears to have been a very complicated matter to control!

The K.O. Rules were simplified to state that no League match could be cancelled to accommodate a cup match.

Teams continued to be four a side with the method of play continuing as follows:

A v W X Y, B v W X Z, C v W Y Z and D v X Y Z

The Executive Committee continued to have an elected member from each division.

Representative teams played in the County Championships Northern Division, the Wilmott Cup and the Rose Bowl with creditable results.

Among those to be awarded County Badges was Harry Dignan who was to go on to become one of the best known figures in the Association both as a coach and an official as well as eventually being President from 1986 to 2007.

In an effort to improve the standard of play of the leading players plans were made for intensive practice throughout the summer at the Sir James Knott Youth Centre.

Messrs Ashforth and Kertzman applied to act as coaches to the Local Education Committee and this was agreed to.

Westonians who were in the Second Division were given permission to include County players in their 'Open Day' programme and it was agreed that Red Cross TTC of Jesmond could invite leading players for an exhibition.

The introduction of a three a side league was discussed but left in abeyance.

It was agreed that the E.T.T.A. scheme for County Umpires be supported and copies of the test papers given to the current Umpires Panel when they became available.

The Northumberland Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs applied to the Association for the supply of a coach for two or three evenings for their girls but for some reason the Executive Committee told them to apply directly to the Education Authorities.

There was sad news in January 1951 when the Committee were informed of the death of Ken Nicholson. The following tribute appeared in the Executive Committee Report for the year -

'It was a very great shock to learn of the death of Mr. K. A. Nicholson. Mr. Nicholson was, without doubt, largely instrumental in the founding of the present Association and chiefly responsible for the framework of the constitution and was from the inception until last year Honorary Treasurer. Those of us who were fortunate enough to be associated with him appreciate the time he devoted to our activities and though having many and varied interests none of them occupied his conscientious attentions more than the furtherance of Table Tennis. He was for many years a respected member of the National Executive and his understanding of constitution must have been of considerable assistance in that particular sphere. It is much to be regretted that the war years resulted in him losing his place on that body.'

On the financial front it was decided to run a Donation Scheme to make sure that the Association remained on a stable footing and this was left in the hands of a sub committee consisting of Littlejohn, Helm and Waugh.

It proved to be successful, raising some £28 which resulted in the Association having a surplus of approximately £22 at the end of the financial year.

News of a league being formed in Alnwick was received and it was expected that this league would eventually affiliate to the Association.

A complaint was received from Ministry of Works regarding the unsatisfactory lighting at Byker Brotherhood which they claimed had probably interfered with the result. The lighting was actually gas lighting and the Executive Committee agreed that they be sent a letter to the effect that in view of the current fluctuation in gas pressure that it was difficult to arrive at a solution to the problem! There is no record of the outcome.

The County Closed Championships continued to be very popular and there was another record entry. The preliminary rounds took place at Sir James Knott Youth Centre with the Finals Night again at Rutherford Grammar School.

Ronnie Heslop of North Durham won the Mens Singles title and the Mens Doubles partnered by Harry Dignan, also of North Durham. He also partnered Miss S.Rutherford (Ministry of Works) to success in the Mixed Doubles.

The Womens Singles was won for the third time by Mrs. J.R.Waugh (Revac) and the Womens Doubles title went to Miss D.Smith (Revac) and Mrs A Coffey (North Durham).

J.Smalley of Revac won the Veterans Singles and L.Rose of Maccabi took the Youths Singles title. The Mens Handicap Singles also went to J.Smalley and the Womens Handicap Singles winner was Miss E.S.Tully of Westonians.

Some of Northumberland's players took part in the Hartlepoons Open Tournament where Ronnie Heslop won the Mens Singles event and Philomena Heppell was runner up in the final of the Womens Singles. Miss D.Smith and Mrs. J.M. Waugh gained the Womens Doubles title and Mrs Waugh was also successful in the Mixed Doubles final partnered by L. Kertzman. The latter also lost in the final of the Mens Doubles with L.Rose. Johnny Hillyer was successful in the Junior Singles.

In the League, Division One was won for the third year running by North Durham, the outstanding club since the war. They were, however, beaten in the final of the K.O. Cup by Ministry of National Insurance in an exciting match, the proceeds of which were donated in full to the Chronicle Sunshine Fund. The Chronicle had kindly allowed the use of Chronicle Hall for the final.

Westonians thoroughly earned the Division Two title and it's 'B' team won Division 4b.

Newcomers Saint Anthony's Old Boys won Division 3 and their 'B' team were successful in Division 5b. Division 4a was won by Longbenton Hostel, North Eastern Marine finished top of Division 5a and Dunston Lawn Tennis Club top of Division 5c. The North Eastern title was retained by Seaton Delaval Miners Welfare.

During the year good press coverage had been given to the Association by the Evening Chronicle, Journal and North Mail and the Northern Press.

There was no change to the format of the League for 1951/52 nor was there at all during the fifties. The number of teams in total reached an all time high at 118.

Newcomers included Blyth Town Boys Club who eventually played in the league for forty years. Two new clubs, Tyne Lead Athletic and Hedley Sports and Social Club later known as Thos Hedley & Co. then Proctor and Gamble Sports Club were to remain until 1986. Reyrolles, who had been member from 1933 to 1938, returned and they stayed until 1987.

Two new teams, Ouston R A.F. and Westonians 'D' side were given permission to play all of their matches away from home.

Changes were made to the Association's Rules and Club Match Regulations with the introduction of a Guarantee Fee. Each club in membership of the league had to pay the sum of one pound as a guarantee of carrying out the full commitments during the ensuing season. The sum to be refunded at the end of the season less any fines imposed. If a team resigned during the season the guarantee to be forfeited in its entirety.

Fines were also brought in for teams cancelling matches at less than three days notice - two shillings and sixpence ( twelve and one half new pence) on each and every occasion, one shilling ( 5p) for each player short on each and every occasion, and one shilling on each and every occasion that the home side failed to send the score card to reach the Records Secretary within three days of the match being played.

On the financial side it was decided to change the year end from 30th June to 31st March.

The only change to the Officers of the Association was that Mr.A.Punshon replaced Mr. T.A.B. Hutchinson as a Vice Chairman.

Two new Vice Presidents were appointed being The Hon. Denis G. Berry of Wylam and Mr. H.V. Lightfoot of Gosforth.

A secretary to the Umpires Sub Committee was appointed with Adam Coffey taking on the role.

Following discussions that had been held during the previous season it was decided to go ahead with an Exhibition to mark the 'coming of age' of the Association which had now been in existence for twenty one years. This was held at the Newcastle City Baths Hall on 19th November 1951 and included top English players Leach and Barron, Mr and Mrs Carrington and Scotland's Helen Elliott. It was very successful and attracted a capacity house, produced some very entertaining table tennis and financially made a profit of approximately £46.

Jack Carrington conducted a coaching session for the local junior players over the weekend which proved that the County had many Junior players of promise. He was also sub let to Northumberland Education Department for three days.

The County teams were not as successful as hitherto and the support was very disappointing. In the newly formed Second Division North the first team finished sixth out of seven whilst the newly formed second team competed in the old Northern division finishing second out of four.

Neither of the League representative teams progressed past the zone finals of the Wilmott Cup and the Rose Bowl.

Seven clubs were interested in forming a Ladies League which had not been in existence since before the war with another two wishing to delay until the start of the following season. It was decided to go ahead with the seven.

Following reports about the suitability of their premises Saint Anthony's Old Boys were written to the effect that the Executive Committee deprecated that Club's action in playing in a public bar. It was also agreed to delete all congratulatory remarks about the achievements of that club from the Annual Report!

Philomena Heppell (Revac) won the Womens Singles at the Hartlepoons Open Tournament and went on to become the first Northumberland player to gain a National Honour. She was picked, along with Doreen Spooner of Middlesex and Jill Rook of Surrey to play for England Juniors against Wales at Aberdare in a mixed junior international. The three girls were, in fact, the first ever junior girls to gain international honours.

The match was won by England with Philomena only playing in one match. According to the English Table Tennis Association's official magazine, Table Tennis News, her

success came as a complete surprise! This was the start of a long and successful time for Philomena.

Newcastle YMCA's Johnny Hillyer was also making a name for himself and the County sponsored both Philomena and Johnny to compete in the English Open Championships. Both gained experience to stand them in good stead for the future.

The County Closed Championships again attracted record entries and was again played on ten tables at Sir James Knott Youth Centre in North Shields with the final staged once again in the Sports Hall of Rutherford Grammar School in Newcastle which drew a large attendance.

The outstanding player was, undoubtedly, Johnny Hillyer, who according to the Executive Committee Report for the season, through keenness and natural ability proved himself, at the time, to be Northumberland's most promising player for many years.

He won the Mens Singles, the Mens Doubles with K.Snaith (Newcastle YMCA) and the Mixed Doubles with Miss D.Smith (Revac).

The Womens Singles was won by Philomena Heppell, being the first of many victories to come.

Miss D.Smith was also successful in the Womens Doubles partnered by Mrs A Coffey of North Durham and for good measure also won the Womens Handicap event. Stan Lawson (Ministry of National Insurance) won the Veterans Singles and the Mens Handicap Singles and the Youths Singles was won by Daniel Knaresborough of St. Anthony's Old Boys.

In the league there was the closest struggle ever for the First Division championship which eventually went to West End Boys Club who wrested the title from North Durham by virtue of a better sets record as they finished level on points.

The two clubs also contested the final of the K.O. Cup with the North Durham side regaining the trophy they had relinquished the previous season. The match was again staged in the Chronicle Hall and again a donation was made to the Sunshine Fund.

St. Anthony's Old Boys won Division Two, their 'B' team won Division 4a and their 'C' team were successful in Division 5a. Murray House were the winners in Division Three, Lyndhurst won 4b, Temple Torchbearers 5b and Power House 5c. Seaton Delaval Miners Welfare made it three in a row in the North Eastern division.

Revac won the newly formed Ladies League.

The Executive Committee Report made special mention of Gateshead Centre for the Deaf 'B' team who lost twenty three of the twenty four matches that they played in Division 5c but persevered to the end of the season when many others would have, in similar circumstances, withdrawn from the league.

Financially the Association broke even for the period to 31st March 1952 thanks to the surplus made on the exhibition.

Good publicity was once more given by the Evening Chronicle, Northern Mail and Journal, and the Northern Press.

The following season, 1952/53, more or less carried on where the previous one left off with the same number of divisions in the league and the same officials.

Harry Dignan had proposed that an Assistant Treasurer be appointed but the Treasurer, Mr. Littlejohn, said he would resign if that happened so it was not proceeded with!

There was one less Vice President as Mr. W.P. Allen had left the district.

The new E.T.T.A. scheme for umpires meant that the official umpires of the County were all qualified County Umpires and a County Umpires Secretary was appointed being Mr. Adam Coffey. Those qualified were J.R. Waugh, A.Coffey, D W Scarth, G

W McDougal, and Sid Holt. The latter was eventually to play a major role in the administration of the Association.

North Shields Boys Club who had previously had a brief spell in the league in 1948/49 season returned and were to stay for a total of thirty six years until the end of season 1986/87.

Bells Close Methodists who were to be involved for twenty three years joined as did Delaval Community Centre who stayed in the league for thirty one years until 1983.

The Association Rules regarding fees were amended so that a club would have to pay fifteen shillings (75p) plus seven shillings and sixpence (thirty seven and one half pence) per team. The latter amount being increased from five shillings (25p). They also had to pay the guarantee fee recently brought in.

Match play regulations were altered so that no player could participate in more than one league fixture in any one week except in the case of the rearrangement of a postponed match. The only exception was that lady players could play in the Ladies League and the Main League.

With regard to playing conditions a rule was brought in to the effect that all teams in divisions one, two and three had to have tables, lighting and conditions which, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, were of reasonably high standard.

However it in no way described what amounted to 'reasonably high standard'.

After much discussion and taking into account the cost it was decided to enter teams in the County Championships Division Two North and the Northern Division, and League representative teams in the Wilmott Cup and the Rose Bowl.

The County second team was to consist of younger players.

It did not turn out to be a very good season for the County teams with the first team only winning one match ( against Durham) and losing all of the other four. The second team did reasonably well to win three draw one and lose two but once again support for the teams was disappointing.

In the Wilmott Cup the men went out in the first round but the ladies reached the Quarter finals of the Rose Bowl before going out 4 - 5 to the Manchester League. The team consisted of Philomena Heppell and Mrs R Ormond of Revac together with Miss E Tully of North Durham.

During the regional stages of the competition Huddersfield had only offered Sunday dates for their home match with Northumberland and the Executive Committee agreed that Northumberland deprecate Sunday play and the secretary wrote to the E.T.T.A. accordingly.

There is no record of any reply being received and the match went ahead with Huddersfield being beaten 6 - 2.

The question of expenses for players representing the Association came under discussion and it was decided that the maximum to be paid to any such player would be the cost of approved transport from Newcastle Central Station plus the cost of one meal.

An Exhibition was again held at the City Baths Hall with star players Richard Bergmann, Johnny Leach, the Rowe twins, Ken Stanley and the Chilean player Vicente Gutierrez together with Jack Carrington.

A full house was treated to a great evening when according to the E.T.T.A. magazine items ranged from the mirth provoking astonishing clowning of Gutierrez to a terrific duel between Bergmann and Leach. The executive committee were of the opinion that the Chilean proved to be the highlight of the season.

The crowd were also treated to the appearance of another Chilean, Newcastle United's F.A.Cup winning star George Robledo.

The night was also financially successful, bringing in a profit of £51.

One of the Daily Mirror Area events was staged at the Sir James Knott Centre in North Shields in March 1952 when two local players, Jack Oughton (Hebburn) and Daniel Knaresborough (Newcastle) qualified for the National semi finals.

This event was also very successful and both the E.T.T.A. and the Daily Mirror reported that the organisation was of the highest standard and infinitely superior to the other three centres.

The County's top two young players were both in action at the Hartlepoons Open Tournament with Johnny Hillyer winning the Mens Singles title and reaching the final of the Mixed Doubles with Philomena Clark. Philomena was also the beaten finalist in the Ladies Singles as she also was in the Ladies Singles final of the Pontefract Open Tournament.

The Central Council of Physical Recreation requested that Philomena Clark be permitted to take part in a show in Berwick to play against Scotland's Helen Elliot.

Permission had been granted by both the E.T.T.A. and the Scottish T.T.A. and the Executive Committee had no hesitation in agreeing to the request.

Once again entries into the Closed Championships reached a record high and the preliminary stages were played to a schedule at the Sir James Knott Youth Centre in North Shields. An earlier start than in previous years was requested but little collaboration was received from the competitors! Somehow the matches were all played.

Rutherford Grammar School was again the venue for the Finals Night which attracted what was the usual large attendance.

Hillyer ( Newcastle YMCA) and Heppell ( Revac) both had personal triumphs with Hillyer winning the Mens Singles, the Mens Handicap Singles, the Mens Doubles with P.Wilson, also of Revac, and the Mixed Doubles with Revac's Mrs. R.Ormond.

Heppell was successful in the Ladies Singles, the Ladies Handicap Singles and the Ladies Doubles partnered by Miss E. Tully (North Durham).

J. Middlemiss of Postal Clerks was the winner of the Veteran's Singles, Jack Oughton of South Shields YMCA won both the Youths Singles (Under 19) and the new Boys Singles for the under 17s.

After an interval of only one season North Durham were once again crowned champions of the Northumberland League First Division, South Shields YMCA won Division Two and Dunston Saint Nicholas were successful in Division Three. The two fourth divisions were won by Sigmund Welfare and North Eastern Marine whilst the three Division Five tables were topped by Saint Peters Youth Club, South Shields Corporation Welfare and Fusarc Sports and Social Club from Team Valley Trading Estate.

There were new winners in the North Eastern Division in Blyth YMCA 'C' team and the Ladies League title again went to Revac who won on set difference from Tyne Lead Industries Athletic Club.

There were new winners of the Knock Out Cup where Ministry of National Insurance were the successful side.

Once again good press coverage of the Association's affairs appeared in the Evening Chronicle, the Newcastle Journal and North Mail and the Northern Press.

On the financial side there was a surplus for the year of £112 thanks mainly to a profit on the Exhibition of £51 and the re introduction of the Donation Scheme which brought in approximately £48.

At the end of the year the total cash at the bank and in hand amounted to approximately £196.

Adam Coffey took over from A. Wilson as Match and Tournament Secretary at the start of the 1953/54 season and there were two new County Umpires in N.W. Boyd and L.W. Robson.

On the National scene Johnny Waugh was elected onto the E.T.T.A. Executive Committee.

A rule change was made to replace the election of one member of each division to the Executive Committee with that committee now having nine members plus a Ladies Representative elected by the Annual General Meeting.

Members elected to the first such committee were L.W. Robson, Dave Robson, Adam Coffey, Stan Lawson, M. Allan, R.S. Bell, Rowley Ormond, R. Smith and Syd Holt as well as the Ladies Representative Mrs. J.R. Waugh.

The divisions remained the same and there were eight teams at the commencement of the Ladies League but unfortunately one was to drop out part way through the season. A team was entered in the County Championships Division Two North again but there was no second team following the disbanding of the County Championships Northern Division.

Unfortunately it turned out to be another poor season with only one match being won. The League representative team failed at the first hurdle in the Wilmott Cup but the ladies reached the quarter finals of the Rose Bowl losing out once again 4 - 5 to the Manchester League.

The continued lack of support for the County team's home matches was discouraging. The Daily Mirror Regional Events were again held at the Sir James Knott Youth Centre and this year saw thirty two competitors including Northumberland's Pat Tindale, Ron Hunter and Miss Keating-Payne.

Pat Tindale excelled, winning through to the National Finals at the Albert Hall in London where he lost narrowly to the eventual winner.

Philomena Heppell again made a name for herself by reaching the final of the Yorkshire Open Womens Singles before losing to Adele Wood of Lancashire and winning the Womens Doubles with Pam Mortimer of Yorkshire.

Tindale, who was sponsored by the County, was runner up in the Boys Singles.

Philomena also won the Womens Singles title at the Hartlepoons Open as well as the Womens Doubles and was runner up in the Mixed Doubles.

On the matter of County players expenses it was decided to pay Philomena's expenses for travel from Hexham and to treat any future requests from players on their merits.

The E.T.T.A. Secretary had telephoned Johnny Waugh to ask if Northumberland would be prepared to host the Norwegian team for a few days before they took part in the World Championships at Wembley.

This was agreed to and the Norwegians were provided with a pleasant and interesting visit which had been most appreciated. Unfortunately there is no record as to whether a proposed match against them ever took place. However it was to be the forerunner of a long association with the Heros Club of Bergen.

The Newcastle City Baths Hall was once more the venue for an Exhibition by top players with Johnny Leach, Victor Barna, Rosalind and Diane Rowe again taking part along with Aubrey Simons and Ken Stanley. The Lord Mayor of Newcastle attended what was again a very successful evening with another capacity audience.

Entries for the Closed Championships were slightly down but were still sufficiently large to tax the resources of the Sir James Knott Youth Centre where the preliminary rounds were once again played.

With Johnny Hillyer not taking part the honours this time went to Revac's young Pat Tindale who won the Mens Singles, the Mens Handicap Singles and the Mens Doubles

with Adam Coffey also of Revac. Coffey also took the Mixed Doubles title partnered by another Revac player, Mrs. D. Ormond.

Philomena Heppell, also representing Revac, was the Ladies Singles winner, the Ladies Handicap Singles winner and the Ladies Doubles champion with Mrs. D. Turnbull of Tyne Lead.

Stan Lawson (Ministry of Insurance) took the Veterans Singles.

The Youths Singles event was won by Jack Oughton of South Shields YMCA with K. Grimmer of West End Boys Club being successful in the Boys Singles.

In the league North Durham retained the First Division title in what was to be the final year of their existence, Whitley Bay YMCA won division two and Vickers Sports Club topped the third division.

Vickers' second team won division 4a and South Shields Corporation were successful in division 4b.

The three fifth divisions were won by North East Marine 'B', Sandersonians and Northex with the North Eastern title once again going to Blyth YMCA 'C' team.

Revac triumphed in the Ladies League and West End Boys Club won the Knock Out championship.

Once again the Association showed a surplus in the Annual Accounts and ended the year with total funds of £248. Whilst the Donation Scheme had been dropped, two Special Events involving the November Handicap and Grand National horse racing raised the sum of £84.

The annual report of the Executive Committee thanked the Kemsley Press for their help in the promotion of the Association's events.

In an attempt to improve the K.O. Cup competition it was decided that from the beginning of the 1954/55 that there would only be three players to a team and that teams would have to apply to enter the competition and pay a fee of one shilling and sixpence (twelve and one half pence) per team. Seventy teams actually applied and it turned out to be a very successful competition.

The treasurer, Mr Littlejohn, had moved to Preston and the finances were taken over by Rowley Ormond. Adam Coffey found that because of pressure of business he could no longer carry on as Match and Tournament Secretary and Dave Robson was appointed in his place. Dave had been a member of the Executive Committee since 1950 and he was to be very much involved with the affairs of the Association in the future, going on to be County Secretary from 1958 until 1968 as well as being the County representative at the E.T.T.A.

He had also qualified as a County Umpire and was added to the county list.

Messrs Ormond and Robson were replaced as Executive Committee Members by Adam Coffey and Mr N W Boyd and Miss Baitey became the Ladies representative with Mrs E.S. Turnbull also co-opted.

Newcomers to the league included Trustex who were to be in for the next twenty years but a loss to the league was North Durham who had disbanded owing to clubroom difficulties. Their leading players all moved to other clubs.

The usual entries were made in the County Championships Division Two North, the Wilmott Cup and the Rose Bowl. The county team fared a little better than in previous years but still finished in fourth place out of six. The League Representative teams went out of both the Wilmott Cup and the Rose Bowl in the second round.

Sunday play for the County team was again frowned upon by the committee and when Warwickshire wished to play Durham on a Saturday and Northumberland on the Sunday of the same week end they were told to contact Durham regarding the match

on the Sunday. They also played matches in the two cup competitions away in Huddersfield and Leeds that had been scheduled at home on Sundays.

Permission to use the Northumberland County Coat of Arm on badges and stationery was refused but permission to use the shield recently used by the County Council was granted.

The Daily Mirror Area tournament was again played at North Shields and again was successfully organised.

The staging of the exhibition at the Newcastle City Baths Hall what had become a regular event had to be suspended until the following season as the leading players who were to be invited were unavailable and others of sufficiently high a standard could not be found.

Pat Tindale continued to impress as a leading young player and the Association sponsored him to enter the Youth's events at the English Open by paying his rail fare, hotel accommodation and expenses of up to fifteen shillings (seventy five pence ) per day.

This decision was justified when he reached the last eight of the Boys Singles before losing to the eventual winner and defeating an English Junior International in the process. In the Mens Singles he lost in the third round but not before he had accounted for the German Number One Junior.

He also reached the final of the Daily Mirror Tournament where he came up against Ernest McLeish from Hinckley in what turned out to be a superb spectacular with a defender having the last word against an explosive hitter. After losing 18 - 21, 18 -21, Pat levelled by taking the next two games 21 -9, 21 -15 only to lose out 20 - 22 in the fifth and deciding game.

He was later picked as a reserve to the English Junior team to play in an International Tournament in Germany at the end of the season.

Philomena Heppell won the Womens Singles at the Hartlepoons Open with victory over the local player Miss O Waites and at the same tournament she was successful in winning the Mixed Doubles event partnered by Johnny Hillyer.

She reached the final of the Womens at the Yorkshire Open but lost out to Scottish international Helen Elliott and lost in another final, this time the South Yorkshire Open when she was beaten by Mrs. B. Cassell of Kings Lynn.

Another Mixed Doubles title came her way at the same event with the help of Peter Skerratt of Scunthorpe.

Jimmy Tindale reached the final of the Junior Singles at Hartlepool.

The Council of Physical Recreation asked for permission for Philomena to play with Helen Elliott in a show they were organising and this was agreed to.

The entry for the Closed Championships was only a few short of the previous year and the conditions and amenities for the preliminary rounds played at the Sir James Knott Youth Centre were, as usual, ideal although it was a long and tiring day for the successful competitors. The concluding stages at Rutherford Grammar School reached a high standard and in these Johnny Hillyer ( Newcastle YMCA), closely pressed by Pat Tindale (Revac), and Phil Heppell ( also Revac) again proved their superiority.

Johnny won the Mens Singles and also the Mens Doubles with Newcastle YMCA's Ron Hunter. Philomena took the Womens Singles title for the fourth year running and the Womens Handicap Singles for the third year running as well as the Womens Doubles partnered by club mate Mrs A. Coffey and the Mixed Doubles with K. Smith of West End Boys Club.

J. Rourke of Vickers Sports Club was the winner in the Mens Handicap Event, Harry Lawson from the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance was successful in the Veterans Singles and Pat Tindale won both the Youths and Boys Singles titles.

In the League the First Division champions were North Shields YMCA whose only loss was by default and not from defeat!

They also looked like doing the double when they led by four games to one in the final of the Knock Out Cup but Newcastle YMCA hit back to win 5 - 4.

Saint Anthony's Old Boys were successful in two divisions with their B team winning the Second and their C team coming out on top in Division 4b.

New club names to appear on the League trophies were Maccabi whose B team won Division Three, Vickers Apprentices (Walker) who took 4a, Cullercoats YMCA who were top of Division 5a without dropping a single point, Bells Close Methodist winning 5b, and a team participating in the League for the very first time in Lansdowne Social Club who finished top of 5c.

Blyth YMCA, with a wide selection of young players from whom to choose won the North Eastern Division again, this time with their D team.

Revac, previously known as L & N E R, had won the Ladies Section every year from 1933/34 season before the war and from its reintroduction in 1951/52. This time Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance broke their monopoly.

The rendition of Result Sheets was the worst for years with sixty three cards not received at the end of the season and even requests for missing cards were ignored in twenty four cases. This resulted in the Annual General Meeting having to be postponed until June.

The non staging of an exhibition and expenditure on the purchase of two tables resulted in a financial deficit for the year of £95 leaving the Association's funds at £153.

Publicity had again been given by the Kemsley Press.

The season ended on a very sad note with the death in May of the President, Mark C Robson.

As a pioneer of the game it had been largely because of his suggestions that table tennis had been introduced to the county.

It was stated that it had only been fitting that the greatest honour that the Association could bestow, that of President, had been held by one who until the end was intensely interested in the Association's activities and who would have preferred to have taken a more active part in the organisation. This, unfortunately was precluded by the state of his health during the last few years.

At the following Annual General Meeting before the start of the 1955/56 season it was only fitting that his place as President was filled by Mr. Bart Kinnair for no-one had worked so assiduously in the Association's interests. He had been actively connected for the twenty five years of the Association's existence and for many of these he had been chairman although in the later years his many varied interests had precluded him from devoting the same amount of time as previously.

In the event he was to hold the position of President for the next thirty years.

Mr. D.W. Scarth, a current vice chairman, was elected as Chairman and Adam Coffey was elected as Vice Chairman.

L.W.Robson, Harry Lawson, R.Smith, Syd Holt, N.W.Boyd, R.S. Bell and Miss Baitey were all re-elected to the Executive Committee with A.Punshon, A.Wilson and Mr G.O.Pearce being added.

Unfortunately Mr. Scarth's job saw him transferred to Manchester in the September and he was then replaced as Chairman by Adam Coffey with Mr. N.W.Boyd replacing him as Vice Chairman until the end of the season.

The format of the League and method of play remained unchanged and one of the new clubs to join was Dunston Hill Hospital who were to be in the League for some thirty four years.

The Ladies League operated again, starting with nine teams but losing North Shields Y.M.C.A. Ladies team part way through the season.

The South Shields league applied to affiliate to the Association but were not allowed to by the English Table Tennis Association who were precluded by E.T.T.A. rules from doing so because of the fact the Durham had objected.

The County team improved their performance over previous years in the County Championships Division Two North, winning two and losing two matches but the League Representative team went out in the first round of the Wilmott Cup to Leeds.

The ladies team of Phil Heppell, Mrs. D. Ormond and Mrs E.Robson again did extremely well in again reaching the quarter finals of the Rose Bowl before being beaten 5 - 4 by the Portsmouth League.

Once more an exhibition was arranged at the City Baths Hall in Newcastle and Johnny Leach was asked to arrange for some top players to take part. This was advertised in the association's handbook as the farewell visit of Victor Barna, Johnny Leach and the Rowe Twins, etc but there is no record of who actually took part and whether or not it was a successful event. The only record is that for the first time money was lost in staging the event. History shows that such an exhibition was never repeated.

There was a great deal of correspondence during the year with the Heros club in Bergen regarding a visit and the seeds were sewn for a long association with them.

The Central Council of Physical Recreation arranged a school leavers course in Newcastle and the association were invited to look after the table tennis aspect. This was duly done by the coaches Mr.and Mrs D.M. Robson, Mr and Mrs Coffey and Mrs J.R.Waugh. Afterwards their opinion of the event was that the young people had been given an insight into table tennis but that results would be impossible to estimate. They possibly would be if a follow on course proposed for later in the year actually materialised but there is no record of this happening.

Mention was made in the Annual Report of the success of R. Lucas in the 'News of the World' coaching scheme but no other details were given.

A proposed exhibition in Berwick by Scottish players was not allowed to take place, not being approved by the E.T.T.A.

International honours came to a Northumberland player for only the second time in their history when Pat Tindale was picked to play for England Juniors against Belgium. He won all three of his matches when the match was played in the November in Chatham with England winning 9 - 0.

Philomena Heppell was again successful in the Yorkshire Open and the Hartlepoons Open tournaments.

In the Yorkshire she won the Womens Singles beating Miss A.Wood of Manchester in the final and then being losing finalist in the Mixed Doubles final partnered by the winner of the Mens Singles, Brian Kennedy.

At the Hartlepoons she again was successful in the Womens Singles, won the Womens Doubles with Miss J.Preston of Knaresborough who she had beaten in the Singles final and again partnered the winner of the Mens Singles in the Mixed. This time it was Ron Allcock of Manchester and once again she had to be content with them being runners up.

It was a notable year for Philomena with her marriage to Matt Clark taking place.

A slightly increased entry testified to the continued success of the Closed Championships but for some reason it was decided not to hold a Veteran Singles event.

Great difficulty was occasioned through having to play a Rose Bowl match on the same day and at the same venue, Sir James Knott Youth Centre, North Shields, as the preliminary rounds. As a result some of the matches had to be left over and with excellent co-operation of the Vickers Sports Club officials the outstanding matches and the finals were completed in their premises.

Ron Hunter of Newcastle YMCA was outstanding in winning the Mens Singles, the Mens Doubles with Pat Tindale (Revac) and the Mixed Doubles with Philomena Heppell (St.Anthony's Old Boys).

Philomena duly won the Womens Singles, the Womens Handicap Singles and helped Mrs. A. Coffey of Revac to retain the Womens Doubles title.

The Mens Handicap Singles was won by E.Peter of Newcastle YMCA, the Youths Singles duly went to Pat Tindale and D.Cunningham of Newcastle YMCA was successful in the Boys Singles.

North Shields YMCA retained the Division One championship in the League and also played against Newcastle YMCA in a repeat of the previous year's final, this time winning to complete the double.

Vickers Sports Club were the winners of Division Two with their 'B' team being successful in Division 4b.

The Third Division winners were Revac 'C' team, 4a was won by Ministry of Works and the three Fifth Division winners were British Legion (5a), West Denton Association 'B' (5b) and BBC House Boys Club (5c).

Blyth Town Boys Club broke the monopoly of Blyth YMCA in winning the North Eastern Division and Revac once more triumphed in the Ladies League.

The local press in Newcastle (Kemsley Press) and in North Shields (Northern Press) had once again been very supportive of the association during the year.

On the financial side a donation scheme had again been promoted based on the Grand National horse race and had brought in £54. However an unexpected loss had arisen on the exhibition and with other costs rising there was a deficit for the year of £19, leaving the total funds at £134.

Club subscriptions at the time were fifteen shillings (75p) per club together with seven shillings and sixpence (37.5p) per team in the league and two shillings and sixpence (12.5p) for each team in the Ladies League. The cost of entering the K.O. Cup was one shilling and sixpence (7.5p) per team.

The main tables were Jaques, Rose, Barna Match and Alec Brook and cost between £23 and £45 according to quality.

Normal bats cost approximately ten shillings (50p) and a new controversial sponge bat was twelve shillings and sixpence (63p). Balls were advertised in the handbook by Murtons Stores in Newcastle at anything from four pence to one shilling and three pence each (under 2p to 6p). The match balls mainly used were either Halex or Villa. Table tennis clothing retailed at between fifteen shillings and one pound one shilling and sixpence for mens shirts (75p to £1.07) and thirty shillings (£1.50) for mens shorts. Womens shirts cost between fifteen shillings and eighteen shillings and sixpence (93p), skirts at one pound nineteen shillings and sixpence (£1.97) and shorts at twenty two shillings and sixpence (£1.12).

The average weekly wage at the time was just over nine pounds.

With a record entry of 119 teams the 1956/57 season carried on as before with the same number of divisions except that there no longer was a Ladies League due to lack of response from clubs. The constitution of teams and method of play also remained unaltered.

League tables had in the past few seasons been regularly published in the Sports Edition of the Evening Chronicle and it was decided that this would be continued with as the method of publication.

Stan Lawson, who had been on the Executive Committee since 1952/53 season was elected as Vice Chairman and he was to continue to be a driving force for the association in future years, becoming chairman in 1959 and continuing in that role until 1971/72 as well as being the association's E.T.T.A. representative from 1959/60 to 1963/63 and later from 1970.71 to 1973/74.

Stan Lawson had to be replaced on the Executive Committee and this brought in another person who was to be a stalwart of the association in Harry Dignan.

L.W.Robson, N.W. Boyd and Miss Bailey were replaced by D.Davidson and Mrs. Patterson leaving one vacancy to be filled. It was decided to ask a Mr. Weightman but he declined the invitation and eventually a Mr. Basil Moore was appointed.

The qualified umpires remained the same except for the loss of D.W.Scarth who had left the district.

The only amendments to the rules saw the fees increased with a club now having to pay £1 and ten shillings (50p) for every team entered in the League. A fee of two shillings and sixpence ( 12.5 pence) was introduced for the transfer of a player.

Seventy three teams entered the Knock Out Competition and it was decided that all matches would be played to a conclusion irrespective of a result having been reached unless it was mutually agreed between the teams to terminate at any point after the result had been determined.

A county team was again entered in the County Championships Division Two North and again the results were disappointing with the side only winning one match and losing three.

Teams were also entered in the Wilmott Cup and the Rose Bowl but both lost out in round two of their respective competitions.

It was in the minutes that the press would be requested to send a representative to the home matches together with a photographer but there is no record to show that this actually happened although there was a press photographer at the closed championships finals.

The newly married Philomena Clark is only on record as having played in one open tournament during the season when she was a beaten finalist in the Womens Doubles at the North of England event in Manchester.

There was success for junior Jimmy Tindale of Gateshead YMCA when he won the Junior Singles at the Hartlepoons Open.

He was also selected, along with D.Mawson of Whitley Bay YMCA, Colin Archbold and D.Ward (BBC House B.C.) to take part in National Junior Trials in Sunderland but unfortunately the performances of all four were disappointing.

Entries in the Closed Championships fell from 157 in the previous year to 116 which caused a financial problem but made the staging of the event a little easier. It was thought that the reason was the earlier start necessary to complete the programme of events.

The Preliminary rounds were one more played at the Sir James Knott Youth Centre and things went according to plan with all matches played. The rule brought in that made losers umpire the following match on a table appeared to work and tended to speed things up a little.

Vickers Sports Club again kindly agreed to stage the finals.

Johnny Hillyer (Revac) regained the Mens Singles title and also won the Mens Handicap event. Ron Hunter (Newcastle YMCA) and Pat Tindale (Revac) retained the Mens Doubles crown.

In the absence of Phil Clark, the Womens Singles was won by Mrs R. Ormond (Revac) who also partnered Revac's Mrs. J.R.Waugh to success in the Womens Doubles. Mrs.D.Ward (Gateshead YMCA) won the Womens Handicap Singles. She also won the Mixed Doubles partnered by Ron Heslop of Gateshead YMCA.

Another Gateshead YMCA player, Jimmy Tindale was successful in the Youth's Singles whilst Colin Archbold of BBC House Boys Club won the Boys Singles.

Revac won the First Division of the League, Gateshead YMCA 'B' team won Division Two and Blyth YMCA 'B' team won Division Three.

The fourth divisions were won by Vickers Sports Club 'D' and Lansdowne with the winners in the fifth divisions being Whitley Bay YMCA 'C', Hedley Sports and Newcastle YMCA 'D'.

Blyth YMCA regained the North Eastern Division with their 'C' team.

Revac completed the 'double' by winning the K.O.Cup.

Despite the loss on the Closed Championships the association managed to break even financially in the year.

The highlight of the year was no doubt the visit to Bergen arranged with their Heros Club. The seeds had been sewn in 1954 when the Norwegian team stayed on Tyneside for a few days after the World Championships in London. They had such an enjoyable time that they started discussions with the Executive Committee with a view to arranging a series of matches between the Heros Club and Newcastle.

The first of these matches took place in December 1956 when a Newcastle party went to Bergen to compete for the 'North Sea Cup' which had been presented by the Bergen Shipping Line for annual competition between the two teams.

The Newcastle men were soundly beaten 5 - 0 saying it was possibly due to the match taking place shortly after a rough crossing! However that did not appear to affect the women who gave a far more impressive performance, losing narrowly 4 - 5.

They also played in the Heros Jubilee Tournament when Newcastle gave a much better account of themselves. Mrs Robson won the Womens Singles, Stan Lawson and Ron Patterson reached the semi finals of the Mens Singles and Alan Morpeth and Harry Dignan just failed to reach the final of the Mens Doubles.

The party of nine comprising of Ron Patterson, Miss D. Bell, Mrs.E.Robson, Mrs.Y.Patterson, Harry Dignan, Alan Morpeth, Harry Lawson, Dave Robson and Fred Hannay all stayed in private homes and said that the hospitality had to be experienced to be believed.

On the last evening the Heros gave a farewell party which lasted until the early hours of the morning.

When the Newcastle contingent embarked on the homeward journey about forty people went to the quay to wave them goodbye.

All in all a very successful time even if the results were disappointing and perhaps more importantly the visit cemented ties of friendship which were to last for over twenty years.

All of the officers remained in post for the 1957/58 season, the only change being in the Executive Committee where Mr.J Arkless was elected instead of Mr. R Smith.

There were still too few qualified umpires and the listing of those that were qualified ceased to be recorded.

During the year news was received of the death of one of the Vice Presidents, Mr.W.R.Archbold.

In the early days of the association he had done sterling work, first as Assistant Secretary and later as General Secretary. It had been largely due to his enthusiasm that the association prospered pre-war and survived during the war years.

A major change took place in the method of play in the league matches although teams were still made up of four players. Previously each player played against all three of the opposing side giving twelve singles matches in total but this was changed to eight singles and four doubles. Twelve matches were still to be played but each player now had to play in two singles only but also in two doubles matches. The order of singles play (where A,B,C,D are the home side and W,X,Y and Z are the away side in order of merit) was C v Z, D v Y, B v W, A v X, D v Z, C v Y, B v X, and A v W.

The doubles pairs had to be nominated before play commenced and the ties could be played in any order and in any sequence, i.e. before, after or between the various singles ties mutually agreed by the respective team captains.

The committee were concerned that serious consequences might arise in the near future so far as representative matches were concerned if the quality and quantity of ladies' play did not improve. Clubs with lady members were asked to try to put teams into the Ladies League or failing that to ask their lady members to take part in frequent American Tournaments organised by the committee.

The standard of play of the top ladies could not be queried in view of the Rose Bowl results but it again proved impossible to re-start the Ladies League and there is no record that the proposed tournaments took place.

Teams were entered in the County Championships and in the League Representative competitions, the Wilmott Cup for men and the Rose Bowl for ladies but eventually the Mens team was withdrawn. This was on financial grounds when regionalisation of the early rounds did not happen.

The County side fared a little better this time round, winning two and losing three matches. There was an unfortunate experience when their last match of the season at home match to Cheshire was staged at Hexham. Just as the match was about to start all of the lights went out and the time lost in fixing them meant that the last two matches could not be played and were conceded to Cheshire. As Cheshire had already won six it did not matter too much with regard to the result.

The ladies did extremely well in the Rose Bowl although there was discussion after they had beaten Sunderland at home and Leeds away and then drawn away to Sheffield as to whether they should be pulled out of the competition on financial grounds. Thankfully this did not happen and they went to Sheffield and won and then travelled to Bristol in the quarter finals and won that one as well.

They then had to travel to Portsmouth where they came up against a very strong London Business Houses side in the semi final and lost 5 - 0.

The team consisted of Mrs Phil Clark, Miss L. Hamilton and Mrs D. Baston. Miss M. Semple played instead of Mrs. Baston in the first round match.

Miss L. Hamilton was not eligible to play for the County side without special licence from the County Championships Committee but this had to be refused when Edgar Reay of Durham objected.

February saw the reciprocal visit by the players from the Heros Club in Bergen. This time the 'North Sea Cup' was won which gave Newcastle satisfaction but this was much less important than the cementing of the association with the Heros Club.

Successful arrangements, including a reception at which the Lord Mayor of Newcastle and the Lady Mayoress attended were attributed almost solely to Dave Robson who was ably assisted by Adam Coffey.

Dave Robson commented that although it was a success some lessons had been learned which might improve their attempt. He also was disappointed that there had been a lack of publicity for which he blamed the local press rather than neglect by the committee. Mrs Phil Clark appeared to have lost very little of her former consistency and was again on the Open Tournament trail, winning the Womens Singles events at the Hull Open, The Hartlepoons Open, the East Yorkshire Open and the Yorkshire Open. She also was successful in the Womens Doubles in the latter.

Junior player Colin Archbold who had come to notice in the 'Eagle/Girl' tournament was one of twenty four young players selected for special coaching by Johnny Leach at a holiday camp.

This year the staging of the preliminary rounds of the Closed Tournament was moved from the Sir James Knott Youth Centre to the M.P.N.I. No2 Canteen in Benton, commencing at 1.00p.m.

This proved to be most successful. With twelve tables side by side and controlled from one point it was considerably expedited. It was hoped that the advantages of the change would prove to be sufficiently attractive to ensure increased entry in future.

The finals were again held at Vickers Sports Club.

The one disappointment was that the re-introduction of the Veterans Singles ( for the over 35s) had been on the entry form but because of lack of sufficient entries it had to be cancelled.

Ron Hunter of Newcastle YMCA claimed three titles, winning the Mens Singles, the Mens Handicap Singles and the Mixed Doubles with Miss L.Hamilton of St. Anthony's Old Boys. The Mens Doubles event was won by the Revac pairing of Johnny Hillyer and Roland Earl. Mrs Phil Clark (St.Anthonys Old Boys) was successful in the Womens Singles and combined with Miss L.Hamilton to win the Womens Doubles. The Womens Handicap Singles was won by Miss M Semple of M,P.N.I., the Youths Singles by Dave Armstrong of West Denton and the Boys Singles by L.McFarlane of Newcastle YMCA.

Newcastle YMCA an Postal Clerks, both members of the League since 1936 won divisions for the very first time, the YMCA winning the First Division and Postal Clerks triumphing in Division Two. St.Anthonys Old Boys won two divisions with their 'C' team coming out on top in Division three and their 'D' team winning Division 4a. The Division 4b winners were West Denton Association 'B' with the fifth divisions going to Blyth YMCA 'C' team, Lemington Glassworks 'B' and Thompson (Contractors) South Shields.

Blyth YMCA retained the North Eastern Division title with their 'D' team.

The K.O. Cup was won by Gateshead YMCA who beat North Shields YMCA in the final. Unfortunately from the League's point of view the final which was staged at Vickers Sports Club was a flop. There were no spectators and the Cup could not be presented because it had not been returned by Revac.

The author of this history, nineteen at the time and having played in the Northumberland Association of Mixed Clubs League for two or three seasons, played in his first ever match in the League, turning out for Delaval Community Centre 'B' in an away match against Bells Close Methodists 'B' in Division 5b on 23rd September 1957. Unfortunately he lost all of his matches.

Despite a Donation Scheme based on the Grand National horse race raising some fifty pounds the association suffered a loss of £23 for the year due mainly to the cost of the County and Rose Bowl matches.

Publicity was again given to the League in the Kemsley Press and the Northern Press.

Towards the end of the season concern was expressed at the 'falling off', i.e. the lack of participation, by members of the Executive Committee at County matches and at the closed tournament.

On the administration side of things Johnny Waugh who had been involved since 1933 and had been General Secretary for the last ten years and Mr.R.Farrow, Records Secretary for the last nine years, both resigned from their posts at the end of the season. This meant that there had to be changes for the 1958/59 season and Dave Robson replaced Johnny Waugh with his position as Match and Tournament Secretary being taken over by Alan Morpeth.

Alan was to be highly involved for the next forty eight years in various capacities. He continued as Match and Tournament Secretary until 1980, was County Secretary from 1968/69 to 1990/91 and again from 1994/95 to 2004/05, National Councillor from 1980/81 to 1987/88, Handbook Secretary from 1982/83 to 1991/92, Development Officer from 1998/99 to 2005/06, Umpires Secretary from 1992/93 to 1996/97 and Chairman of the Association from 1991/92 to 1996/97.

Mr. Farrow's job as Records Secretary was taken on by Syd Holt who had been on the Executive Committee since 1953/54 and was another who was to become a long service volunteer, holding that position until the end of the 1986/87 season and then serving one more year on the Executive Committee. He also served as Umpires Secretary from 1971/72 until 1986/87 and Handbook Secretary in 1980/81 and 1981/82. Mr. R.Farrow continued on the Executive Committee and was joined by Mr. C.B. Fairless who replaced Mr. B G R Moore.

Dave Robson also replaced Johnny Waugh as E.T.T.A. Representative.

Two new Vice Presidents were appointed in Mr. G W Wilde of Gateshead and Mr. C L Mellowes of Cramlington.

Unfortunately Dave Robson had to resign as General Secretary in the November and Adam Coffey stood in for the remainder of the season. The duties of the chairman were taken on by the Vice Chairman, Stan Lawson with Harry Dignan acting as Vice Chairman and Mr P Chaplin being co-opted onto the Executive Committee.

Johnny Waugh had been involved as a player for L.N.E.R. Accountants and on the committee since the very foundation of the Association and he was presented with a Smith's gold watch by the President, Bart Kinnair, at a special informal evening held at the Corner House Hotel in Newcastle.

The only change in the rules was that the entry fees were increased from ten shillings (50p) to seven shillings and sixpence (75p) per team and one hundred and thirteen teams from fifty eight clubs, a slight decrease from the previous season took part in the league. The only change to the number of divisions was that a Ladies League was re introduced. There was not any change to the method of play.

Youngsters G.Bass and Colin Archbold took part in Junior Area Trials held in Sunderland and came joint second to Barker of Durham.

This led to the arrangement of a Junior Friendly match away to Durham Juniors with the two boys being joined by Miss L.Hamilton which ended all square at 4 - 4.

A coaching course for coaches, conducted by Ken Stanley of Manchester, was held in Sunderland and was attended by P.Chaplin and Stan Denton who both passed the course.

A very successful coaching session was held at Vickers Sports Club and then three sessions were arranged at North Shields.

Both P.Chaplin and Stan Denton were referred to the Northumberland Association of Mixed Clubs organisers who had requested assistance with a coach in preparation for their Regional competition.

Unfortunately P.Chaplin's job meant that he had to leave the area at the end of the season.

Another organisation to seek assistance from the Association was the Gateshead Police who need two tables for their championships. Permission was granted but they had to make their own arrangements for transporting the tables.

Complaints were made to the E.T.T.A. about the way in which the Umpires Scheme affected the county and a reply was received referring them to Edgar Reay of Durham who was the North East Representative.

He attended one of the Executive Committee meetings but it appears that the matters discussed and Edgar Reay asked to refer back to the E.T.T.A. seemed to refer more to the financial spending of the E.T.T.A. which the committee felt were of no benefit to the county.

1958/59 was a disastrous season for the County team who lost all five of their matches and finished bottom of the Second Division.

It was pleasing, however, that 130 people turned up to watch one of their home matches. Even though the North Sea Cup had not been won a very successful visit to Bergen took place in the February.

No team was entered to represent the Northumberland League in the Wilmott Cup but a team of ladies was entered in the Rose Bowl. Unfortunately they did not, like the County team, have the services of Phil Clark and went out in the first round to Leeds. There is no record of any Northumberland player being successful in any Open Tournaments in this year. Phil Clark did not play at all in the season.

A very successful County Championships was held at the M.P.N.I. canteen with ten events, including the reintroduction of the Veterans Singles, taking place.

Ron Hunter (Newcastle YMCA) and Miss L.Hamilton (St.Anthony's O.B.) were the stars of the tournament. Ron winning the Mens Singles for the second year running, the Mens Doubles with Jack Oughton (Gateshead YMCA) and the Mixed Doubles with Miss Hamilton, also for the second year running.

Miss Hamilton was the Womens Singles champion and also won the Womens Doubles, partnered by Mrs.D.Ward (Gateshead YMCA).

Stan Lawson (MPNI) was successful in the Mens Handicap event and Miss M.Semple, also MPNI, took the Womens Handicap title.

Adam Coffey (Revac) won the Veterans Singles with the Youths Singles going to D.Mawson of Whitley Bay YMCA.

Gateshead YMCA's Colin Archbold was the Boys Singles winner.

The League Title was retained by Newcastle YMCA who won the first division and also beat Gateshead YMCA in the final of the K.O. Cup.

All of the other divisions went to separate clubs with Lansdowne top of the Second Division and South Shields YMCA winning the Third Division.

The two fourth divisions were won by Lemington Glass Works and Blyth YMCA 'C' team with the three Fifth Division winners being Tynemouth NALGO, Swan Hunters and Dunston Hill Hospital whilst Blyth Town Co-op won the North Eastern Division for the first time.

The Ladies League and a small K.O. Competition were both won by ladies from Saint Anthony's Old Boys Club.

The Association was once more grateful to the Newcastle Chronicle and to the South Shields Gazette for publishing the league tables and mention was also made of Tyne Tees Television for their support of the Association.

Unfortunately there is no record of what the TV company covered.

It was a better season financially with a surplus of £28 being made and the year ending with £139 in the bank.

Prices for equipment and clothing at the end of the season saw Tournament standard tables at £44 or £45 and the Ken Stanley bat at ten shillings (50p) and the Johnny Leach bat dearer at twelve shillings and sixpence (87p). Mens shorts cost one pound seven shillings and sixpence (£1.37) and Ladies shorts one pound ten shillings (£1.50). A sheet of rubber retailed at one shilling and three pence (approximately 6p).

Season 1959/60 saw two clubs that were to be regular members for many years join the League. Winthrop Laboratories, later known as Sterling Winthrop were to stay until 1979/80 and Electric's destined to stay even longer until 1990/91.

Once again there were nine divisions made up of 116 teams from 57 clubs and a Ladies section.

The rule regarding submission of scorecards was changed to state that score cards had to be in the hands of the records secretary within seven days of a match being played. Stan Lawson continued as Chairman, Harry Dignan as Vice Chairman and Adam Coffey as General Secretary and the E.T.T.A. representative was Stan Lawson.

J. Arkless, R.S. Bell, A. Punshon, G.O. Pearce all came off the Executive Committee and with Harry Dignan now being Vice Chairman there were five vacancies which were filled by Stan Denton, Ronnie Heslop, J L Mundy, W D Robson and Ron Patterson.

Dave Robson was co-opted onto the committee in the November and took over all of the arrangements for the visit of the party from Bergen.

The method of play in the league was changed with the doubles being done away with although teams still consisted of four players. With A,B,C,D being the home team and W,X,Y, and Z the away team A now played W,X and Y. B played W,X and Z. C played W,Y and Z whilst D played X,Y and Z. This was back to the system in force before doubles was introduced.

There was an increase in the amount of coaching that was carried out with Stan Denton holding a number of sessions during the summer period and more coaching of the county team players.

A one Day coaching course taken by the National Coach Jack Carrington was held at Sunderland which was reasonably successful. Some of the association's players attended although Northumberland was not very well represented. Those who went received individual instruction, talks, match play and physical exercise. In the evening they then saw two films of world championships.

A coaching session organised by Stan Denton at Vickers Sports Club attended by eighteen junior players proved to be worthwhile and a practice session, also at Vickers Sports Club, for eight men and five women in contention for places in the County side was very successful.

Despite the additional coaching and practice the County side again finished bottom of the County Championship Second Division without a win to their name..

The League representative sides had similar results to the previous season with the men beating Stockton in the first round of the Wilmott Cup but then losing to Huddersfield.

The Women again narrowly lost to Leeds in the opening round of the Rose Bowl.

Another friendly match was held with Durham for the Juniors but this time the Northumberland youngsters Colin Archbold, A Purvis and Bill Young were beaten 7 - 1.

Dave Robson organised a very successful weekend over Easter for twenty six visitors from the Heros Club in Bergen with the Lord Mayor of Newcastle receiving them at the Mansion House and then attending a dinner in their honour together with the Lady Mayoress,

On the playing side seven events took place with Northumberland winning 5 - 2 to regain the North Sea Cup. Pat Tindale excelled by defeating the Norwegian National Champion.

Away from the county Phil Clark once again entered Open tournaments as did Pat Tindale and Miss L.Hamilton. Phil reached the final of the North of England Tournament but lost out to England ranked Betty Bird of Surrey but then played with her in the doubles which they won.

She also reached two finals in the North East of England Open losing to star junior Jean Harrower in the Womens Singles and also losing in the Mixed Doubles final partnered by Brian Brumwell of Essex.

Pat Tindale and Miss Hamilton were both prominent in the Hartlepoons Open with Miss Hamilton winning the Womens Singles, the Womens Doubles with Northumberland's Mrs. D.Ward and the Mixed Doubles with Pat.

Pat lost out to Durham's W.Barker in the final of the Mens Singles but won the Mens Doubles with his Northumberland colleague Roland Earl as well as the Mixed Doubles. Durham's Edgar Reay received the highest honour that the English Table Tennis Association can give which at the time was described as the Knighthood of Table Tennis and a letter of congratulations on behalf of the Northumberland was sent to him. The M.P.N.I. Canteen in Longbenton was again the venue for the Northumberland Closed Championships held in February and featuring the same ten events as the previous year.

Phil Clark representing St.Anthony's Old Boys came back with a vengeance, winning the Womens Singles, the Womens Doubles with Mrs D.Ward of Gateshead YMCA and the Mixed Doubles with Roland Earl (Revac). For good measure she also won the Womens Handicap making it win in each event that she entered.

Pat Tindale (Revac) was successful in the Mens Singles and Roland Earl won another title, taking the Mens Doubles partnered by Revac team mate Johnny Hillyer.

The Mens Handicap was won by B.Craike of Balkwell St.Peters and North Shields YMCA's Harry Dignan was the Veterans winner.

There was an excellent final in the Boys Singles between Bill Young ( Gateshead YMCA) and A.Purvis which was won by the fourteen year old Young.

The previous year's Boys Singles winner, Colin Archbold, also from Gateshead YMCA, took the Youth's Singles title.

The League Championship went to Revac, previous winners in 1956/57 who went through the season undefeated.

South Shields YMCA, winners of Division Three the year before, won promotion to the first division by winning Division Two and Reyrolles came out on top in the third division.

Thomson Contractors and Tynemouth N.A.L.G.O. were the winners of the two fourth divisions and in the fifth divisions success was achieved by the newly formed Electrics who won Division 5c.

The other fifth division winners were South Blyth B.R.S.A. and British Paints 'B' and Blyth YMCA 'D' came out on top in the North Eastern Division.

The Ladies Division was won by St.Anthony's Old Boys ladies team with Revac ladies team winning the Ladies Cup.

Gateshead YMCA were the winners in the Knock Out Cup.

The Association was financially stable with a small surplus of £10 meaning that the total finds at the end of the year was £149 compared with £61 ten years previously.

When the Chairman and General Secretary presented the Annual Report of the Executive Committee for the year they claimed that the present Executive Committee was the ablest that the Association had had since its formation and anticipated that this would reflect in the affairs generally in the next few years.