

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Nineties

1990-1991

There was very little change in the management of the Association for 1990/91 season although the position of County Match Secretary was left vacant after the resignation of Pauline Long. Ian Robertson was proposed but the appointment was left in abeyance pending a report on incidents in Sweden in which he had been involved whilst in charge of an England junior team.

The position was never filled with Alan Morpeth handling things as well as his other duties as Company Secretary.

Peter Wilkinson took over as Coaching Officer from Ray Main-Brown.

The position of County Umpires Secretary was also not filled and Alan Morpeth also looked after this.

Rob Nichol and Debbie Scholfield were added to the Management Committee from which Brian Thompson eventually resigned in November 1990 because of a decision taken that he believed made every member negligent if certain circumstances occurred. It was not mentioned in the minutes what the decision referred to had been.

The Northumberland League and the Tynedale league continued to be the only leagues affiliated to the county and this has remained the same until the present time.

Rule changes saw the fees payable by teams in the Northumberland League raised to £29 per team.

Unfortunately, the decline in number of clubs and teams in the Northumberland League continued into the nineties with a further drop of two clubs and ten teams leaving seventy teams from forty clubs in membership. The number of divisions was reduced to five with fourteen teams in each one.

Aubrey Drapkin continued to look after publicity with his weekly reports in the Evening Chronicle and his regular broadcasts on BBC Radio Newcastle. Occasionally, during the season he also managed to supply copy to Table Tennis News.

The demise of the Centre of Excellence and other regular coaching at Eldon Square Recreation Centre led to a general decrease in coaching in the area although Ian Robertson continued to have Friday evening sessions at Eldon Square.

Brian Thompson continued to produce outstanding juniors at Blaydon Youth Club. A coaching rally was held at Gosforth High School and funding for future coaching at North Shields YMCA was looked into.

The best juniors and cadets attended a centre in Seaburn where Durham's Cliff Olsson was the coach.

Four youngsters took part in the Junior Regional Trials with Andrew Wilkinson qualifying for the Nationals in the junior boys and Joanne Donnelly doing likewise in the cadet girls. Barry Forster was an automatic choice for the Nationals and the Association paid £20 to each of them towards their travel costs.

Unfortunately, Oliver Court and Craig Sangster failed to qualify.

A Cadet League was again organised by Blaydon Youth Club as part of their activities.

Eldon Square Recreation Centre held a Sports Open Day which included table tennis in which a good number of people participated.

Table tennis continued to be organised by Neil Dorney for the Newcastle schools and they made good use of the facilities at Gibson Street. Neil also organised a schools' league.

Blaydon Youth Club had a team in the British League which was sponsored by Peter Hoyles. They finished fifth in Division Three North.

Regional Leagues were organised once again with the Cleveland firm of Newboulds Butchers sponsoring the Women's league and Aubrey Drapkin's firm of Moore and Drapkin doing likewise for the Men's league.

Eighteen teams took part in the Women's league with the first half being played at Seaburn and the second half scheduled for Thornaby but this had to be cancelled because of very heavy snow. It was re-arranged later but by this time some of the teams could not compete.

The North Shields team was the sisters Karen Newby and Denise Wilkinson and they led the way in the first division after the first session but eventually had to be content with fourth place.

The North Shields 'B' team of Diane Cartmell and Joanne Donnelly won the second division and Gosforth 'A' side of Leigh McCullough and Laura Checkley finished winners of Division Three.

Fifteen teams took part in the Men's league and Blaydon Youth Club took fourth place in the top division. The second division winners were North Shields YMCA side of Paul Bullars and Keith Bibby.

Two City of Newcastle Ladies teams took part in the Ladies British League but unfortunately the first team ended up bottom of the first division. The seconds were a creditable fourth in Division 3A.

There was another chance to see international table tennis in the region when England played France in a challenge match at the Crowtree Centre in Sunderland.

The E.T.T.A. had a scheme whereby leagues could apply for funding for development plans and a plan was put forward. Unfortunately, it was declined but an amended one was submitted which was successful with two rollaway tables together with a small grant being obtained.

Barry Forster started the season at number eleven in the national junior ranking list and stayed as high as thirteen throughout the season and Andrew Wilkinson started at three in the cadet lists but eventually dropped down to number ten.

Barry got to the semi finals of the Junior Boys Singles at the Essex Junior Select tournament where he also lost in the final of the Junior Boys Doubles with his partner, G. Knights of Staffordshire.

As well as reaching the quarter finals of the Junior Boys Singles at the Cotswold Junior Open he won the Junior Boys Doubles at the same tournament.

Stephen Coverdale won the Junior Boys Doubles at the Tameside tournament when his partner was Durham's Ian Collier.

Andrew Wilkinson took part in various tournaments but the results of most of them were not kept. He did, however, get to the quarter finals of the Cadet Singles at the Cotswold Junior Open where he was also a losing finalist in the Cadet Boys Doubles. He actually made his debut for England Cadets during the season and locally he was nominated for North Tyneside Junior Sportsman of the month in April 1991.

Two of the very young players tasted a measure of success at the Grove Junior tournament with Gareth Brown being runner up in the Under 11 Boys Singles and Paul McCann doing likewise in the Under 10 Boys Singles.

Gareth also reached the semi finals of the Under 11 Boys Singles in the Schools National Individual tournament.

The Northumberland Closed tournament was again held at Wallsend Sports Centre and was also again sponsored by the Wilding Office Group and North Tyneside Council but a Junior Tournament was not held.

Eddie Smith was the Men's Singles for the fifth year in a row and Jackie Marriott took the Ladies Singles title. The winner of the Veterans Singles was Bob Dodds, Neil McMaster won the Class 2 Singles, S. Allan the Class 3 Singles and L Adamson the Handicap Singles.

The combination of Ian Robertson and young Andrew Wilkinson were successful in the Men's Doubles and Clare Mouzon was a winner in the Ladies Doubles for the fifth time since the beginning of the eighties, this time with Lynne Yarnell.

There was no Mixed Doubles event.

The County senior team suffered from the non availability of players during the season and finished a disappointing sixth in the County Championships Senior Division 1A.

The junior team played well and were third in Junior Division 1A with Barry Forster unbeaten in all of this matches but the veterans' side were not strong enough for Veterans Division 1A and were relegated.

In the National League Competitions the mens team lost to Sunderland in the Wilmott Cup, the Women's team beat Sunderland and York but lost to Wolverhampton in the Rose Bowl, the veterans team lost to Northallerton, the junior girls went out of the Bromfield Trophy to Blackpool and the cadet girls lost to Leeds in the Hammersley Cup.

The selection committee's decision not to play Stephen Coverdale in the Carter Cup matches was the subject of fierce criticism by Brian Thompson.

However, the highlight of the season was the performances of the sides selected to represent the junior boys and the cadet boys.

The juniors beat Hull, Grimsby, Selby, Nottingham and Plymouth to get to the final of the Carter Cup while the cadets defeated Stanley, Stockton, Barrow and Plymouth to reach the final of the Leach Cup.

Both finals were staged at Milton Keynes on the same day and were covered on BBC Radio Newcastle by Aubrey Drapkin who had several live spots during the course of play. Barry Forster and Phil Robson both won two sets for the juniors and with Andrew Wilkinson getting one they beat the Bristol League 5 - 1 to win the Carter Cup.

Andrew also played for the cadets along with Oliver Court, Billy Stokoe and Martin Gibson. Andrew and Martin each got two sets and one from Oliver saw them defeat the Willesden League with a 5 - 3 score line to claim the Leach Cup as well.

The Northumberland League obtained a sponsor and was known as the Midland Bank Northumberland League for the season.

There was a great deal of controversy regarding the transfer of a junior player from Blaydon Youth Club to North Shields YMCA to which the player's father approved but Brian Thompson objected most strongly. It eventually needed the setting up of a special sub committee to deal with it and their final decision was to support the wishes of the boy's father and approve the transfer.

The season needed to be extended by two weeks in order to get all of the postponed matches completed and as no one could be found to organise it the Handicap Cup Competition did not take place.

The first division was won by Sunderland, the second by Lemington 'A', the third by Washington TTC 'B', the fourth by Ashington YMCA 'B' and the fifth division by Byker Community Centre 'D'.

Despite the sponsorship of the Northumberland League bringing in £300 there was still a shortfall for the year of £114 but the financial affairs were still healthy with £2305 in reserves.

The 1991 summer league saw an entry forty-three teams in six divisions. The championship was won by North Shields YMCA and the Handicap Cup winners were Springwell.

Aubrey Drapkin felt that he could no longer continue as chairman in July 1991 partly because of business commitments but also because of the serious complaints being made about both himself and the Management Committee. There had been constant harassment of committee members during the season culminating in them being told they were dishonest men!

1991-1992

Alan Morpeth, or 'Mr. Northumberland' as he was often referred to took over as Chairman for 1991/92 but gave up being County Secretary which position was taken over by Karen Newby. She also took on the position of League Secretary from Larry Cartmell and filled the position of County Match Secretary which had remained unfilled the previous year.

Aubrey Drapkin replaced Gordon Sinclair as National Councillor and Dave Scholfield replaced Aubrey as Summer league secretary.

Paul Bullars was appointed onto the Management Committee from which Gordon Sinclair had resigned but an offer from Brian Thompson to be re-elected was defeated when put to the vote at the Annual General Meeting. Later in the season Neil Dorney was co-opted as schools representative.

The only leagues affiliated to the county were the Northumberland League, which was now named the Northumbria League and the Tynedale League.

The reason for the change of name to the Northumbria League was because of the large number of clubs in membership that were based south of the Tyne.

However, there was another decrease in the number of clubs in the Northumbria League which now stood at thirty-two and the number of teams went down by four to sixty-six.

The number of divisions was reduced to five, but the Handicap Cup competition was revived this year.

It was decided that the regulation requiring the colour of the bats being red on one side and black on the other now be fully implemented for all competitions organised by the county.

The fees for entry into the Northumbria League were increased by £4 per team to a total of £33 per team

Sheets of bat rubber now cost between £15 and £20 per sheet, blades between £15 and £40 each and balls approximately £9 per dozen. Butterfly clothing had shirts costing between £10 and £15 each and shorts retailed at approximately £15.

The average wage at this time was approximately £278 per week.

Karen Newby produced monthly newsletters with the help of Paul Bullars which were distributed to all clubs in membership of the Northumbria League.

Aubrey Drapkin continued to provide weekly copy to the Evening Chronicle and for a while continued with his broadcasts on BBC Radio Newcastle. Unfortunately, these were at first re-scheduled for a Friday evening instead of a Saturday afternoon and eventually petered out all together following a change in the sports editor.

The setting up of a centre for the coaching of youngsters at North Shields YMCA that had been discussed towards the end of the previous year came to fruition with the help of a grant of £588 from the E.T.T.A. League Development Fund. It catered mainly for youngsters between the ages of nine to fifteen from North Tyneside but any keen young player was welcome. It took place on Friday evenings and was excellently organised by Peter Wilkinson and Dave Scholfield.

Blaydon Youth Club continued to encourage and coach young players during the season. Ian Robertson was coach in charge at a training session at North Shields YMCA on two Sundays in January 1992 and he also ran a county training session for all county and league representative sides players, again at North Shields YMCA.

A number of senior players registered with the E.T.T.A. to become registered coaches.

Towards the end of the season Carol Knight-Moore, the former England player from Cleveland, was appointed as Regional Coaching Officer.

Several young players were nominated and took part in the Junior Regional Ranking Trials. Oliver Court finished in sixth place in the Junior Boys in which Phil Robson, Gareth Brown and Gordon Keogan also took part. Barry Forster and Andrew Wilkinson were exempt until the National Trials.

In the Junior Girls competition Joanne Donnelly came second, Debbie Scholfield third and Diane Cartmell fourth. Susie Atherton also took part.

The Cadet Boys saw Gordon Keogan finish fifth and Gareth Brown sixth with Paul McCann and Craig Sangster also taking part.

At the Nationals Barry Forster got to the semi finals of the Junior Boys but Andrew Wilkinson did not reach the later stages. Joanne Donnelly won three matches in the Junior Girls competition and Debbie Scholfield won one.

Brian Thompson was given permission to run a senior invitation tournament and a cadet league at Blaydon Youth Club.

Neil Dorney was the main organiser of school's events with a Newcastle Schools League and also a Newcastle Schools Individual Championships taking place. He was also the secretary of the Tyne and Wear County Schools Table Tennis Association which was affiliated to the English Schools Table Tennis Association.

In the schools' area competitions the under thirteen boys team from Dame Allan's School qualified for the regional event but that was as far as they got.

Regionally the Newboulds Women's and Girls League and the Drapkin & Co. Men's League were organised at Seaburn Leisure Centre in March 1992 by Aubrey Drapkin. North Shields YMCA 'A' team were runners up in Division One of the Newboulds Womens and Girls League and their 'C' team won Division Three.

City of Newcastle had a team in the second division of the Women's British League but they fared badly, not winning a single match and finishing bottom.

North Tyneside Council Recreation Department held a 'Sport Day' at North Shields YMCA at which table tennis was featured.

As in previous years a Junior International Friendly Match was held at Dunston Activities Centre when England played the Netherlands.

A Senior International with England playing China again took place at Gateshead Leisure Centre.

A number of the younger players who were regulars on the tournament scene were Barry Forster, Andrew Wilkinson, Gavin Brown, Paul McCann and Gordon Keogan. Joanne Donnelly and Diane Cartmell took part in the more northerly events.

Barry, who received £100 from Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council was at number six in the England Junior Rankings in January 1992 and moved up to number five in March.

He had a good measure of success in Junior Boys Doubles playing with Ray Powell of Gloucestershire. They reached the semi finals at the Essex 2 Star and the final at the Cotswold Junior Select. They were the winners at the Kirklees Junior Open, but their biggest achievement was to win at the English Junior Nationals at Stourbridge.

Andrew Wilkinson was a Junior Boys Singles semi-finalist at the Kirklees where young Gareth Brown reached the final of the Under 12 Boys Singles. Gareth's best performance, however, came at the Kent Junior Open where he won the Under 12 Singles.

The only senior player who did anything of note was Ian Robertson who played for a team called Stephens NYSD in the second division of the British League and helped them to win the division. He was also a quarter finalist in the Men's Singles at the Yorkshire 2 Star tournament.

The county senior team fared badly in the County Championships, losing all of their matches to finish bottom of Division 1A. The veterans side won three and lost two of

their matches in the Veterans Division 2A and the juniors held their own in the Junior Division 2A with three wins, one draw and three defeats. Barry Forster was once again the star of the junior team with an unbeaten record.

Apart from the junior boys' team there was no joy for any of the league representative sides.

The men beat Sunderland but then lost to Stockton in the Wilmott Cup and the ladies' went out at the first attempt to Sunderland in the Rose Bowl.

The veterans went out in the first round of the Alec Brook Trophy, the cadet boys side had a bye in the first round of the Leach Cup but were then defeated by Hull in the second round and the junior girls lost to Sunderland in the first round of the Bromfield Trophy.

It was another great season for the junior boys who were, of course, defending the Carter Cup. Their regular team was Barry Forster, Andrew Wilkinson and Phil Robson although Oliver Court also played.

They started with a 5 - 2 win over Sunderland and then beat Stockton by the same score. Harrogate were beaten 5 - 3 and victory over Huddersfield followed before success by 5 - 1 over Nottingham took them into the final for the second year running.

This was at Grantham when their opponents were Southend but unfortunately neither Barry Forster nor Phil Robson were available on the date of the final.

Barry was on a work experience course in Germany, Phil was not allowed time off work to play and the boys from Blaydon Youth Club were playing in the National Association of Boys Clubs final.

The eventual team that travelled was Andrew Wilkinson, Oliver Court and Billy Stokoe but they were not strong enough and went down 5 - 1. After such a good run to the final it was indeed unfortunate that they could not field their strongest team.

The Northumberland Closed Tournament was again sponsored jointly by North Tyneside Council and Wilding Office Equipment and was played at Wallsend Sports Centre for the fourth year running. There was a good entry with the same events being played as in the previous year and Aubrey Drapkin was the referee.

Eddie Smith was injured and could not defend his title in the Men's Singles which was won by Ian Robertson who also won the Men's Doubles with Malcolm Lusk and the Handicap Singles. Lynne Yarnell won the Ladies Singles and the pairing of Caron Guthrie and Karen Newby won the Ladies Doubles, it being the fourth time that Caron had won this event. The winner of the Veterans Singles was Bob Dodds who retained his title, M. Wylde won the Class 2 Singles and Craig Fryer the Class 3 Singles.

The Northumbria League needed a three-week extension in order to complete all of the fixtures.

On the administration side the possibility of dealing with the results and league tables by computer was investigated and it was eventually decided to run computerised records alongside the manual ones in 1992/93.

It was a great season for North Shields YMCA whose first team won Division One as well as the Handicap Cup whilst their 'B' team won Division Two and their 'F' team were successful in Division Three.

Lemington Community Centre 'B' team won the fourth division and Washington 'C' team won Division Five.

Financially it was a bad year, mainly because of the expense incurred in travelling expenses by the successful junior boys' side in the Carter Cup, and there was a deficit of £768 leaving the sum of £1538 to carry forward.

However, the good news was that thanks to the efforts of Brian Illingworth of Northumbria Fire table tennis club the league would be sponsored in the following season by National Power.

For the first time for several years a social and presentation night was arranged at the County Hotel in Newcastle by Karen Newby and Paul Bullars and their helpers which turned out to be very successful.

Dave Rogers of National Power at Blyth Power Station was in attendance and he handed over the sponsorship cheque of £500.

Nationally Aubrey Drapkin had been appointed as administrator for the British League and he continued in this role until 2013.

The Summer League had an increase of two teams which meant that forty-five took part in six divisions. After their success in the normal league in the winter it was no surprise that North Shields YMCA also won the Summer League.

1992-1993

At the start of the 1992/93 season Karen Newby became more involved when she took over from Alan Morpeth as Handbook Secretary. Alan, however, took on the job of County Umpires Secretary. Changes to the Management Committee saw Brian Thompson back on the committee along with newcomers John Donnelly, Ray Lydall and Neil Dorney as schools representative. Steve Dickinson was no longer on the committee and Rob Nichol resigned during the season.

There was a further decrease of three in the number of clubs taking part in the Northumbria League leaving the total at twenty-nine. The number of teams, however, actually increased to sixty-eight and a further two joined after the start of the season meaning that there were five divisions, each with fourteen teams.

A rule change was brought in that meant that where a club had two teams in the same division then the matches between them had to be played on the scheduled date.

There was also a further increase in the fees payable by Northumbria League teams which went up to £34.50 per team.

During the season a sub committee was formed to look into the rules in detail and make any recommendations to put to the next Annual General Meeting.

For most of the season Karen Newby continued to produce monthly newsletters that were sent out to all National Power Northumbria League team secretaries but towards the end of the season indicated that due to pressure of work she would not be able to continue.

Aubrey Drapkin continued to supply weekly copy to the Evening Chronicle.

Coaching continued at North Shields YMCA for younger players and a grant of £1900 was received from the Foundation of the Sports and Arts which was used to increase and improve the equipment needed. Dave Scholfield and Peter Wilkinson both continued to run the centre and the number of youngsters attending was steadily increasing.

Blaydon Youth Club continued with their policy of encouraging and coaching young players.

Five members of the association completed a Coaches Course and four of them then attended an assessment carried out by Alan Ransome. All four were successful in the two parts of the test on which they were assessed and after completion of twelve hours practical work under the supervision of a qualified coach they were awarded Assistant Coach status. Unfortunately, the names of the successful four were not recorded.

Caron Guthrie carried out coaching at Whitley Bay Grammar School for a ten-week session.

Carole Knight-Moore, the ex England player, attended a special session of the North Shields YMCA coaching scheme to coach twenty-four selected young players at a cost to the scheme of £40. Afterwards it was felt that it was expensive for the coaching that was actually given and that this would not be done on a regular basis in future. Actually, there is no record that it was ever repeated.

Peter McQueen became involved in coaching in the county again when Neil Dorney set up coaching sessions for under thirteen year olds at Gibson Street Baths for twenty to thirty school children on a regular basis and invited him to take part on one occasion. Ronnie Bell was also involved in helping Neil.

As well as that Neil arranged for Peter to be the coach in charge when he set up a six-week course in April 1993.

Neil also arranged an Easter Coaching Course for twenty-four children at Gibson Street.

Peter was also put in charge of a Summer Camp that was held at North Shields YMCA after the end of the regular winter league season.

Regional Co-ordinators meetings were held during the year and Ray Lydall, Karen Newby and Dave Scholfield were all involved in attending them.

Brian Thompson offered to organise junior and cadet competitions to start in January 1993 but it is not known whether or not they actually materialised.

Several young players took part in the Regional Junior Trials with Martin Gibson in the Junior Boys, Joanne Donnelly in the Junior Girls, Diane Cartmell in the Cadet Girls and Paul McCann in the Cadet Boys all qualifying for the National Trials.

In the event Oliver Court replaced Martin Gibson who was unavailable, and they were joined by Andrew Wilkinson in the Junior Boys and Gareth Brown in the Cadet Boys, both of whom were exempt from the regional event.

A contribution to travelling expenses of £20 was paid to each of them.

At the Nationals Andrew Wilkinson reached the last eight in the Junior Boys Competition and Gareth Brown did likewise in the Cadet Boys.

Neil Dorney organised the Newcastle Schools Leagues for under nineteens and under sixteens at Gibson Street Baths and the under nineteen league was won by Dame Allans 'A' team. There was no record kept of the lower age group winners.

By the end of the season the tables at Gibson Street were in a very poor condition and needed to be replaced but it was uncertain whether or not the premises would continue to be available for table tennis.

Neil was the organiser of the National Schools Area Finals which were held at North Shields YMCA and he received help from Ray Lydall and Ronnie Bell.

Dame Allans Under 19 Boys, Gosforth Central Middle School Under 11 Boys and West Jesmond Under 11 Girls all qualified for the Regional Finals in Pontefract but they did not make any further progress.

Karen Newby was the women's regional committee representative and she attended a meeting of the regional co-ordinators in Kings Lynn.

The Regional women's and men's leagues were again held in May in Seaburn but no records exist of the winners or, indeed, of those taking part.

A letter from the Royal Victoria Infirmary was received asking for help in the organisation and staging of the table tennis events at the British Transplant Games being held in the area in July 1993.

Several members volunteered and Aubrey Drapkin refereed the senior event at the Gateshead International Stadium with others helping with the umpiring of matches.

Some volunteers also assisted at the junior events at Killingworth Leisure Centre.

There was still a shortage of qualified umpires in the county although Dave Scholfield did become a County Umpire.

Aubrey Drapkin acted as referee and Alan Morpeth and Dave Scholfield were involved as umpires for a Junior International friendly match at Dunston Activities Centre when England entertained Denmark. The English team won the Junior and Cadet matches but lost both of the girls matches.

A women's European League match was also staged at Dunston when England defeated France 4 - 3.

Eddie Smith and Ian Robertson both played in the Friendly Hotels British League for Sedgfield and were quite successful.

On the tournament scene Ian won the Class 2 Singles at the Blackpool 2 Star.

Of the junior players Joanne Donnelly attended an Advanced Training Course run by Carole Knight-Moore at Sedgfield and Gareth Brown represented England at the National Schools Championships in Perth winning a gold medal in the team event.

Paul McCann reached the semi finals of the Under 12 Boys Singles in the National Championships where he also got to the same stage in the Under 12 Boys Doubles.

The county's young player of the year was without doubt Andrew Wilkinson. He achieved success in the National Schools competitions and represented England along with Gareth Brown at the National Schools Championships in Perth where he picked up two gold and one silver medal. The golds came in the Boys Doubles and the team event whilst the silver was won in the Boy's Singles.

He was nominated for the England team in the World Schools Championships but was not successful in making the final squad.

He gained a great deal of experience when he attended a Chinese Training Camp that was organised in Kent.

At the English Junior Open tournament Andrew qualified from his group to reach the knock-out stage which was a good achievement and he was invited to take part in a training camp with the England Junior squad at Thornaby which he accepted.

He was also selected to play in the England Junior Top Twelve tournament and by the end of the season was at number three in the English junior rankings.

At senior level he won the Class 3 Singles at the Blackpool 2 Star tournament.

The Northumberland senior county team squad of Eddie Smith, Ian Robertson, Mark Coverdale, Stephen Coverdale, Steve Penman, Caron Guthrie and Karen Newby had a successful season the Senior Division 2A of the County Championships when they finished as runners up.

The junior team held their own in Junior Division 1A and the veterans side, who were now fully financed by the county, finished in mid table in Veterans Division 2A.

The Northumbria League representative sides made early exits from the Rose Bowl, at the hands of Sunderland, and from both the Carter and Leach Cups at the hands of Hull. In the Wilmott Cup the men fared better by beating Harrogate and Stockton before going out to Bradford.

The veteran men, however, did well in the Alec Brook Trophy to reach the semi finals which were held at Milton Keynes on a group basis. They were represented by Ian Robertson, Fred Short and Pat Tindale and finished in fourth place.

The Closed Championships were again sponsored by North Tyneside Council and Joynson's Office Equipment as they were now known and took place at Wallsend Sports centre. Aubrey Drapkin was the referee and there was a good entry despite the fact that it clashed with the Durham Closed tournament.

Bradley Billington, ranked at number fifteen in England, who was studying in Newcastle and had played in the National Power Northumbria League for Gateshead, was eligible to enter and he duly won the Men's Singles. Ian Robertson was the winner of three titles, the Men's Doubles with Andrew Wilkinson, the Veterans Singles and the Handicap Singles.

Christine Burke was back in the area and she took the Ladies Singles title whilst Karen Newby teamed up with Lynne Yarnell to win what turned out to be the last ever Ladies Doubles event.

The winner of the Class 2 Singles was Keith Weatherby who was also the winner of a new event, the Open Singles Consolation Singles, and Craig Fryer retained the Class 3 title.

The proposal that the Northumbria League results be dealt with on a computer alongside the manual results for this season did not materialise as Ron Applegate, the person looking into this for the association, had moved to Scotland and had not had the time to progress it.

However, once he was settled in his new home, he was able to test his computer for the results. After being recorded all scorecards, etc were sent to him and he eventually produced a user guide at a cost of £101.50 and donated his computer equipment to the association. It was agreed that the trial would take place alongside the following seasons manual records.

Unfortunately, the Management Committee had to deal with a disciplinary matter when a scorecard from the match between Gateshead 'A' and Byker 'A' submitted to the League Secretary had been defaced with foul language by one of the Gateshead players. A letter of apology was received from the player concerned but a sub committee was formed to deal with the matter.

The player was requested to appear before this sub committee but did not turn up. The findings were that he be suspended from Gateshead's matches scheduled for weeks

24, 25 and 26. Also that he would be sent a letter of censure about his future conduct and a warning that any repetition would result in more severe action.

Last year's National Power Northumbria League Champions North Shields YMCA did not make the best of starts to the new season when they were beaten at home by Glebe TTC at home. On top of that the match did not finish until 11.00p.m. due to the late arrival of the visiting team. An irate caretaker then kept both teams locked in the premises for another half hour! The defeat, however, did not stop the North Shields team from going on to retain the first division title.

Saint Judes were the winners of Division Two and Gateshead 'C' finished on top of the third division. North Shields YMCA 'G' team won Division Four and Whitehouse Lane 'B' team won the fifth division.

The Handicap Cup competition final was fought out by two teams from Gateshead TTC with the 'A' team beating the 'B' team by 29 points.

A presentation evening was organised by Karen Newby and her committee at the Northern Electric Recreation Club in Wallsend.

At the E.T.T.A. Annual General Meeting Aubrey Drapkin received the honour of being made a Vice President of the national body.

Financially 1992/93 saw an improvement with a surplus of £363 being achieved thanks to the £500 sponsorship from National Power making the bank and cash total at the end of the year £1901.

A sub committee was formed to consider a re-draft of the League Regulations that had been submitted to the Management Committee and they agreed that the way that they had been dealt with was an improvement on the previous ones and also made several suggestions of regulation changes to be put to the next Annual General Meeting.

The usual Summer league went ahead with North Shields YMCA winning the first division for the third year running.

1993-1994

There were no changes to the Officers of the association for season 1993/94 and only one change to the Management Committee with Mark Christie taking the place of Paul Bullars. However Brian Thompson died suddenly in January 1994.

The number of clubs in the National Power Northumbria League actually increased to thirty-one with sixty nine teams playing in five divisions.

The new draft of the Northumbria League regulations which also contained several changes was approved at the Annual General Meeting.

The significant changes saw the Summer League regulations being brought into line with the main league and in particular brought in promotion and relegation. Other changes allowed players to play as many times in a week as they wanted, the old rule

that multi-team clubs must always field a full strength 'A' team was scrapped, up to five players per team could now play in a match in the main league and a player could now play six times for a higher team than they were registered for before being re-registered for the next higher team (four times in the Summer league).

A major change to the merit points was that one point be awarded for each set won replaced the previous system of two points for a win.

Entry fees to the League were increased slightly to £35.25 per team.

Weekly reports continued to be given to the Evening Chronicle by Aubrey Drapkin who also managed to arrange for the Chronicle to pay £8 for each submission of copy and whenever possible he also submitted copy to Table Tennis News.

The Training Centre at North Shields YMCA continued and was again very successful under the guidance of Peter Wilkinson and Dave Scholfield.

It was hoped to set up an Advanced Training Centre at North Shields on a Thursday evening with Ian Robertson in charge and Peter Wilkinson to co-ordinate with the YMCA but unfortunately the YMCA was not available on a Thursday and the proposed scheme was abandoned.

However, a successful Coaching Week was held at the YMCA but Colin Stanbury of the YMCA requested that any future course be organised by the YMCA themselves and not by the County Association.

Ray Lydall attended a Northern Region Co-ordinating Meeting on behalf of Northumberland.

Seven players were nominated for the Junior Regional Trials in Thornaby. Gareth Brown, Martin Gibson, Oliver Court and Neil Catley were all put forward for the Junior Boys but Neil Catley did not go as he did not receive the entry form from the organisers.

Andrew Dinning was nominated for the Cadet Boys' but he was unable to attend. The Junior Girls nominations were Joanne Donnelly and Diane Cartmell. Andrew Wilkinson was exempt.

Gareth Brown qualified for the National Trials where he reached the semi finals of the Cadet Boys and Joanne Donnelly qualified for the Junior Girls where she finished third in her group.

Neil Dorney continued to organise various events as well as the league for Newcastle Schools.

There was once again a junior international match at Dunston Activities Centre when Alan Morpeth and Steve Dickinson assisted with the umpiring.

Northern Regional Leagues for both men and women were again organised and took place in Cleveland.

A list of qualified umpires in the county was given to the E.T.T.A. and comprised of Aubrey Drapkin, International Umpire and National Referee, along with County Umpires Steve Dickinson, Dave Scholfield, Bill Brown and Alan Morpeth.

Ian Robertson had numerous good results in veterans events including being runner up in the Veteran Men's Singles at the Cleveland 5 Star and winning the same event at the Blackpool 3 Star.

Along with Eddie Smith he performed well for Sedgefield second team's winning side in the Friendly Hotels British League and also played for Sedgefield's winning side in the Veterans British League.

He also won his first Veterans Masters Title but his best performances were probably the ones at the Veterans World Championships in Melbourne where he was England's star player and reached the third round of the Over 40s Mens Singles as well as gaining a silver medal in the Over 40s Mens Doubles with Nigel Eckersley of Cheshire.

Young Gareth Brown reached number seven in the England Cadet Boys rankings.

At the East Yorkshire Junior he lost in the final of the Cadet Boys Singles having beaten the Scottish number one, the English Number one and the English number five in earlier rounds.

He was picked to play for England Schools in the Schools International Tournament in Dublin and played for the Under 14 and under 16 teams and was also runner up in the Under 14 Boys Singles.

Andrew Wilkinson was the outstanding Northumberland player and reached number one in the England Junior rankings at one point in the season. He attended a Young Sportswinners dinner at the Gosforth Park Hotel, received an award of £300 from the local Sports Council and also was voted North Tyneside's Young Sportswinner of the Year.

He played for the England Junior second team that won the Plate Event at the English Junior Open. At the English Junior Championships he was a quarter finalist in the Junior Boys Singles and a runner up along with Yorkshire's Mark Smith in the Junior Boys Doubles. In addition, he was voted 'Player of the weekend' at the Woolwich Junior British League.

He was also selected to play for the English Schools under eighteen side in the event in Dublin. In addition, he won the Under 18 Boys Singles in the individual events. Two of the Northumberland County sides did well in the County Championships with the juniors led by Andrew Wilkinson finishing as runners up in Junior Division 1A and gaining promotion. Unfortunately, most of them would be too old to take up the promotion the following season.

The veterans team were unbeaten throughout the season to win Veterans Division 2A and were led by Ian Robertson. The squad included Maurice Cheek, Dave Armstrong, Pat Tindale and Pauline Long.

The senior side held their own to finish fourth in Senior Division 1A.

The only one of the League Representative sides to progress were the men in the Wilmott Cup, there being no success in the Rose Bowl, The Carter Cup or the Alec Brook Trophy competitions.

And some success it was. They started with a victory over Stockton 5 - 3 followed by success by 5 - 2 over Harrogate. Bradford were beaten 5 - 3, Liverpool 5 -2 and Leicester 5 -2 to put them in the final which was played at Grantham.

Andrew Wilkinson and Steve Coverdale had both been involved along the line but the team for the final was Eddie Smith, Ian Robertson and Bradley Billington. They were up against Crawley and Horsham and both Robertson and Smith won two of their matches. With Smith taking one the trophy was won by a Northumberland team for the very first time.

There was a change of venue for the Closed Championships which were held at Killingworth Leisure Centre for the first time, but the entry was on the low side. Joynson's Office Equipment once again sponsored the tournament. The Men's Singles was replaced by the Open Singles which meant that both men and women could play in it.

Eddie Smith and Ian Robertson both won three titles, Smith claiming the Open Singles, the Handicap Singles and the Men's Doubles with Robertson. Robertson's other two successes were in the Veterans Singles and in the Mixed Doubles partnered by Karen Newby. Lynne Yarnell regained the Ladies Singles title but there was no Ladies Doubles event.

Steve Penman was the winner of the Class 2 Singles and of the Open Singles Consolation event.

The Class 3 winner, for the third year running, was Craig Fryer and a Junior Singles event was introduced which was won by Andrew Wilkinson.

National Power continued to sponsor the Northumbria League which was successfully completed despite enforced interruptions to the fixtures following the death of Blaydon's Brian Thompson.

Larry Cartmell and Maurice Cheek took over running things and even if some home matches had to be played away from home they managed to get the fixtures for all five of their teams completed.

The computer talked about in the previous season eventually arrived in March 1994 and its use was to be looked into for the following season.

Sadly the deaths of both Allan Jarvis of Saint Charles and Jack McAllister were recorded during the season, the former having died during a league match. Jack had formally been connected with Byker Community Centre, had served on the Management Committee, as Coaching Officer and had been a County Umpire.

For the third year in a row North Shields YMCA 'A' team won the first division and despite their problems Blaydon Youth Club 'B' team won Division Two.

Ashington YMCA won Division Three and D.S.S. won both the fourth and fifth divisions with their 'B' and 'C' teams respectively. Gateshead 'A' won the Handicap Cup with victory over Washington 'B' in the final.

On the financial side there was a small deficit of £48 but the cash carried forward amounted to £1853.

On the National scene 1994 was an important one in England with the European Championships being held in Birmingham. Northumberland's Aubrey Drapkin was involved as Administration Director.

The Summer League had an entry of thirty-seven teams and consisted of five divisions. with North Shields YMCA once again winning the first division.

Karen Newby resigned from her various positions at the end of the season due to pressure of work and for 1994/95 Alan Morpeth took on the job of County Secretary.

Dave Scholfield became League Secretary as well as continuing as Treasurer and the position of Handbook Secretary was done away with.

Pauline Long returned to the position of Publicity Secretary to replace Aubrey Drapkin.

Alan Livingstone, Ronnie Bell and Mark Christie all came off the Management Committee to which Jimmy Scope and Bill Hodgkins were appointed. Bill, however, resigned during the season.

There was a further decrease in the membership of the Northumbria League that now had twenty-eight clubs and sixty teams. The number of divisions was reduced to four but with fifteen teams in each one.

The Handicap Cup continued to be arranged.

The Tynedale League reported that it now had thirteen teams in membership.

There was another increase in the cost of membership of the Northumbria League with the fees becoming £37 per team.

Weekly copy continued to be submitted to the Evening Chronicle but it was now done by Pauline Long who also gave monthly copy to Table Tennis News.

The Friday night coaching sessions for young players continued at North Shields YMCA with Ray Lydall now assisting Peter Wilkinson and Dave Scholfield.

The V.I.P. Disabled Club also organised coaching sessions at the YMCA and Andrew Wilkinson assisted them.

A coaching session was held at the Maccabi Club for five junior boys and three junior girls and this was taken by Dave Scholfield. Andrew Wilkinson started coaching at Eastfield Grammar School.

A coaching course for coaches was held at Herrington YMCA which was conducted by Peter McQueen.

Ken Muhr had been appointed Northern Region Area Development Officer and he was welcomed to a special meeting of the clubs when he stated that he would help with any worthwhile plan to promote the sport within the county and also that he felt that a Woolwich Junior League should be set up.

However, the feeling about the Junior League was that junior players are already able to play in the Northumbria league as well as the Newcastle Schools League.

Andrew Wilkinson and Ken Muhr visited Amble and Alnwick for introductory sessions and also gave demonstrations. These visits were well attended by local players.

Six boys and one girl attended the National Area Junior Trials in Thornaby, having been nominated by the Management Committee and Neil Catley qualified for the National trials along Gareth Brown who had been exempt from the Area one. It is assumed that they made no further progress as there is no further reference to them on record.

Neil Dorney continued to organise the Newcastle Schools League and also organised a training week at Gibson Street Baths with Peter McQueen in charge.

In the schools National Competition the Royal Grammar School under nineteen boys team and the Central High, Newcastle under thirteen girls team both qualified for the Regional Competition but that was as far as they got.

Two teams from North Shields YMCA entered the Northern Region team events that were held in Newton Aycliffe and both of them topped their respective divisions.

An umpires' seminar was held at Herrington YMCA during the season.

Ian Robertson once again did well in Veterans events and won the Over 40 Men's Doubles with Dave Welsman of Twickenham at the Veterans Table Tennis Society's National Masters Championships where he was also a semi finalist in the Over 40s Men's Singles.

He also partnered Welsman in the Veterans Men's Doubles at the English Senior Championships where they were the runners up.

In the July Ian was selected to play for England Veterans in Austria.

Andrew Wilkinson reached the semi finals of the Under 18 Boys Singles at the E.T.T.A. Under 15/18/21 tournament and partnered by Ian Robertson got to the quarter finals of the Mens Doubles at the English Closed.

Andrew was voted as the Young Sportsman of the Year by North Tyneside Council. Caron Guthrie, Karen Newby and Joanne Donnelly helped Sedgfield to win the third division of the Womens British league which was played over two weekends. Karen was voted 'Player of the Weekend' at the first session whilst Caron was unbeaten over both weekends.

In the Friendly Hotels British League Eddie Smith did well playing for Sedgfield first team and Andrew Wilkinson did likewise for their third string.

In the County Championships the seniors finished in fifth place in the Senior Division 1A and the veteran's side were sixth in the Veterans Division 1A after being promoted in the previous season.

Unfortunately, Eddie Smith let the side down at the second weekend of the Senior Division with his bad behaviour which led to him being suspended by the Management Committee from playing for the county in the following year.

It was not possible to enter a junior team because all of the players of sufficient standard were now too old.

Apart from the men's team the Northumbria League representative sides had a poor time. The ladies went out of the Rose Bowl to Leeds after defeating Sunderland, the junior boy's team were beaten by Carlisle in the first round and the veterans side lost out to Harrogate.

The men's team were defending the Wilmott Cup and the side of Eddie Smith, Ian Robertson and Andrew Wilkinson were hoping to keep the cup when they reached the semi-finals but they lost out 5 - 4 to Nottingham.

The County Closed Tournament was again held at Killingworth Sports centre and was again sponsored by Joynson Office Equipment Limited with Anita Lithographic Printers printing the entry forms free of charge.

Jimmy Scope was the referee with Dave Scholfield as his assistant.

Unfortunately, there was a very low entry with only thirty-five men and three women.

Ian 'Benny' Robertson was the star of the show, winning four titles. He took the Open Singles, an event he first won twenty years earlier when it was called the Men's Singles and he was again successful in 1979/80, he retained the Mixed Doubles title with Karen Newby and won the Men's Doubles with Andrew Wilkinson.

It was the thirteenth time he had been successful in the Men's Doubles starting in 1974/75 when his partner was Dave Armstrong, Peter Whiteman was his partner in 1979/80. Since 1982/83 he won with Peter McQueen twice, with Eddie Smith three times, Neil McMaster, Mark Christie, Malcolm Lusk and this was the third time with Andrew Wilkinson.

Lynne Yarnell retained the Ladies Singles crown, Eddie Smith won the Handicap Singles, Fred Woodhouse triumphed in the Class 2 Singles, Alan Hedley came out on top in the Class 3 singles, N. Blackburn was the winner of the Open Singles Consolation Singles, and Neil Catley was the winner of the Junior Singles.

There were new champions in the National Power Northumbria league with the first division being won by Gateshead TTC who also beat Newton in the final of the Handicap Cup.

North Fire had a good season with their 'A' team winning Division Two and their 'B' team winning Division Four.

D.S.S. 'B' were the successful team in Division Three.

Financially the season was a successful one with a surplus of £222 being achieved making total assets to carry forward £2075.

The Summer league was down to thirty two teams playing in four divisions and North Shields YMCA were the winners of the first division, Silksworth the second, Lemington C.C. the third and Byker C.C. 'B' team the fourth.

The only change in the Officers of the association for 1995/96 was the appointment of Tom Turnbull to a new position as Development Officer and the Regional Representative Ken Muhr offered to obtain £200 towards his expenses.

Ken Lusk replaced Aubrey Drapkin as National Councillor.

Alan Hedley, Ray Rodgers and Mrs Lesley Blakey were appointed to the Management Committee, Neil Dorney and Bill Hodgkins having resigned.

The National Power Northumbria League and the Tynedale League continued to be the only leagues affiliated to the county.

The fees for entry to the Northumbria league were increased to £42 per team.

There were again four divisions in the Northumbria League, there being a decrease of two clubs but only one team. Of the fifty nine teams now in the league North Shields YMCA had eleven of them.

A new team to enter was Cramlington Table Tennis Club who are still members and have grown into the largest club to play in the league.

The Handicap Cup was again staged and the Management Committee considered a new form of producing the rankings suggested by Alan Hedley. After careful consideration they decided to bring this into being in 1996/97 season.

League tables and lists of players averages were distributed to the Northumbria League teams on a monthly basis and Pauline Long submitted regular weekly copy to the Evening Chronicle and monthly articles to Table Tennis News. The Chronicle continued to make a payment for the articles.

Regular training sessions continued to be held at North Shields YMCA on Friday evenings and were again organised by Peter Wilkinson, Dave Scholfield and Ray Lydall although Dave later became involved in a new set up at Kenton School in Newcastle and could not continue.

The new set up involved a new club and also an advanced training centre which were helped financially by a regional grant of £700 and a grant of £500 from Newcastle council.

Both the training centre and the club were well supported in no small part due to the enthusiasm of the Regional Development Officer Ken Muhr along with Dave Scholfield, Andrew Wilkinson and John Donnelly.

Coaching was being developed at Cramlington by Alan Hedley and also at Ouston for juniors by Tom Turnbull.

Ken Muhr organised an introductory course at Newbiggin Sports Centre where he was helped by Peter McQueen and he was also involved in the issue of an E.T.T.A. Coaching Newsletter.

A seminar was held at Durham University involving Alan Ransome and England player Alan Cooke which was well attended.

Three Northumberland players attended a coaching course at Durham University and Andrew Wilkinson qualified as a coach.

After his qualification Andrew was involved in coaching at the new set up at Kenton School, and coaching at West End Boys Club in Newcastle, at Birtley, Sedgefield, Darlington, North Shields YMCA and also undertook private sessions.

Several youngsters were nominated to take part in the Regional Trials with David Gladwin and Andrew Dinning for the Junior Boys. David attended but was unable to make any further progress.

Peter Scatchard, Chris Worswick, Ben van de Velde and Nicky Beckett boys all played in the Cadet Boys but none of them qualified for the Nationals.

Gillian Chapple was nominated but did not take part in the Junior Girls and it was left to Ellie de la Hunt to keep the Northumberland flag flying by finishing second in the Cadet Girls and qualifying for the Nationals in Kings Lynn along with Gareth Brown who had been exempt from the Regional trials because of his England ranking.

It was agreed to subsidise the travelling expenses of both of them.

Unfortunately there is no record of how they got on at the Nationals.

With regard to the development of local table tennis there was considerable interest in the South Shields area and Tom Turnbull had meetings with several head teachers in that area. Together with Ken Muhr he also had a meeting with Newcastle United regarding development of sport in the Newcastle area.

An Open Day was held at Kenton School where a Woolwich Junior League was set up by Dave Scholfield.

Dave also arranged to give exhibitions at various schools with the help of Andrew Wilkinson.

Three of the county's women, Karen Guthrie, Karen Newby and Joanne Donnelly represented Sedgefield in the second division of the Womens British League where they finished mid table.

Table tennis continued in Newcastle Schools with the Royal Grammar School winning the Under 13 Boys league and also having a team in second place whilst Gosforth won the Under 13 Girls League with La Sagesse School in second spot. Teams took part in the Schools area event with the Royal Grammar School winning their way to the Regional competition with their Under 11, Under 13, and Under 19 Boy's teams and Newcastle Central High progressing in the Under 13 Girls.

None of them managed to progress any further than the regional event.

A number of other events took place in the county including the Boys Brigade National Finals which were organised by Alan Hedley at Morpeth leisure Centre.

Alan also organised the Northumberland Association of Youth Clubs tournament at Cramlington where Andrew Wilkinson, Peter Scatchard and Ellie de la Hunt won their way to the National Finals.

At the National finals Andrew won the Under 19 Boys Singles and Ellie won the Under 14 Girls Singles and Peter won the Under 14 Boys Plate competition.

A National Disabled tournament was held at Wallsend Sports centre and help was asked with the staging of it. Alan Hedley took on the job of referee and others helped with the umpiring.

Sadly the death of a former hard working official Ray Main-Brown was recorded in September 1995. Alan Morpeth and Ray Lydall represented the association at his funeral.

On the National Scene the Olympic Games Qualifying Tournament was held in Manchester where Aubrey Drapkin was in charge of administration.

By the end of the season Eddie Smith was at number 26 in the Mens National Rankings, Gareth Brown reached number ten in the Junior Boys and Ian Robertson was at number seven in the Veteran Mens list.

Ian did well in the Veteran Mens Singles at the Cleveland 3 Star tournament where he lost in the final to Nigel Eckersley of Cheshire.

In the County Championships the Senior side held their own in the Senior Division One. It was possible to enter a Junior team this season and despite losing all of their matches they showed a lot of promise when competing in the Junior Division Two. Unfortunately the Veterans side only won one match and were relegated from the Veterans Division One.

There was little to cheer about for the Northumbria league representative sides with the Men losing to Sunderland in the Wilmott Cup, the Women losing to Leeds in the Rose Bowl and the Juniors losing to Darlington in the Carter Cup. The Veterans went out to Bradford after beating both Sunderland and Darlington.

The County Closed Championships were held at Wallsend Sports centre and was again sponsored by Joynson's Office Equipment and Anita Lithographic Printers. The entry was poor with only fifty competitors but the referee, Jimmy Scope, did a great job and organised the various events on a group basis where possible. Unfortunately it was not possible to play the finals of the Handicap Singles and the Mens Doubles within the time scale and these were played the following week at North Shields YMCA.

Andrew Wilkinson was the winner of the Open Singles and Karen Newby won the Ladies Singles. The Veterans Singles winner was Ian Robertson and Eddie Smith joined forces with Dave Godbold to win the Mens Doubles. There were not enough female players to stage the Ladies Doubles or the Mixed Doubles events.

Steve Penman won the Handicap Singles, Ali Al Kandari won the Class 2 Singles and Alan Hedley retained the Class 3 Singles title. The Open Singles Consolation event was won by Karen Newby, the Junior Singles by Gareth Brown and the Junior Singles Consolation event by Paul Hazlehurst.

Gateshead TTC 'A' team retained the Northumbria National Power Championship, North Shields YMCA 'C' team won Division Two and their 'J' team were successful in winning Division Four. Brinkburn Community Association won Division Three.

The Handicap Cup was won by Newton TTC 'A' who defeated Byker Community Centre 'C' in the final.

Financially the season was hugely successful with a surplus of £1045 being achieved mainly because of a refund of V.A.T. from the E.T.T.A. amounting to approximately £700. The Blyth firm Wenade U.K. had sponsored the Junior county team to the extent of £300.

The 1996 Summer league had thirty one teams taking part in four divisions. Washington 'A' won the first division and their 'B' team won the second division.

Division Three was won by North Shields YMCA 'E' team and Division Four by Ouston Community Centre 'B' team.

The only change in the management of the association for 1996/97 was that Aubrey Drapkin came back onto the Management Committee.

The same leagues were in operation and the Northumbria league still had four divisions of fifteen teams. There was actually an increase of one club in membership and the season started with sixty teams but three withdrew during the season. North Shields YMCA was again the largest club with ten teams and Cramlington TTC now had five.

With fifteen teams in a division the season was really too long and a special meeting was held during the year at which it was agreed that the maximum number of teams in a division for future years would be limited to twelve

Sponsorship was again received for the Northumbria league from National Power but the amount was reduced from £500 to £300.

The Handicap Cup was again organised but the ranking system suggested by Alan Hedley and discussed during the previous year was not implemented. It was, however used for the Handicap Singles event at the Closed Championships.

Dave Schofield continued to let the clubs in the Northumbria League have monthly updates of the league tables and player percentages and Pauline Long continued to send weekly copy to the Evening Chronicle. She also sent monthly reports to Table Tennis News but unfortunately there were problems with that publication during the season and they were not regularly published.

Coaching continued at Kenton School throughout the season for junior players and also for the Advanced Training Centre players. Peter McQueen was in charge of coaching was assisted by Andrew Wilkinson until Andrew ceased in January and a student at Northumbria University, David Purdy, was brought in to help.

Financial support was again given by Newcastle Council.

The Woolwich league at Kenton School was organised once again and help in running the projects there was given by John Donnelly, Dave Scholfield and Ken Muhr.

Coaching also continued at North Shields YMCA under the guidance of Peter Wilkinson and Ray Lydall.

Alan Hedley organised coaching sessions at Cramlington which proved to be popular and productive.

Before the start of the winter season Peter McQueen and Andrew Wilkinson organised a Summer School Coaching Session at North Shields YMCA which was attended by twelve players. They also organised some coaching at Norham High School.

Some coaching of children in the Dunston area also took place during the year.

A coaching seminar was held in Cleveland in Billingham which was attended by Alan Hedley.

Billingham was also the venue for a Regional Training Day and Peter Wilkinson arranged for three young players to attend.

In an attempt to attract more youngsters into the game Ken Muhr and Andrew Wilkinson gave a demonstration at a school in Gateshead and Tom Turnbull made contact with schools in Whitley Bay with a view to restart coaching in that area.

An exhibition of table tennis was given by Bradley Billington and Andrew Wilkinson at the Newcastle Arena during half time at a basketball match.

The N.A.B.C. area tournament was again staged, this time at North Shields YMCA in March 1997 from which Peter Scatchard, Steven Blacklock, Richard Chapman and

David Graham all qualified for the National tournament but there is no record of how they got on.

Ellie de la Hunt won the girls event but this year the National tournament did not include girls.

The Northern Area Junior and Cadet Trials were once again held in Thornaby and Northumberland sent four players to play in the Junior Boys and three to play in the Cadet Boys but none of them made any progress. Ellie de la Hunt was entered for the Junior Girls and was one of two for the Cadet Girls. As she was the only entry for the Juniors she automatically qualified for the Nationals and she also did well enough to qualify in the Cadet Girls event.

Ken Muhr indicated that there was £100 available to the county from regional funds and Tom Turnbull agreed to produce a detailed development plan which he passed on to Ken.

At the beginning of the season nine players from Northumberland and North Tyneside took part in the national tournament organised by the British Sports Association for the Disabled which was held in Hull.

Arthur Wade and Liz Cree both won silver medals and Noreen Wade, Andy Holland and Paul Agnew won bronze medals in their respective classes.

Others who took part were Dawn Smith, Simon Smith, Keith Knox and Paul Craggs. Stan Cree was the team manager and did an excellent job.

Overall there was an great atmosphere at what was an excellent weekend.

In March 1997 a regional tournament was held at Wallsend Sports Centre.

Alan Hedley had approached the Metro Centre to enquire about the possibility of staging an open day there to promote table tennis and they had agreed so Ken Muhr was instrumental in organising an exhibition.

Ken was also involved in organising publicity and the E.T.T.A. provided funds for the hire of tables and the production of leaflets.

This was jointly supported by both Northumberland and Durham Associations and Ken officiated on the day along with Aubrey Drapkin, Alan Hedley and other officials.

Many leading players took part as well as junior, senior and disabled club players and hundreds of members of the public were involved with thousands watching during the course of the day.

Afterwards there were a number of enquiries regarding playing at clubs but despite all of the good work put into the exhibition there was no real increase in numbers playing in the leagues in either Northumberland or Durham.

England hosted the World Championships in Manchester and Aubrey Drapkin was involved as Admin Director. A Northumbria League player actually took part in the championships, Ali Al Kandari representing Kuwait.

Andrew Wilkinson did quite well in the E.T.T.A. Grand Prix events in the Mens Band 1 Singles. He won the event in the Yasaka Western Open in Bath and at one stage was lying in third place in the overall points table for the grand Prix events. He eventually finished tenth.

He also helped Darlington second team to win the second division of the Senior British league.

Ian Robertson was runner up in the Veteran Mens Singles at the Yasaka Southern Open in Andover while Dave Godbold was runner up in the Mens Band 2 Singles at the Yasaka Northern Open in Sunderland.

Several Northumberland players who also played in the Sunderland League entered the Durham Closed tournament. Eddie Smith was the runner up in the Mens Singles and Andrew Wilkinson won the Under 21 Mens event.

Eddie Smith was ranked at 27 in the English Association's Mens ranking list at the start of the season and reached number 23 at one stage, finishing the season at 25.

In the Veteran Mens list Ian Robertson started and finished at number nine, having briefly moved up to number eight.

Gareth Brown started at number ten in the Junior Boys but gradually dropped down the order.

Young Ellie de la Hunt, who had done well in the regional trials and also played well for the county junior team broke into the lower places in both the Junior Girls and Cadet Girls lists.

It was not a good season for the County teams with the seniors finishing seventh out of eight in the County Championships Division 1A and being relegated and the juniors also being relegated from the Junior Division 2A, losing all nine matches.

The veterans were in the Veterans Division 2A where they finished in fourth place.

Northumbria League teams played in the Wilmott Cup, the Rose Bowl and the Alec Brook trophy but made very little progress in any of them. Unfortunately the junior boys side had to concede to Darlington in their first round match.

The County Closed Championships were again financially supported by Joynsons Office Equipment and Anita Printers together with an anonymous donation.

Play was on Easter Sunday at Wallsend Sports Centre, tables being hired from Tees Sport and Aubrey Drapkin was the referee with Jimmy Scope his assistant.

It turned out to be a good day despite the fact that only thirty five men and three women entered. Play in most events was on a small group basis followed by a knock out stage and the tournament finished at 8.30 p.m.

Eddie Smith won the Open Singles, Karen Newby was successful in the Ladies Singles and Ian Robertson won the Veterans Singles for the fifth year running.

Eddie also won the Mens Doubles with Andrew Wilkinson, Jimmy Scope was the winner of the Handicap Singles, Geoff Salter won the Class 2 Singles and Peter Scatchard won the Class 3 Singles as well as the Junior Singles.. The Open Singles Consolation event winner was Steve Penman.

The National Power Northumbria League first division was won by Saint Gabriel's, Newton TTC 'A' won Division Two, Whitley Chapel triumphed in Division Three and Blaydon Youth Club 'B' finished top of Division Four. The Handicap Cup final between Newton 'A' and North Shields YMCA 'B' was won by Newton who retained the trophy that they won the previous year.

There was little change in the financial state of the association at the end of the year with a small surplus of £74 being achieved.

Thirty two teams took part in the 1997 Summer league which had four divisions. As in the winter league Saint Gabriels were the champions. The other divisional winners were North Shields YMCA 'B' in Division Two, Ouston Community Centre 'B' in Division Three and North Shields YMCA 'E' in Division Four.

Alan Morpeth resigned as Chairman at the Annual General Meeting in July 1997 and Dave Scholfield was appointed in his place for season 1997/98 but he resigned as Treasurer and Brian Pierce was appointed. Aubrey Drapkin became County Umpires Secretary and Alan Westwater replaced Tom Turnbull as Development Officer.

Ronnie Bell was appointed to the Management Committee from which Ian Robertson and Ray Rodgers resigned.

Changes to the rules saw the number of teams in the divisions of the Northumbria League restricted to twelve and the fees for entry to the league increased to £45 per team.

The league, now sponsored by Approved Print and Design again had an entry of twenty seven clubs although the number of teams decreased by one to fifty seven. A new club to enter was Birtley Sports Club who were to stay in the league until season 2016/17 at times being called Birtley Leisure Club and simply Birtley.

The restriction of the number of teams in a division meant that there were now five divisions and the top one was designated the Premier Division with the others Division One to Four, a set up that has lasted to this day.

North Shields YMCA continued to be the largest club although with nine they had one less team.

The Handicap Cup was again a feature of the league and the system of producing the handicaps previously suggested by Alan Hedley was brought into operation. This was a success and was well received by the clubs.

Up to date league tables and players individual percentages continued to be sent to clubs on a monthly basis and Pauline Long continued to give weekly copy to the Evening Chronicle. Table Tennis News was not produced as regularly as in previous years but copy supplied by Pauline was published from time to time.

Towards the end of the season copy was also published in The Journal.

Coaching continued to be given at Kenton School where the Advanced Training Centre also continued under the leadership of Peter McQueen. The assistant coach was still David Purdy who continued until the October after which he was unfortunately unable to continue because of an injury and Steve Penman replaced him. John Donnelly continued to help with this project.

Peter Wilkinson and Ray Lydall continued with the coaching at North Shields YMCA as did Alan Hedley at Cramlington T.T.C. Alan also held a 'taster session' in Alnwick. A summer camp was arranged at North Shields YMCA under the direction of Peter McQueen which was successful although only attended by eight players.

Junior and cadet players were again entered in the Regional Junior Trials at Thornaby and Ellie de la Hunt qualified for the Nationals in the Junior Girls.

At the start of the season Alan Westwater was the sole Development Officer but during the year it was decided to split the area of responsibility into four sections.

Alan Hedley took on Northumberland, including the West, John Donnelly and Dave Scholfield the Newcastle area, Alan Morpeth and Dave Scholfield took on North Tyneside and Jimmy Scope the Gateshead area.

Alan Hedley was successful in gaining a grant of £3500 from the Foundation for Sport and Arts for equipment for Cramlington Table Tennis Club.

John Donnelly viewed a possible location at College Street in Newcastle which seemed to be ideal for both practice and matches after speaking to Newcastle Council. A proposal had been received from the Council that a one year licence be initially taken at a cost of approximately £1300 and the premises used by the association as well as karate and real tennis organisations.

The committee decided that, if possible, the association would take the licence and sub let to the other organisations. Income would be generated from those regularly using the premises and also from schools, etc and hopefully the project would become self financing although future years rent would be at twice the figure.

It was agreed that discussions to this effect be held with Newcastle Council with a view to putting it into place for the following year.

Peter McQueen set up a new Newcastle Schools Woolwich Junior League at Blakelaw Comprehensive School. This proved to be popular after an early disappointing response. After the end of the league programme coaching was held at the venue.

Andrew Wilkinson gave an exhibition along with England's Bradley Billington at the Northern Rock North East Sports Awards evening at Seaburn Centre which was featured on Tyne Tees Television.

A cadet team participated in a county event in Darlington but were unable to field any girls. Darlington kindly allowed two of their youngsters to play and the event was won by Cumbria. It was a very enjoyable day and John Donnelly was thanked for organising and looking after the Northumberland side.

The Boys Brigade Regional finals and the Northumberland Association of Boys Clubs area event were both again organised by Alan Hedley. Lee Harris won the Under 19 Boys Singles, Shaun Jackson the Under 16 Boys Singles, Louise Graham the Under 14 Girls Singles and David Graham the Under 12 Boys Singles.

Whilst there were no teams from Northumberland taking part in the Senior British league Eddie Smith was part of the Darlington Squad, playing in every match for their first team who won the Premier Division and winning 66.7% of his matches.

He was also in their team that played away to the Russian side Trud Krasndar in the Nancy Evans European Cup in October 1997 when he won one and lost one, the Russians winning the match 4 - 3.

Andrew Wilkinson was selected for an England representative senior side that visited Saudi Arabia.

In the Grand Prix events Andrew won the Under 21 Mens Singles at Blackpool and also the Mens Doubles with Bradford's Mark Smith. In the Mens Singles event he reached the semi finals.

In the Eastern event at Kings Lynn he got to the quarter finals of the Under 21 Mens and to the semi finals of the Mens Doubles, this time partnered by Eddie Smith.

Dave Godbold was a winner at the East Midlands event in Kettering, coming out on top in the Band 2 Mens Singles.

In the accumulation of Grand Prix points based on results at all of the events Andrew finished in seventh place in the Mens Under 21s and Dave was ninth in the Mens Band 2 category.

Both Eddie Smith and Ian Robertson featured in the English Ranking lists. Eddie started the season at number 28 in the Senior Mens, reached 18 at one stage and finished the season at 21.

Ian began at number 9 in the Veteran Mens rankings, was at number 10 most of the time but finished the season at 15.

There was success for players from Northumberland who also played in Durham when the Durham Closed Tournament was held. Eddie Smith won the Open Singles and was runner up in the Open Doubles with Steve Penman. Geoff Salter was runner up in the Veterans Singles.

In the Teams of Two event Eddie Smith and Darlington's Steve Wilson beat Jimmy Scope and Darlington's B Taylor in the final.

The Northumberland County sides were sponsored by Wenade (U.K.) and the Seniors did well to finish as runners up in the County Championships Senior Division 2A. They were represented by Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold, Caron Guthrie and Lynne Herrington.

The Junior side lost all of their matches in Junior Division 3B. Finding girls had become a major problem and on occasions they had to play without any or just with one girl.

The Veterans side held their own in the Veterans Division 2A, finishing in fourth place.

The Northumbria League representative sides made early exits in the Rose Bowl, Carter Cup and Alec Brook Trophy competitions. Unfortunately due to a mix up the Mens side did not take part in the Wilmott Cup when the Hull League made the arrangements.

The Championships Committee eventually recognised that the Northumbria League were not at fault but it was too late to reinstate them.

The Northumberland Closed Championships were once again sponsored by Joynson's Office Equipment and held at Wallsend Sports Centre with an entry of forty three players. Alan Morpeth organised the tournament and the referee was Aubrey Drapkin. Andrew Wilkinson regained the Open Singles title from Eddie Smith and Lynne Herrington won the Ladies Singles, this being the fourth time that Lynne had been successful.

Eddie and Andrew combined to win the Mens Doubles and Eddie also won the Handicap Singles. The Veterans Singles winner was Bob Atwell and the Open Singles Consolation Singles winner was Fred Woodhouse.

In the banded events Marcus Neidert won the Class 2 Singles, Charlie Mouzon the Class 3 Singles and Les Waters the Class 4 Singles.

As in the previous year Peter Scatchard won the Junior Singles.

North Shields YMCA 'A' were the winners of the Northumbria League Premier Division, Newton 'A' won Division 1, Ouston Community Centre 'A' topped Division 2, Blaydon Youth Club 'B' finished at the head of Division 3 and Maccabi 'A' triumphed in Division 4.

Newcomers Birtley Sports Club 'A' won the Handicap Cup, defeating D.S.S. 'A' in the final.

June 1998 saw the Veterans World Championships taking place in Manchester where Aubrey Drapkin was the Administration Director.

It was a successful year on the financial front with increases of £200 in both advertising income and sponsorship helping towards a surplus of £774 making a total of £3968 to carry forward.

The summer of 1998 again saw four divisions of the Northumbria Summer league take place with Saint Gabriels again the winners of the Division One. The second division was won by Washington 'B', the third division by Oxhill Youth Club and the fourth by D.S.S. 'C' team.

This year a presentation night was to be held at Leo's Restaurant in Northumberland Street in Newcastle but had to be cancelled because of lack of interest.

Ken Lusk retired as Vice Chairman and National Councillor at the start of the 1998/99 season and was replaced by John Donnelly as Vice chairman and Aubrey Drapkin as National Councillor. Ken was sincerely thanked for the work he had done in the past. Karen Newby took on the job of County Match Secretary with Peter Wilkinson dealing with the Junior team and Maurice Cheek with the Veterans.

Bob Atwell was appointed to the Management Committee.

The Northumbria League and the Tynedale league continued to be the two leagues affiliated to the county.

There was a change in the format of the handbook which was organised by Dave Scholfield and which reduced the cost substantially.

There was another increase in the entry fees to the Northumbria League which were increased to £46.50 per team.

There were again five divisions in the Northumbria League which was again sponsored by Approved Print and Design (Wenade U.K.). There was an increase of two teams to fifty nine although the number of clubs was one less at twenty six.

North Shields YMCA still had nine teams in the league and Cramlington Table Tennis Club still had five. Ouston Community Centre now also had five teams.

Pauline Long continued to supply weekly reports to the Evening Chronicle and monthly one to Table Tennis News.

Monthly details were circulated to the Northumbria League team secretaries showing the up to date league tables and the players averages.

The season started with the Advanced Training Centre at Kenton School still being organised by John Donnelly with Peter McQueen still in charge and Dave Purdy again his assistant. Unfortunately it was forced to take an early Christmas break due to lack of finance and poor attendance and it never restarted.

Alan Hedley continued to organise coaching for the youngsters at Cramlington Table Tennis Club and he also attended a High Performance coaching course in Durham.

Four young players, Shaun Jackson, Chris Leyland, David Graham and Kevin Wilson took part in the Northern Region Junior Trials at Billingham but unfortunately none of them progressed through to the National Trials.

Elli de la Hunt was exempt from the Regional in the Junior Girls, going through direct to the Nationals but she made no further progress.

The Regional Development Officer, Ken Muhr, was appointed as Press Information Officer by the E.T.T.A. at their head office in Hastings and Mark Smith was appointed to take his place in the region towards the end of the season.

There was an event for cadet players in Barrow in March 1999 and five of the association's youngsters were sent to take part but it is not known whether or not they had any success.

The five were David Graham, Kevin Wilson, Adam McCormack, Ruth Swinburn and Louise Graham, all from Cramlington Table Tennis Club.

The Northern Regional finals of the National Association of Boys Clubs were again staged in the county with Shaun Jackson winning the Under 19 Boys Singles and Steve Blacklock the Under 16 Boys Singles to progress to the Nationals in Southport.

Les Waters of Cramlington Table Tennis Club appeared on Tyne Tees Television in 'Stars in your eyes' for which the introductory film was made at the Cramlington club.

Sadly a previous chairman, Adam Coffey, died during the season.

A major development took place during the season when John Donnelly reported that the premises in College Street in Newcastle, currently being used as the Newcastle Racket Sport Centre was to become available to be leased from Newcastle Council.

There was a possibility that the premises could be leased from the Council, although a great deal of work would have to be done to make them suitable for the county's use.

At a Special Meeting in December 1998 it was decided to sign a twenty one year lease. Initially to ask for one year rent free with break clauses every seven years and the rent after the first year was likely to be in the region of £2500 per year.

This was eventually agreed with Newcastle Council in March 1999 and work started to be carried out as necessary. A grant of £800 was received from the E.T.T.A. towards the cost of doing this.

Because of any potential financial liabilities to which the members of the Association would become liable it was decided that the Association should become a limited

liability company and this was carried out before the end of the season. The future name of the association would simply be Northumberland Table Tennis.

The Northumberland Closed tournament was again held at Wallsend Sports Centre and again sponsored by Joynson's Office Equipment. Alan Morpeth organised the event with Aubrey Drapkin as Referee. Jimmy Scope was to assist but was taken ill and John Donnelly took his place.

The events were organised on a group basis wherever possible and despite a low entry of thirty six play was very keen and of a high standard.

The Open Singles was won by Eddie Smith, an event he had now won eight times He won the Mens Doubles for the seventh time when he joined forces with Andrew Wilkinson.

Karen Newby was the winner of the Ladies Singles and Malcolm Lusk won the Veterans Singles. The Class 2 winner was Neil Herrington, Peter Wilkinson won the Class 3 event and Shaun Jackson won the Class 4 Singles.

The Handicap Singles winner was Chris Leyland, Ronnie Bell won the Open Singles Consolation Singles and Shaun Jackson was successful in the Junior Singles.

After the event Aubrey circulated a results bulletin.

During the season Ian Robertson was selected to play for England Veterans and Geoff Salter for Scotland Veterans.

Eddie Smith again played for Darlington in the British league and was in the team that hosted a Czech side, Ostrava, in the European Cup. Unfortunately they lost 4 - 1.

Young David Graham did well in the Blackpool Junior 3 Star tournament when he reached the semi finals of the Under 12 Boys singles.

As in the previous season Eddie Smith was in the top twenty of the England Mens Ranking list, starting at number nineteen and eventually rising to number thirteen by the end of the season. In the England Veterans Rankings Ian Robertson again featured, starting at eighteen, being at thirteen for a while and ending the season at sixteen.

1998/99 turned out to be a successful year for the County Senior and Veteran teams who both won their respective divisions.

The senior squad of Dave Godbold, Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Steve Penman, Caron Guthrie and Karen Newby won the County Championships Senior Division 2A while the veteran squad of Ian Robertson, Geoff Salter, Bob Dodds, Malcolm Lusk and Pauline Long were top of County Veterans Division 2A.

Unfortunately the junior side were bottom of County Junior Division 3 although Ellie de la Hunt did really well in her matches. The side were sponsored to the tune of £150 by a Mr. Stan Rutter.

A junior boys team was also entered in the Woolwich Junior League which was played in Leeds on four separate dates. The team of Shaun Jackson, Richard Chapman and Chris Leyland did well to finish in fourth place out of eight.

Success narrowly evaded the Northumbria League representative sides with the Men going out in the Semi Finals of the Wilmott Cup to North Middlesex, the Ladies losing to Leeds in the quarter finals of the Rose Bowl and the Veterans losing in the semi finals of the Alec Brook Trophy.

The men were represented by Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold, Ian Robertson and Ali al Kandari. The Ladies side was Karen Newby, Caron Guthrie and Lynne Herrington and the Veterans team was Bob Dodds, Ian Robertson and Geoff Salter.

Unfortunately the junior side could not find anyone to transport them to Worksop, the venue for their Carter Cup match and they were forced to withdraw.

There were new winners of the Northumbria League Premier Division in Birtley Sports Club whose 'C' team were also successful, taking the first division title. Winners of Division Two were Lemington Community Centre, Phillips Components won Division Three and Cramlington Rejects were the winners of Division Four. North Shields YMCA 'J' team won the Handicap Cup, defeating North Fire 'A' in the final.

The financial side of things saw a surplus of £895 being made thanks mainly to an increase of £400 from the Evening Chronicle for the publicity items and a saving of £355 being achieved from the new format of the handbook.

The 1999 Summer league had an entry of thirty one teams and four divisions were again in action. The First division was once again won by Saint Gabriels, Blaydon Youth Club won Division Two, Byker Community Centre 'C' team won Division Three and North Shields YMCA 'E' team were the winners of Division Four.

Season 1999/2000 started without any changes to the Officers or to the Management Committee of the Association not to the secretaries of the County teams.

There was however an appointment of a schools representative with John Thompson of Gosforth High School taking on the job.

The Northumbria league once again consisted of five divisions and there has been no change to this since then. The number of clubs in the league was twenty five, one less than the previous season, and the total number of teams fell from fifty nine to fifty six. North Shields YMCA continued to be the largest club with ten teams whilst Cramlington TTC continued to enter five teams.

The Rules and regulations of the Association were all amended to reflect the fact that it was now a Limited Company.

Publicity was still in the hands of Pauline Long who continued to supply weekly copy to the Evening Chronicle and monthly articles to Table Tennis News.

Regular updates of the league tables and players' individual percentages continued to be sent to club secretaries.

New coaching sessions were organised at College Street by John Donnelly and the regular coaching sessions at North Shields YMCA were still organised by Ray Lydall. Coaching still continued at Cramlington where starter sessions and coaching for disabled groups were also held during the season.

Two schools, Marden Bridge in Whitley Bay and Central High School for Girls in Newcastle held coaching sessions during the year and a coaches course for grades one and two was held at Benfield School.

At the beginning of April there was a visit by England's Alan Cooke for a coaching session at College Street.

The Northern Region was extended and Mark Smith was now based in Yorkshire.

Regional trials for juniors and cadets were held on Teesside where Steve Blacklock and David Graham took part. David made progress to the Nationals.

There was also a regional cadet event in Teesside where Northumberland entered a team. Unfortunately no girls were available on the day and Durham, as on a previous occasion, kindly lent them two who could not get into their own team.

The boys who played were the Cramlington trio of David Graham, the only one to win any games, Adam McCormack and Daniel Busby.

There was interest in starting a schools league with a meeting being organised by the schools representative John Thompson at Gosforth High School which was attended by the Regional Development Officer mark Smith and top coach Peter McQueen.

A league was in fact started and a 'Come and try it' session was also arranged.

Five teams, two each from Central High School and Gosforth High School and one from Gosforth Middle School progressed to the Schools Regional Finals at Billingham but did not then qualify for the National Finals.

Cramlington Table Tennis Club formed a Woolwich Junior League at their club which was then affiliated to the county.

All of the necessary repairs and alterations were carried out to the College Street premises and a grant of £5000 was received through the Millennium Festival Awards Scheme towards the cost of the heating system and for the purchase of equipment.

Income was received by renting out the parking spaces to city centre businesses and by renting out the hall at certain times to the Newcastle Karate Club as well as to league clubs.

The tables previously held at Kenton School were moved to College Street and the D.S.S. team used the premises whilst their own were unavailable.

Practice sessions were then organised for Friday evenings from 6p.m. until 9p.m. Sessions on Saturday and Sunday afternoons were also held by arrangement with Jimmy Scope.

National Transplant Games were held in Gateshead and in Blyth with Cramlington T.T.C. being greatly involved in the running of them, and Aubrey Drapkin in their organisation.

Help was also given by supplying umpires for the Disabled Games that took place in Willington Quay.

Dave Scholfield and John Donnelly attended a meeting with Brandon Gilhooley of Newcastle City Council, the Regional Development Officer Mark Smith and Judy Rogers of the English Table Tennis Association after which a pilot scheme for the disabled at College Street was put in place.

The National Association of Boys Clubs local tournament saw North Shields YMCA youngsters Chris Leyland and Shaun Jackson qualify for the Regional finals in Bradford. Shaun then went on to reach the National Finals in Widnes where he finished as runner up.

Bill McMaster, former chairman of the Association and long serving organiser of Byker Community Centre club sadly passed away in September 1999.

Many members of the county and league attended his funeral.

On the County Championships front the senior team finished third in Senior Division 1A and the veterans side did likewise in Veterans Division 1A. The juniors again struggled in the Junior Division 3A despite good performances from Ellie de la Hunt.

The Northumbria league sides failed to make any progress in the Rose Bowl, the Carter Cup or the Alex Book Trophy competitions but the senior mens team did extremely well in the Wilmott Cup.

The squad of Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold and Malcolm Lusk fought their way through to the final but eventually lost out to the West Middlesex League.

A team was entered in the Woolwich Junior league in Billingham with David Graham, Steve Blacklock and Mark Hetherington making progress to reach the final stages. At the finals Adam McCormack replaced Mark Hetherington and they finished in third place.

Eddie Smith played for Darlington in a European Club Cup match at home to Neuhausen but they lost 4 - 1.

Eddie started the season at number 12 in the National list but he gradually fell away, finishing at number 21.

Ian Robertson was at number 18 in the Veteran Mens list at the commencement of the season but dropped out of the top thirty by January 2000.

There were no Closed Championships this season as they due to be held on 2nd April 2000 but the new Newcastle Open was arranged for that date and another venue with an available date could not be found.

The Regional Development Officer, Mark Smith, was largely responsible for the arrangement to stage a Grand Prix Satellite Tournament, the Newcastle 3 Star Open at Eldon Leisure Centre with the Northern Region being responsible for financing it.

There was a prize fund of £1500 with Keith Wilson being the organiser and Aubrey Drapkin the referee.

The E.T.T.A. Events manager was also involved and it turned out to be an excellent event with an entry of 85 competitors. As a result it was upgraded to a full Grand Prix event for the following year.

The winner of the Mens Singles was Alan Cooke of Derbyshire and the former All Africa champion, Kubrat Olowabi from Middlesex won the Womens Singles event.

There were two Under 21 singles events with the Welsh player Adam Robertson being successful in the Mens and Cherith Graham of Lancashire winning the Womens.

The Veterans Singles was won by Dave Harding of Surrey and there was also a Mens Band One Singles in which Scotland's Keith Rodger was successful.

The champions of the Northumbria League were Birtley Sports Club 'A' for the second year running. Byker Community Centre 'A' won Division One, North Shields Y.M.C.A. 'F' won Division Two, D.S.S. 'B' won Division Three and North Shields Y.M.C.A. 'K' finished top of Division Four.

The Handicap Cup was won by Cramlington Colts who beat Byker Community Centre in the final. The author of this history was in the winning team along with Richard Graham and young David Graham.

Financially there was a small deficit of £51 partly due to the initial expenditure at the College Street premises and partly because of the additional expenditure incurred with the Wilmott Cup team getting through to the final. There was still a healthy state of affairs with £4812 carried forward to the next year.

At this time a new table suitable for league play cost between £400 and £700, a blade for a bat between £20 and £60, new rubbers approximately £20 per sheet, balls between £6 and £11 per dozen, table tennis shoes £30 to £35, shirts £21 to £25, and shorts £13 to £15 per pair.

Thirty one teams entered the Northumbria Summer league 2000 with four divisions again being organised. Saint Gabriels won the first division for the fourth year in succession, Washington 'B' team winning Division One.

The third division winners were Cramlington Codgers and Maccabi were successful in Division Four.