

A History of Northumberland Table Tennis Association
By Aubrey Drapkin

CHAPTER FIVE

The Peak Years - Part One

1960-1961

The next decade was to turn out to be the years during which the activities of the Association and participation reached their highest level although **1960/61** season in the Northumberland League started with one less club and four fewer teams than the previous season.

There was a lack of support for the North Eastern Division with insufficient teams to actually form a full division and those teams that did enter from that region were spread across the other divisions meaning that there were only eight divisions in total.

The Knock Out cup continued and, despite only four teams entering, the Ladies K.O. Cup also took place again.

Despite having been turned down because of lack of available places the Newton club from the Tynedale area were eventually admitted when there was a late withdrawal and they are still in the league to this day. When they entered their secretary was Edwin Symm and, apart from two years when he did his National Service, he has continued in that role until the present time.

The President and all of the Officers of the Association were unchanged except for that of General Secretary where Adam Coffey had resigned during the previous year. Dave Robson had taken over and he was to continue in that position with Adam Coffey remaining on the Executive Committee where the only other change was that Mr A Wilson had resigned and Mrs. E Robson replaced Mr. J L Murdy. The Vice Presidents remained unchanged and the E.T.T.A. representatives were Stan Lawson and Dave Robson.

The constitution of teams and method of play in the league remained unchanged and there were no changes to the Rules and Regulations of either the Association or the Northumberland League.

The need for coaching was highlighted by the executive committee at the beginning of the season and it was arranged for the National Coach, Jack Carrington, to come to hold a Diploma Course for Coaches in the October. This was duly held and the committee decided to issue registration forms to all of those who attended with one exception although Jack Carrington felt that those on the course were not likely to qualify in full. This, however, then gave some level of coaching expertise to a number of individuals which it was hoped would benefit those who attended coaching courses held by the association.

The committee were also aware of the fact that it would be of great benefit if coaching table tennis in schools came about but nothing is on record that this was able to be done at that time.

However there were several applications from clubs for coaching which did take place and a further course for coaches was also held at Ashington YMCA.

An effort to improve the standard of play of the best young players in the county was made by sending several of them to the Yorkshire Junior Open tournament. They had little success but all benefitted from the experience.

Three Juniors, Stuart Lennie of North Shields YMCA, W. Young of Gateshead YMCA and A. Purvis of Balkwell Saint Peters, went to the E.T.T.A. Junior Trials but unfortunately they were somewhat out of their class.

Phil Clark was back in action in various Open tournaments and was also placed at number ten in the England Women's ranking list. At the East of England Open she won the Women's Doubles with the England number three Betty Bird of Surrey and also reached the semi finals of the Women's Singles. It was a similar story at the North of England with success in the Doubles with J. Williams of Hertfordshire and reaching the Women's Singles semis. Two other semi final defeats were at the Yorkshire Open to another England player Jean McRee of Essex and to Warwickshire's Pam Mortimer at the North of England Open.

Phil also entered the English Open where she went out in the second round of the Women's Singles to Jean Harrower of Middlesex and reached the quarter finals of the Women's Doubles partnered by J. Williams.

Another visit to Bergen was hugely successful although Bergen narrowly won the North Sea Cup. The Northumberland squad won the Junior and Veterans events but lost the Men's First and Second competitions as well as the Doubles.

The County side again played in the Second Division North of the County Championships but only won one of their four matches.

It was decided to enter the Wilmott Cup and the Rose Bowl provided that they were initially held at Central Venues. They were, in fact, held on that basis in Leeds and the Northumberland League therefore participated in both competitions. The Men went out of the Wilmott Cup, losing to Bradford in the second round after defeating York in the first. The Ladies side were without Phil Clark and were no match for Grimsby, losing 5 - 0 to them in the very first round of the Rose Bowl.

The clubs in the Northumberland league played in a variety of premises with thirty of them in Works or Office premises, seven at YMCAs, six in Boys or Youth Clubs, five in Church premises, and seven in various other.

One of them, Westonians, played at Benwell Adult School where the policy of the Trustees of the School was that the consumption of alcohol on the premises was strictly forbidden. At one point during the season they were in danger of losing the use of the premises after a visiting Newcastle YMCA team brought bottles of beer to a match and to make matters worse left the empties behind! Fortunately Westonians were able to continue to use the premises and an official of Newcastle YMCA sent them an apology.

Press coverage was difficult to get and on a couple of occasions when articles had been printed about Phil Clark they had contained inaccuracies. The desperate need of a Press or Publicity Officer was highlighted but nobody could be found who was prepared to take on the task.

Discussion took place at an Executive Committee meeting about the possibility of staging an Open tournament as the only one in the North at that time was the Hartlepool's Open. A sub-committee was set up to look into this but they came to the conclusion that nothing could be done until at least 1963.

A very successful Closed Championships was once again staged at the M P N I Canteen and all events were completed in good time on the same evening.

Johnny Hillyer of Revac returned to form to capture the Men's Singles and Men's Handicap Singles titles while Phil Clark (St. Anthony's O. B.) retained the Women's Singles crown, the Women's Doubles title, this time with Eileen Chape of North Shields YMCA and the Mixed Doubles again with Revac's Roland Earl. P. Norton (Newcastle YMCA) and Pat Tindale (Revac) won the Men's Doubles event, Miss Doyle, another St. Anthony's O.B. player, won the Women's Handicap and R.S. Bell of North Shields YMCA was successful in the Veterans Singles. The Youth's Singles and Boy's Singles were retained by the Gateshead YMCA players W. Young and Colin Archbold respectively.

After stiff competition from Revac and Newcastle YMCA the Gateshead YMCA team became champions of the first division while their second string won Division Two. Westonians won the third division winning all of their matches except the very last one. The two fourth divisions were won by North Shields YMCA 'C' team and Electrics. The Electrics club completed a double when their 'B' team were successful in Division 5a. One of the ex North Eastern Division teams, Ashington YMCA finished top of Division 5b and the other fifth division winners were the new club Newton TTC who won that division without losing a match.

Revac beat Blyth YMCA (a top team many years earlier) in the final of the K.O. Cup and St. Anthony's Old Boys ladies won a very exciting Ladies K.O. Cup final against Tyne Lead.

On the financial side a Donation Scheme based on the Grand National Horse Race was again organised and raised £41 which was largely responsible for the surplus of approximately £47 for the year.

1961-1962

1961/62, the following season started more or less where 1960/61 left off with the same set up of divisions for the Northumberland League and the same method of play. There was one more club affiliated making fifty six in total but the number of teams was exactly the same at one hundred and twelve.

There was one change to the Officers being the addition of a Publicity Secretary and Fred Hannay was appointed to this position. The necessary amendment to County Rule 6a to allow this appointment was made.

All of the other Officers continued to act and there was no change to the Executive Committee nor were there any changes to the Vice Presidents although Johnny Waugh had been invited to become one but had declined. The E.T.T.A. representatives were also unchanged.

The duties of the Publicity Secretary were roughly outlined as having to make every effort to obtain space in the local press for a weekly table tennis article and also to place a similar article

in the E.T.T.A. magazine. Also to try to improve the publication of results and league tables in the local press and the clubs were asked to supply as much information to him as possible.

At the October meeting of the Executive Committee Fred Hannay reported that he was still trying to overcome the apathy of the local press but at a later meeting reported that things had improved and that there was now a regular space in the Newcastle Journal every Saturday. Very little information was supplied by the clubs. No articles were ever published in the E.T.T.A. magazine but it is not known whether any were submitted or not. An attempt was made to obtain sponsorship from Newcastle Breweries and from Hedley Soapworks to run an Open Tournament but was declined although Hedley's did say they would be prepared to help in any other way that they could. The appointment was not really a success and before the end of the season Fred Hannay had resigned. The circumstances leading up to his resignation were reported by the secretary to the Executive Committee but were never minuted. Alan Morpeth took on the responsibility of the job for the remainder of the season.

A considerable amount of coaching was undertaken during the season and in the previous close season with sessions being held in a few clubs, local Youth Clubs and some progress into schools.

The education authorities of Northumberland, Newcastle and Wallsend were contacted but at first only acknowledgements were received. However Wallsend eventually responded and agreed to have a course at their Hadrian Road school. A Junior practice night was held during the season which ten likely youngsters attended and two of them, Peter Hoyles of Newcastle YMCA and a youngster called Nelson from Marine Park came out on top and showed great promise for the future.

The committee also looked into the possibility of setting up a Northumberland Youth Club League, something that actually came into being a few years later.

Madge Waugh was registered as an evening class teacher of table tennis with the Northumberland Education Committee and on one occasion when she was unable to take a course in Bedlington the general secretary filled in for her and as a result he also became an evening class teacher.

A verbal approach for coaching was received from the Northumberland Association of Mixed clubs but surprisingly they were told to write in officially but there is no record of anything taking place.

At the end of the season it was the opinion of the Executive Committee that they felt that the year had been a successful beginning in breaking new ground.

As usual a County team was entered in Division Two North of the County championships but it was defeated in all of the matches and the performance was considered to be the worst ever.

A league team was again entered in the Wilmott Cup but lost 5 - 3 to Leeds in a close match in round one.

An entry was also made into the Rose Bowl for the ladies but when it was discovered that Phil Clark, Eileen Chape and Nancy Young were all unavailable the entry was withdrawn.

It was considered that the Juniors were not of sufficiently good standard to be entered into the newly formed Junior Division North of the County Championships so an attempt was made to enter a team in the Durham Junior League but this was turned down by Durham. The Juniors eventually played six friendly matches against teams in Durham and actually won four of them.

Bergen were unable to send a team to play for the North Sea Cup during the season so that event was postponed until the following year. However a Norway Week for several sports was organised in the area of Northumberland and Durham which included table tennis matches against a very strong team from Bergen which included Knut Havag, the Norwegian national champion. A match against them was played at North Shields which the visitors comfortably won 8 - 2 but the organisation was far from satisfactory and certainly not of the standard that the Association had provided for the North Sea Cup matches.

One of the County Matches had been played at Ashington YMCA and a verbal approach was made to Alan Morpeth asking that player's expenses incurred in getting to Ashington should be paid by the Association. This created a heated discussion and unfortunately the usual pleasant atmosphere of the Executive Committee meeting was somewhat dispelled. The committee members were obviously very divided on the matter with some thinking that any expenses incurred in getting to a match should be paid and others of the opinion that this was a home match and nothing should be paid. It was also felt in some quarters that the honour of playing for the county should be sufficient reward for the players. In the event no firm proposal was made and no vote taken so presumably the matter was dropped.

It was hoped to take several young players to the Yorkshire Junior Open tournament but the only one to go was Miss Robson and she did not make very much progress.

It was a quiet time for Seniors on the Open Tournament circuit, the only record of anyone involved being Phil Clark who reached the semi finals of the Ladies Doubles with Yorkshire's L. Hamilton at the Yorkshire Open and also played in the English Closed Tournament but lost in the second round.

The Closed Tournament continued to go from strength to strength with a record entry being received. In order of any very strong lady players like Phil Clark to take part in it the previous Men's Handicap Singles for re-named the Individual Handicap Singles.

It was again staged at the M P N I. canteen in Benton with the other events exactly as in the previous year. A decision to give prizes instead of trophies for the Men's and Women's Singles, all Doubles and both Handicap Singles events was met with a mixed reception by the players. The tournament was once more a very successful one with all matches being completed on the day. Unfortunately the floor was left in such a poor state that there was a complaint to the association by the M P N I authorities. It was noted that things would have to be improved upon in that direction if the tournament was to be able to be held there in the future.

On the playing side of things Gateshead YMCA's Ron Heslop, whose only other success in the Men's Singles was eleven years previously took the title and he also won the Mixed Doubles with another Gateshead YMCA player, Mrs. D. Ward. Phil Clark (St. Anthony's O.B.) won the Women's Singles again and also the Doubles with Eileen Chape of North Shields YMCA who also came out on top in the Women's Handicap Singles. Harry Dignan (N. Shields YMCA) won the Veterans Singles and also took the Men's Doubles partnered by Stuart Lennie, also of North Shields YMCA whilst the Individual Handicap Singles was won by Alan Wilkie of

Dunston Hill Hospital. The Youths Singles and the Boys Singles were won by the same Gateshead YMCA players for the third year running with Colin Archbold successful in the Youths and W.Young in the Boys.

Despite the fact that clubs were constantly reminded to keep within the regulations the Records Secretary felt that it was one of the worst ever seasons for infringements and hoped that things would dramatically improve in the future.

Gateshead YMCA retained the Division One title and Lansdowne were the top dogs in Division Two. Electrics continued to make remarkable progress, winning Division Three with their first team, Division 4b with their 'B' team and Division 5b with their 'C' team.

Division 4a was won by Ministry of Works, Division 5a by Power House Youth Club and Division 5c by North Shields YMCA Boys team.

The K.O. Competition was again won by Revac who beat Gateshead YMCA in the final and St.Anthony's Old Boys ladies once again defeated Tyne Lead in the Ladies K.O. Competition final. Both finals were excellent matches to watch.

On the financial side it was felt that a Donation Scheme was not really needed but it was an opportunity to go ahead with one on a reduced scale for the express purpose of raising funds to buy a new typewriter for the Association. This happened and £24 was raised, the typewriter being bought in the next financial year at a cost of £27.10.0 (£27.50).

The accounts for the year, which included the income from the Donation Scheme, showed a small surplus of approximately £13.

1962-1963

The increase in participation in league play in the Northumberland League began to show with the advent of the **1962/63** season when the number of clubs increased by seven to reach sixty three with the number of teams rising by fourteen to a total of one hundred and twenty six. This necessitated the formation of an extra fifth division.

New teams included Newcastle NALGO and Woodlands Park. The former were to stay in the league for twenty two years and Woodlands Park remained members for thirty years.

Teams continued to be made up of four players and there was no change to the method of play.

All of the Officials except for the new position of Publicity Sectary where no one could be found to take on the job continued in office and the E.T.T.A. representatives were unchanged. Fortunately a Publicity Secretary was found after the start of the season. There were, however, changes in the membership of the Executive Committee with Phil Clark, Roland Earl, Leo Gowan and Fred Hannay all being elected to replace D.Davison, C B Fairless, W D Robson and Mrs Y J Patterson.

A change to the League regulations saw the introduction of a fine of five shillings (25p) if a team cancelled a match at less than three days' notice and a fine of ten shillings (50p) if a team failed to turn up for a match. In each case points to be awarded to the non-offending team.

On the coaching front National Coaching Diplomas were earned by Harry Dignan (N.Shields YMCA), Phil Clark (St.Anthonys) and B.Reid and Dave Robson (Westonians) with Stan Lawson (M P N I) gaining a Teaching Theory Certificate. Later in the season Stan Denton (Ministry of Works) was also awarded the Coaching Diploma.

Several courses were arranged during the year and Junior Trials were held as well as quite successful County Trials.

There was concern that members of the association were at times playing against players in the South Shields League, the Berwick on Tweed League, a league in the Hexham area and the Tynemouth League, all of which were unaffiliated leagues. The Berwick League actually affiliated during the season, the Hexham and South Shields leagues promised to affiliate at the start of the following season but the Tynemouth League stated that they had no intention of affiliating to anyone and that Northumberland Association players would not be allowed to play in their league.

The discussion about these leagues also led to discussion about the possibility of forming an Inter Town League but this was left in abeyance for the time being.

Arrangements had been made for a reciprocal visit to Norway by the organisers of the Gateway to Britain who had contacted Edgar Reay of Durham. He went ahead with the organisation of the table tennis participation in conjunction with the Sunderland Committee but they completely ignored Northumberland. Dave Robson had protested in writing and lengthy correspondence together with Reay's reply were read at an Executive Meeting in October.

In view of the non-co-operative nature of the reply the committee decided to ignore it and felt there was no point in proceeding further in the matter.

Obviously relations with Durham were at a low ebb with Durham in the past refusing to allow the South Shields League to affiliate to Northumberland and trying to stop clubs based South of the Tyne from playing in the Northumberland League and refusing to accept entry of a Northumberland Junior side including the current season under the name of Newcastle into the Durham Junior League.

A meeting with some of the E.T.T.A. officials was arranged at the M P N I in Benton and it turned out to be most satisfactory from a Northumberland point of view and founded good relations with the governing body. Unfortunately, the rank and file membership did not really support the meeting with only twenty-four Northumberland people present. General discussion took place covering such points as future E.T.T.A. fees, their administrative structure, international matches as well as county representation and development.

There was a great deal of promise among the younger players, W.Young being selected to attend an E.T.T.A. sponsored intermediate tournament in Stevenage although he did not have a very inspiring time but would have gained a lot of experience.

Four of the juniors in Brian Burn, Joe McLeod, Ball and Longstaffe attended area trials where McLeod reached the group final play off. Burn reached the semi finals of the Under 15 Boys Singles at the Yorkshire Junior Open.

Thirteen year old Maureen Heppell, the niece of Phil Clark, who played for Newton in the Northumberland League had only been playing competitive table tennis for six months when she entered her very first tournament, the Sussex Junior Open.

Her father, Len, had decided the time was right for her to play in as many tournaments as possible. The round trip to Hastings and back was 600 miles but it was to become typical of the distances she was prepared to travel.

Not only did she reach the semi finals of the Junior Girls Singles she actually won the Under 13 Girls event.

She had a great deal of success in the Eagle/Girl competition and did well in other tournaments, reaching the final of the Junior Girls singles in the North East of England, the semi finals of the Lancashire Open Girls Singles, and the final of the Under 15 Girls Singles at the Yorkshire Junior Open.

A venture north of the border saw her described as a delightful 13 year old who won the Junior Girls Singles and the Senior Women's Doubles partnered by Pam Mortimer of Warwickshire.

Apart from the juniors Phil Clark reached the semi finals of the Womens singles at the Hartlepoons Open.

Brian Burn, Joe McLeod and Maureen Heppell were considered by the executive committee to be the Association's most promising players.

The North Sea Cup was competed for at the M P N I in Benton but this year the Bergen only sent a party of three and they also played in a small invitation tournament.

Jack Oughton, Stuart Lennie and Roland Earl represented Northumberland in the North Sea Cup match and ran out 6 - 3 winners.

The County team once again had a very lean time in Division Two North of the County Championships and because of the fact that the early rounds of neither the Wilmott Cup nor the Rose Bowl were played on a regional basis at a central venue both League teams were withdrawn.

Friendly matches were played against the Whitehaven League in Hexham with success for both the Senior and Junior teams.

Having been refused entry to the Durham Junior League the junior side did play a couple of friendly matches against Hartlepool's juniors, winning both.

Once again the question of paying expenses for players representing the county or the league in home matches was raised and this time it was decided that such expenses in excess of two shillings and sixpence (12 1/2p) would be paid.

At the beginning of the season the A.G.M. gave the Secretary permission to inaugurate a County Youth League and steps in this direction were taken with the formation of a sub committee to investigate and the same sub-committee also took on board the possibility of an Inter Town League.

In an attempt to overcome the non-election of a Publicity Secretary at the Annual General Meeting the executive committee invited Fred Hannay to take on the role again but he refused stating that he was unable to do so under the existing arrangements for receipt of scorecards.

As the Chronicle had a team participating in the League it was decided to offer the job to their secretary, Mr. Gus Park, and he kindly agreed. After discussions with him it was agreed that he would initially concentrate on the Chronicle only for our main features.

It was subsequently recorded that there had been more success than in previous years. However a request to the Chronicle to sponsor a Northumberland tournament was refused.

There was a record entry of 234 including a strong contingent from Berwick on Tweed into the Closed Championships which meant that the tournament stretched to two Saturdays. All eventually went well although it was obvious that there was a need for more help in running the event in the future. The Men's Singles was won by Jack Oughton (Newcastle YMCA) who also secured the Men's Doubles title with Roland Earl of M P N I. Phil Clark, now playing for Revac, was once again successful in the Women's Singles, winning it for what was to be the tenth and last time. She also won the Women's doubles with her niece Maureen Heppell of Newton. The Mixed Doubles title was retained by the Gateshead YMCA pairing Ronnie Heslop and Mrs. D. Ward.

Harry Dignan (N.Shields YMCA) was once again successful in the Veterans Singles. Young Brian Burn of North Shields YMCA won the Junior (Under 17) Singles and also took the Individual Handicap Singles. while his club mate Stuart Lennie won the Youths (under 19) Singles.

The Women's Handicap Singles went to Florence Kauffman of M P N I.

It was a good year in the administration of the Northumberland League this time round.

North Shields YMCA won the First Division and their 'C' team took Division Three. The Second Division was won by Reyrolles and the two Fourth Divisions were won by West End Boys Club 'B' team and Kenton Civil Service whose 'B' team were successful in Division 5c. Hayhole Works won Division 5b and two teams of students, Kings College and Eustace Percy Hall were successful in divisions 5a and 5d respectively.

North Shields YMCA completed the double by beating Gateshead YMCA in the final of the K.O. Cup and Tyne Lead were successful in the Women's K.O. Cup.

There were no financial problems and a small surplus was made taking the cash in hand to £232.

1963-1964

The momentum in participation in the Northumberland League continued with 140 teams from sixty eight clubs at the start of the **1963/64** season which necessitated the formation of a tenth division. As it was considered bad policy to extend the fifth divisions any further a premier Division was formed from the previous first division and the old first division down over were renamed and filled up on merit.

There was no change in the Officers with Gus Park being confirmed as Publicity Secretary nor was there any change in Executive Committee or the E.T.T.A. representatives. However Ronnie Heslop and Adam Coffey resigned from the Committee mid-season and Phil Clark at the end of the season.

One of the Vice Presidents, the Hon Denis G Berry had resigned because he was leaving the area. New appointments were D S Davidson of Gosforth and Johnny Waugh of Whitley Bay.

The number of players in a team remained at four and the method of play was unchanged.

RAF Acklington joined and because of the distance involved by other clubs to their venue they agreed to play all of their matches away from home if necessary.

The Hexham and South Shields League followed Berwick in becoming affiliated to the Association and several minor alterations to the Association's rules were made to cover the affiliation of autonomous leagues.

The Club Match Rules were amended to allow for the first four sets of a match to be claimed at 7.00p.m. if the opposition were not present and to allow the match to be claimed in entirety if the opponents failed to arrive at all by 7.30p.m.

A great deal of importance was given to the coaching of the younger players and the National Coach again visited the county. He held sessions at Newcastle, Berwick and Kings College, Newcastle as well as schools in Bedlington, Newbiggin and Blyth.

All of the association's panel of coaches did a lot of work, particularly in the schools which appeared to be worthwhile judging by the keen interest eventually shown by the Northumberland Education Youth Organisation.

Two county team trials were held at North Shields YMCA and special junior practise sessions were arranged.

The Annual General Meeting had given the go ahead to the Executive Committee to organise an Inter Zone Competition with the current member clubs of the Northumberland League being divided into eight zones but there was very little response to this idea by the clubs themselves and the idea was dropped in favour of forming an Inter Town League for the commencement of the following season for which a considerable amount of progress was made.

The secretary, Dave Robson, had attended a meeting with Youth Centre leaders at County Hall when they had expressed an unanimous wish that the association should run league competitions for them until such time as they were able to do so themselves and that there were about twenty five youth clubs that could be involved. The executive committee instructed Dave to go ahead and he put the wheels in motion to do so and twenty centres expressed an interest, so arrangements were put in place to commence a Youth League for the following season.

The Publicity Secretary continued to work with the press to get copy published and especially, to get advance publicity for county matches. By the end of the season a quite satisfactory amount of cover had been obtained when the occasion warranted it.

It was thought that Northumberland should host an Open Tournament and the committee obtained provisional approval from the E.T.T.A. to run such an event on the assumption that the next Annual General Meeting would approve.

The Association became a subscribing member of the Northumberland Playing Fields Association and were now in contact with the Governing Bodies of other sports. The hope was

that if and when the proposed multi sports stadium in Newcastle became fact membership of the that organisation would ensure that table tennis was not forgotten, and that adequate facilities and the association's own advice would be provided for.

The County Senior team were once again a disappointment, losing all five matches played in the County Championships. Difficulty in getting a team out was a problem and at one stage the committee expressed disgust at the attitude of some of the leading senior players.

On the other hand, the newly formed Junior side won five, drew one and lost only two of their matches to finish runners up in Junior Division North. The two losses were to Yorkshire who won all of their matches and the division. Of the Junior performances young Maureen Heppell started her county career by winning six of her eight sets.

The Northumberland League Senior Men lost to Leeds in the second round of the Wilmott Cup and the Women fared even worse, going out of the Rose Bowl in the first round to Bradford. Both competitions were zoned and played at Leeds.

Friendly matches were again played against the Whitehaven League with both the Senior and Junior teams being successful.

The now regular visit to Bergen was very successful in all but the playing side with defeat in the North Sea Cup to the extent of 5 - 0.

The leading junior boy Brian Burn had a deal of success in Open tournaments, winning the Boys Singles at the South Yorkshire Open. In other events he reached the final of the Boys Singles at the Hull Open, the final of the Under 15 Boys at the Yorkshire Junior where he also reached the semi finals of the Under 17s, the final of the Boys Singles at the Midland Open and also at the East of England Open.

Young Maureen Heppell had even more success, winning five titles on her travels. They were the Under 15 Girls Singles at the Yorkshire Junior where she was also a runner up in the Girls Doubles, the Girls Singles at the South Yorks Open, the Under 15 Girls Doubles at the Sussex Junior (also semi finalist in the Under 15 Girls Singles), the Under 15 Girls Singles at the Cheshire Junior, and the Cadet Girls Singles at the North East of England. She was also a finalist in the Girls Singles at the North of England, the Hull Open, where she also reached the semis of the Mixed Doubles with Stuart Lennie, and the Pontefract Open. In addition, she reached the final of the Eagle and Girl Under 15 Competition and was runner up in the News of the World scheme. She was also a losing finalist in the Girls Doubles at the Cheshire Junior Open where she also lost in the semis of the Girls Singles. Other semi finals were reached in the Girls Singles at the Merseyside Open, the Lancashire Open and the East of England Open and of the Women's Doubles at the Lancashire Open.

Both Brian and Maureen were invited to the E.T.T.A. Junior trials, Brian being one of ten boys and Maureen one of eleven girls.

Maureen's father, Lennie got to the semis of the Veterans Singles at the Merseyside whilst Harry Dignan won two Veterans titles being successful at the Hull and East Riding and at the Yorkshire Open.

The Northumberland Championships were staged at the M P N I Canteen which was now established as their home and the leading light this time round was Stuart Lennie of North Shields YMCA. Not only did he win the Men's Singles, he won the Men's Doubles with Harry Dignan, and the Mixed Doubles with Eileen Chape, both Harry and Eileen also of North Shields YMCA. And just for good measure he retained the Youths Singles.

A congratulatory letter had been sent to Phil Clark who had won the Women's Singles for the tenth time in the previous year and this year she was succeeded by her young niece Maureen Heppell who now played for St. Anthony's Old Boys. The Women's Doubles was won by the M P N I pairing of Florence Kauffman and J. Turnbull and Harry Dignan won the Veterans Singles for the third year in a row. The Individual Handicap Singles was won by P. Graham of West End Boys Club with Florence Kauffman retaining the Women's Handicap crown and North Shields YMCA's Brian Burn retaining the Junior Singles title,

On the League front Sid Holt unfortunately reported that it had been a Record Secretary's nightmare with nine resignations from the league and about one hundred postponed matches. Over forty of these were in division 5d alone mainly because of the fact that there were four University teams in that division.

North Shields YMCA retained the championship, winning the newly named Premier Division and their Juniors were successful in Division Two. M P N I won Division One and North Shields Boys Club finished top of the third division, the fourth division winners being Eustace Percy Hall in 4a and West End Boys Club 'C' team in 4b. The four fifth division winners were Borough of Wallsend Sports Club. M P N I 'E' team, South Shields Corporation Welfare and newcomers Methodist International House.

North Shields YMCA beat Revac in the final to retain the K.O. Cup and the final of the Women's K.O. Cup was an all M P N I affair with the first team defeating the 'B' team.

Financially there was a small loss of approximately £35 at a time when bats could cost anything from six shillings (30p) up to just over one pound and as much as thirty-five shillings and sixpence (approx. £1.77). A sheet of rubber was about seven shillings and sixpence (approx. 37p), shirts were approximately sixteen shillings (80p) and a new table was anything from £38 to £45. The average weekly wage at that time was approximately eighteen pounds.

1964-1965

The highest ever number of clubs playing in the Northumberland League happened in the **1964/65** season when it totalled seventy nine from which one hundred and fifty two teams took part. The clubs were made up of thirty eight works or office clubs (73 teams), eight Church Youth Clubs, ten Youth or Boys Clubs, nine YMCA clubs, four Universities and ten other. This necessitated the formation of an eleventh division and following a rule change the divisions for the season were divisions one, two, three, four, two fifth divisions, two sixth divisions, two seventh divisions and an eighth division. A youth section also came into being in the Northumberland Youth Association League.

Teams were still made up of four players and the method of play stayed the same.

One new club was West Allotment who competed in the league for a total of twenty-one years split over two spells.

In addition to the Northumberland League the Inter Town League was formed and affiliated to the County Association.

The changes to rules meant that the formation of divisions had to be made on the basis of the first four being numbered consecutively from 1 to 4 and thereafter in two streams, 'A' and 'B'. This meant that it would take a very good new club in the bottom division some seven years to get into the top division and this was to prove to be unpopular and only lasted for one year.

Other changes to rules saw an increase in the league fees with the payment of £1 per club plus fifteen shillings (75p) being replaced with a straight forward twenty eight shillings (£1.40) per team. Payment by autonomous leagues was based on two shillings (10p) per team.

In order to save having to send out handbooks and score sheets to those clubs that did not attend the Special Meeting held before the start of the season a rule came into force stating that any club not represented at the Special Meeting would be liable to expulsion from the league.

Under E.T.T.A. regulations the County's National Councillor as the E.T.T.A. representative was now called had to be ex-officio a member of the executive committee if not already a member. A representative of each autonomous league was also able to attend executive committee meetings as a full member.

The season started with no changes to the Officers but three new members of the Executive Committee in J Richardson, B Reid and Miss E Smith to replace those who had resigned. Dave Robson represented Northumberland on the new E.T.T.A. National Council and he was appointed to the E.T.T.A. Tournament Committee.

The death of Johnny Waugh who had served the association extremely well in various roles between 1933 and 1958 and was one of the Vice Presidents was sadly recorded. One new Vice President was appointed in Adam Coffey.

The South Shields League had affiliated but the dispute over this with Durham persisted and eventually the South Shields League were told by Northumberland that for the future the decision as to who they affiliated to would have to be their decision alone.

Participation in the E.T.T.A. Master Points Scheme was discussed, and it was agreed that Northumberland would participate from the beginning of the next season.

Discussion also took place regarding the possibility of staging an International match within the county and Dave Robson was instructed to explore the possibility with the E.T.T.A.

Another item that was considered was the separation of the Northumberland League from the County Association, but this idea was dropped as it was decided that it was impossible on financial grounds.

Harry Dignan took on the organisation of coaching and quite a good deal of effort was put into this. Coaching took place with regular weekly sessions being held in Wallsend (four centres),

Ponteland, Prudhoe, Blyth (two centres), Bedlington (two centres), and two centres in Whitley Bay.

Harry worked closely with the Northumberland Education Authority and also with the National Coach, Jack Carrington who visited the area in the October when coaching days under his guidance were held. These included a day at Longbenton, a session with the Northumberland Association of Youth Clubs, and a mass rally at Guidepost School which was paid for by Northumberland Education Committee.

A few weekly sessions were held at the request of Gateshead YMCA and North Shields YMCA organised weekly tournaments. Advanced coaching for the best young players and for pupils on the students list for coaching diplomas were also held.

A new coaching centre was opened at Valley Gardens School in Whitley Bay in conjunction with Northumberland Education Committee, Harry being a leading light in this venture.

All of this seemed to have a tremendous effect with a massive improvement in the standard of players at Youth Club level.

Another area where there was a great improvement was that of publicity with Gus Park making inroads into the local press. Unfortunately, he found it necessary to resign at the end of the season because of pressure of business.

Arnie Warents had also started supplying copy although he had to be asked not to overlap with Gus. He did get copy in the English Table Tennis Magazine 'Table Tennis' as he had done previously for Durham, which was the first time that Northumberland copy had been published in it.

The County team continued to struggle in Division 2 North of the County Championships, and it was only the fact that newcomers Cumberland were very weak that they did not finish bottom again.

However, a Junior team was again entered into the Junior Division North and did well in winning three, drawing one and only losing one match to finish in third spot.

The Wilmott Cup and Rose Bowl Northumberland League teams were both eliminated by Sunderland in the first round of each competition.

Unfortunately, it did not prove possible to arrange anything with Bergen regarding the North Sea Cup.

The lack of spectator interest and resultant poor attendances at the home county matches continued to be a disappointment.

The first ever Northumberland Open Tournament was staged at the M.P.N.I. canteen in Longbenton in the October and it turned out to be a very successful event although the entry of 120 was not as big as that for other Open tournaments and the local entry was rather low.

The star of the show was Lesley Proudlock from Yorkshire who captured three titles. Not only did she win the Women's Singles but took the Mixed Doubles with Mike Symonds of Lancashire and the Women's Doubles partnered by Northumberland's own Phil Clark. Mike Symonds was the Men's Singles winner and the Lancashire pairing of Keith Forshaw and Ron Allcock triumphed in the Men's Doubles. There were local winners in the Junior Singles which was won by Brian Burn and, in the Veterans where Harry Dignan came out on top.

Brian Burn produced the shock of the day in the Men's Singles when he defeated the North East's top player and England number five Denis Neale.

W D & H O Wills supplied what were described as wonderful prizes for both the Men's and Women's Singles events.

For the first time there was a big interest in Open Tournaments by Northumberland players with two dozen going to the Lancashire Open and nearly three dozen to the Yorkshire Open. There was a degree of success for some of the male players with young Brian Burn being the most successful despite not winning any Singles events. He was runner up in the Boys Singles at the Lancashire and at the North East of England as well as winning the same event at the Northumberland. He also reached the semi finals of the Boy's Singles at the Bucks Open, the Under 19s at the North East of England and the Boy's Singles at the Merseyside. Playing with Joe McLeod he won the Junior Doubles at the Midland and was a semi finalist in both the Men's Doubles and Boys Doubles at the Cumberland and in the Junior Doubles at the Midland as well as reaching the semi finals of Boys Doubles at Cumberland in the Boy's Doubles at the Yorkshire Junior.

Joe also reached the semi finals of the Mens Singles at the Cumberland. Arthur Chilvers got to the semis of the Men's Singles at the Cumberland Open. At the Hull Open Stuart Lennie reached the semi finals of the Men's Singles and Peter Whiteman lost at the same stage of the Boys Singles.

At Veteran level Harry Dignan triumphed at the Northumberland, the Hull and at the Yorkshire Open where he beat Len Heppell in the final. Len won the Veterans Single final of the Stevenage and also in the semi final of the Hull Open.

On the female side Phil Clark reached the semi finals of the Women's Singles at both the East of England and the Hull as well as winning the Women's Doubles at the Northumberland before announcing her retirement but the year belonged to her niece Maureen Heppell.

Maureen set a junior record by winning the Girls Singles in no less than twelve Open tournaments - North Of England, Birmingham, Portsmouth, Hull, Merseyside, Midland, Yorkshire Junior, Lancashire, Scottish, Gwent, Bucks, and North East England. Just for good measure she also won the Women's Singles when she ventured North of the border taking the West of Scotland and the Scottish Open titles. She also had success in the Women's Doubles at the Scottish and in the Mixed Doubles at the Yorkshire Open, the Scottish and the Gwent Opens.

She was also runner up in a number of singles events including the English Open Girls Singles and at the English Closed she reached the semi finals of the Women's Consolation Singles. There were also a lot of events in which she at least reached the semi finals.

Unfortunately, the list of honours did not include her local tournament as she was playing in the English Open on the date that it took place.

The excellent form of both Brian Burn and Maureen Heppell was recognised at International level with Brian been selected to play for England Juniors against Wales when he won two singles and also a doubles with Johnny Kedge of Yorkshire as England triumphed 9 - 1.

Maureen who had been ranked at number three in the England Junior Girls Trials was selected to play against Germany at Crawley where she won the only singles set that she played in and also won the doubles with Stuart Gibbs of Essex although England were beaten 5 - 4.

Letters of appreciation were sent by the Executive Committee to both Brian and Maureen and also to Phil Clark on her retirement.

There was a new Men's Singles Champion in Mike Ford of M P N I at the Closed championships which were held at what now was the regular venue at the M P N I canteen in Longbenton.

Another M P N I player, Florence Kaufman won the Women's Singles, a third, Norma Robson taking the Women's Handicap Singles and also the Women's Doubles with Gateshead YMCA's Mrs D Ward.

North Shields YMCA's Harry Dignan retained the Veterans crown and also the Men's Doubles with club mate Stuart Lennie. Lennie also retained the Mixed Doubles title with Eileen Chape, also from N.Shields YMCA. D.White, a Newcastle University student based at Henderson Hall triumphed in the Handicap Singles, Peter Hoyles (Newcastle YMCA) won the Youths singles and North Shields' Brian Burn won the Junior Singles once again.

The Northumberland Youth Association League got underway with twenty six teams taking part in three divisions split into Tyne Area, Blyth, Alnwick, Morpeth Area and Ashington, Bedlington Area. Play offs at the end of the season were held to decide the overall winner but unfortunately there is no record of league tables or as to which Youth team won it. It had been well organised by Mr. Farrow and a letter of thanks was received from the Northumberland Education Committee.

The new Inter Town League had twelve teams consisting of North Shields who won all of their matches to become the first champions, runners up Newcastle, together with Gateshead, South Shields, Hexham, Hebburn, Wallsend, Ashington, Blyth, Berwick, Morpeth and Whitley Bay although Whitley Bay did not complete the season.

The administration of the Northumberland League had been good but unfortunately there were still 93 postponements, 63 of which involved the various university teams.

The champions were, for the third year running, North Shields YMCA with Westonians winning Division Two, North Shields Boys Club taking the third division and Tyne Lead finishing on top of Division Four.

The fifth divisions went to Woodlands Park and Ministry of Labour, the sixth divisions to Tynemouth Village Boys Club and Maccabi 'C' team, the seventh to Prudhoe Youth Club and

National Assistance Board whilst newcomers West Allotment Boys Club won Division Eight. North Shields YMCA won the K.O. Cup for the third year in a row and M P N I retained the Womens K.O. Cup.

Unfortunately, there had been an incident involving Stuart Lennie at a Yorkshire tournament held in Scarborough which resulted in a complaint being received from Scarborough although no details were recorded of what had happened.

However, the Executive Committee obviously decided that whatever it was deserved strong action being taken as Lennie was removed from the coaches list, asked to give an apology and suspended Nationally for the period 1st September 1965 to 9th October 1965.

Scarborough and Yorkshire County were both informed of the outcome.

The increase in membership of the Northumberland League had brought in some extra income and this, coupled with less being spent on the County matches during the season resulted in a surplus for the year of approximately £105 and the committee considered that the financial state of the association was very healthy indeed.

1965-1966

1965/66 saw the loss of the South Shields League as an autonomous league affiliated to the Association but both the Berwick League and the Hexham League continued their affiliation as did the Inter Town League.

Because of the growing amount of administration work three new officials were appointed with Ron Patterson becoming Handbook Secretary, Michael Lynch becoming Assistant General Secretary and Dave Barron appointed as Assistant Records Secretary.

Arnold Warents was appointed as Publicity Secretary to replace Gus Park and changes to the Executive Committee brought in J F Griffiths, W M Kidd and Terry Wilkinson to replace Ron Patterson, the new Handbook Secretary, and Roland Earl and Fred Hannay who had both resigned.

Unfortunately, the position of National Councillor lapsed due to the fact that the application submitted to the E.T.T.A. was invalid. The official list of qualified umpires consisted of Adam Coffer, Harry Dignan, Syd Holt, B.Reid, J.Richardson and Dave Robson.

In order to spread the load of the admin work the Executive Committee appointed four sub committees to deal with County Management, League Management, Affiliated/Associated Leagues and Coaching.

There was little change in the number of clubs or teams and once again there were eleven divisions in the Northumberland League. However, the distribution of divisions was altered to bring in a pyramid system with one first division, two second, three third, four fourth and one fifth.

Teams still consisted of four players and the method of play was unchanged.

Byker Community Centre were newcomers to the league and were to be members until 2016/17, a total of fifty-two years.

On the coaching front Harry Dignan was appointed as Coaching Secretary and all credit to him was due as an increasing number of young players were taking advantage of practice sessions and were beginning to make their presence and ability felt. It was a tremendous boost to Harry and the various coaches involved and was hoped to spur them on to greater efforts in the future.

A coaching rally was held at Thomas Addison Boy's School in Hailsham Avenue, Longbenton under the direction of the National Coach, Jack Carrington which was sponsored by Northumberland Education Committee.

Coaching was highlighted in a television programme on Tyne Tees Television showing the coaching techniques from the new Lightfoot Stadium featuring Harry Dignan and Dave Robson and also including an exhibition by Brian Burn and Peter Hoyles.

Training sessions for top players were being held by the E.T.T.A. in Bradford and it was agreed to support this at a cost of £4 per year, with players to pay their own entry fees and travelling costs. A session was also held for advanced juniors.

Further coaching sessions were held during the season sponsored by Frank Brennan Limited and it was considered that all of these coaching activities were making a worthwhile contribution to the Association. Thanks, were expressed to the many coaches and helpers involved and in particular to Northumberland Education Committee Youth Officers for their tremendous co-operation and assistance.

The need for more coaches was also apparent.

The Committee were empowered to send one Senior and or Junior player of outstanding merit to the English Open and or Closed if the opportunity arose and it was agreed to send Brian Burn to the Closed and to subsidise him to the extent of £15 if necessary.

Maureen Heppell was nominated for the Junior Trials but she was so successful elsewhere that she reached number one spot in the E.T.T.A. Junior Rankings and number six in the Senior Rankings. She also played for England in the European Junior Championships where she won one and lost one in her singles group, did likewise in the doubles and played one and lost one in the mixed doubles.

She also played for the English Senior Ladies team, being 'the baby of the team' in the European Championships. In the singles she had a bye in round one, beat Michele Stirn (Switzerland) in round one and Greta Petterson (Finland) in round two before losing out to Signe Pajsarv of Russia in the fourth round. She also played in the team event in an early group match against Greece. but not in the later matches.

Maureen's father Len must have been a very proud man when Maureen reached number one junior. To coach first his sister Philomena and then his daughter to number one junior was no mean feat but Len never had any doubts that he would achieve this ambition.

Brian Burn was also making a name for himself and he reached number three in the E.T.T.A. junior boys rankings, finished seventh in the European Qualifying tournament. He was picked for England Juniors in matches against Wales and Scotland, both of which England won 10 - 0.

On the tournament scene Maureen won Girls Singles titles at the North of England, Newbury Junior, Merseyside, Middlesex, Cumberland, Lancashire, Newbury Senior, Kent and Scottish after losing in the final at the East of England. She also picked up the Senior Women's title at the East of England and the Cumberland, the Women's Doubles crown at the Cumberland and the Scottish. Four Mixed Doubles titles were also hers being at the North of England, the Cumberland, Lancashire and Scottish. She was also runner up in the Butlins Boy and Girl of the Year event.

Brian was successful in the Men's Singles at the Cumberland, Pontefract and Scottish, won the Junior Boys titles at the Cumberland, Lancashire and Cheshire Junior as well as reaching the final at the Newbury Junior and at the Merseyside. He also won the Under 17 Singles at the Newbury Junior and the Boys Doubles at the Scottish. Three Men's Doubles were his, the Lancashire partnered by Joe McLeod, the Scottish and at the Cambridge when Stuart Lennie was his partner.

Other Northumberland players saw Arnie Warents reach the final of the Mixed Doubles at the Cumberland, Lennie reach the semi final at the Lancashire as well as winning the Northumberland Men's Doubles.

Phil Clark lost in the final of the Northumberland Women's Singles and also in the semi final of the North East England. Veterans Lennie Heppell and Harry Dignan also did well with Lennie winning the Veterans Singles at the Merseyside, the Lancashire and the Scottish as well as losing in the Veterans final at the Northumberland. Harry won both the Yorkshire and Northumberland Veterans titles. Peter Whiteman lost in the final of the Boy's Singles and Pauline Burns lost in the final of the Girl's Singles at the Northumberland.

The question of the situation regarding Stuart Lennie had been discussed at the Annual General Meeting when the decision of the executive to have him suspended was overturned but there still appeared to be discord between Lennie and the Association as he stated that he no longer wished to represent the County but later changed his mind.

The performance of the County team was again disappointing with the Senior team only winning one match and losing four. However, the match which was lost to Yorkshire was described as surely being one of the finest matches seen in the area for a very long time. The home matches were played at three different venues with Cumberland being entertained at North Shields YMCA, Durham at Berwick and Yorkshire at Gateshead YMCA.

The Juniors also had a poor season winning only once. drawing one match and losing two.

The League representative teams had a measure of success with the Men's side beating Darlington, Sunderland and Carlisle before going out of the Wilmott Cup to Harrogate. In the Rose Bowl the Women's team beat Sunderland but then lost away to Manchester.

The Junior Boys side played in the Carter Cup and beat Leeds before losing to Bolton.

The North Sea Cup was won when Bergen were beaten in Bergen 5 - 2 and then in Newcastle 5 - 0.

The visit of the Norwegians at Easter was unfortunately marred by the tragic death of Walter Kaufman, the Bergen Association Chairman. This was a sad blow as Walter was well liked and

respected by all who knew him. Those who were able, did what they could to relieve the distress of the visiting guests and Harry Dignan was heartily commended for the very sympathetic and efficient manner in which he was able to deal with this most unfortunate situation. Suitable floral tributes were sent from the Association.

A letter was later received from the Vice Chairman and Secretary of the Bergen Association thanking Northumberland for the consideration and kindness shown to their party at the unhappy time.

The Publicity Secretary, Arnie Warents wished to set up a table tennis magazine in the county and this was agreed to. The new magazine, called 'Sandwich' got under way with the first publication in October 1965 and was well received. An article by Harrison Edwards was the highlight with others by Stan Lawson, Harry Dignan and Brian Burn. Invaluable help was given by Brian Reid both in production and distribution. The biggest problem was distribution and the magazine cost £7 over the first three months but the committee decided that it should continue at least until the end of the season. In the event it developed into a good publication and was to continue for some considerable time after that.

The inter town league had teams from Hebburn, North Shields, Wallsend, South Shields, Newcastle, Hexham, Gateshead and Prudhoe, a total of eight but enthusiasm for this competition appeared to wane and many matches were not played. North Shields were the eventual winners.

The Northumberland Youth Association was once organised by Bob Farrow and had two divisions of twelve teams and again functioned quite well, producing some good young players. A few clubs took steps to transfer their best teams into the Northumberland League and it was anticipated that more would follow in the following season showing that the Youth League was fulfilling its proper function.

Two new trophies were donated to the Association, the first being the Heppell/Clark Trophy donated by Phil Clark for presentation each year to the winner of the Girls Singles event at the Closed tournament.

Mrs Madge Waugh donated a trophy for presentation annually to the person considered to have done the most in the cause of the Association during the previous year. With her approval the committee named this the J.R. Waugh Award in memory of Johnnie.

Some of the top players gave an exhibition at Whitley Bay Y.M.C.A. in connection with the opening of their premises which was very much appreciated by the local organisers.

Newcastle University organised an invitation tournament which appeared to be outside of the scope of the tournament regulations but the executive committee told them they could solve the problem by calling it the Tyneside and District Closed Tournament. They did so and it went ahead, the winners being Jim Nelson, a former County player, in the Men's Singles, Phil Clark in the Women's Singles, Arthur Chilvers and Arnie Warents in the Men's Doubles whilst Len Heppell and Phil Clark won the Mixed Doubles and A. Cole the Consolation singles.

A letter was received from Cumberland asking if Northumberland would support the formation of a new Northern League for players of a standard just below that of County level. It was agreed to give support to this but there is no record that it ever materialised.

The Closed Tournament was once again held at the M.P.N.I. canteen in Longbenton with Brian Burn of North Shields YMCA winning the Men's Singles for the first time as well as taking the Junior Singles for the fourth year running. For good measure he also won the Boy's Singles. As expected Maureen Heppell (Westonians) was the Women's Singles winner, the Women's Doubles winner with her aunt Phil Clark (Prudhoe Y.A.) and the Mixed Doubles with her father Len (also Westonians). For the third year running the Men's Doubles was won by the N.Shields pairing of Harry Dignan and Stuart Lennie and Harry also claimed the Veterans Singles for the fourth year in a row. Terry Wilkinson of B.W.S.C. was successful in the Men's Handicap, A.Temple of Prudhoe Y.A. in the Women's Handicap and the new Junior Girls event went to P. Burns of Walbottle Campus Youth Association.

The Open Tournament, also staged at the same venue, attracted a larger entry than in the previous year although the number of players from other counties was disappointing. W.D. and H.O. Wills again provided excellent prizes for the Men's and Women's Singles winners.

Kevin Forshaw of Lancashire won the Men's Singles and also the Doubles partnered by another Lancashire player. R.Allcock. Lesley Proudlock of Yorkshire was the star female player winning the Women's Singles, the Women's Doubles with Cynthia Duncombe of Yorkshire and the Mixed Doubles with Yorkshire's Peter Duncombe. Yorkshire also triumphed in the Junior Boys event which was won by P.Rowe and Miss B.E.Yates of Lancashire won the Junior Girls Singles.

There was local success in the Veterans Singles, the title being retained by Harry Dignan.

Both records secretaries for the Northumberland League found a backward trend in administration at club level but those good club secretaries did help the Officers enormously. At least a quarter of all scorecards had been filled in incorrectly or incompletely and there were over one hundred postponements, some of which were re-arranged without telling the appropriate official. There also appeared to be a large increase in the number of complaints and disputes.

The success of North Shields YMCA continued with victory in the top division for the fourth year running for their 'A' team who also won the Knock Out Cup, again for the fourth time running. Their 'C' team won Division 2a and their 'F' team took Division 3c.

Division 2b winners were Reyrolles 'B', The university side Eustace Percy Hall topped Division 3A and Division 3b was won by B.W.S.C. Newcomers Byker Community Centre finished top of Division 4a and the other fourth divisions went to Newcastle University 'B', Newcastle Co-op Welfare and Willington Quay Boys Club, Saint Lawrences taking Division 5.

The Ladies K.O. Cup competition did not take place.

During the summer the North East Summer League, which had started in 1964 continued to operate with North Shields YMCA participating but there were no divisions purely for teams based in the Northumberland or Tyneside areas.

Financially the Association broke even for the year and with a sum of £302 in the bank appeared to be financially sound.

1966-1967

There were again seventy-eight clubs in the Northumbria League for the **1966/67** season and the number of teams rose to an all-time high with one hundred and sixty three participating. The number of divisions was increased to twelve by the addition of an extra fifth division being the greatest number of divisions ever in existence.

Of the clubs Tyne Dock Youth Club, who had previously been in the league in season 1952/53 joined and were to participate in the league until 1994/95 season and again from 1995/56 until 2013/14, a total of forty-eight years.

In **1966/67** the positions of Assistant General Secretary and Assistant Records Secretary which had been created in the previous year were replaced by a Northumberland League Secretary, Michael Lynch, and Master Points Secretary, D.Barron.

Changes to the Executive Committee saw Bill Hodgkins, Llew Baker and K.Griffin replace Bob Farrow, Leo Gowan and J.F.Griffiths. Stan Lawson was added to the list of qualified umpires and the need for more umpires was expressed. Dave Robson was appointed as National Councillor.

Bob Farrow had resigned at the end of the previous season feeling that he had been 'in harness' long enough. He had served the Association since season 1948/49 being League Secretary from 1949/50 to 1957/58 and a member of the Executive Committee since then and had done sterling work being a patient, unassuming and diligent worker. The Executive Committee wished to put his name forward to be a Vice President but he declined the offer and assured them that he would always be on call to render any assistance required.

Once again, a lot of emphasis was put on the need for coaching with Harry Dignan again heavily involved. Numerous sessions were arranged, and the top players again had the opportunity to go to Bradford if they wished to.

Area Junior Trials were arranged by Durham but a letter was sent to Edgar Reay deploring the unsatisfactory organisation. His reply was considered unsatisfactory.

It was agreed to send Brian Burn, Stuart Lennie and Maureen Heppell to the English Closed Tournament and to subsidise each of them to a maximum of ten pounds each.

A team from Valley Gardens and Whitley Bay Grammar School was sent to the schools' championships in Stockton.

The Association took part in the Blyth Festival of Sport where Brian Burn and Stuart Lennie gave an exhibition.

Participation in the Local Council's Anglo German Week together with Durham took place although details of what actually took place were not recorded.

Publicity saw greater coverage in the local press of the Association's major events but very little in the way of the league results and tables. Despite overtures to them there was a lack of interest in the affairs of the Association by the television companies.

The 'Sandwich' magazine continued to be successful under the guidance of Arnie Warents who also made regular contributions to the E.T.T.A. magazine, Table Tennis News.

The County team was strengthened by the fact that Durham's Alan Ransome started to play for Westonians and became qualified to represent Northumberland and with him in the team along with Brian Burn and Stuart Lennie, Maureen Heppell and Eileen Chape they finished as runners up in the County Championships Division Two North, losing only to Lancashire.

The Junior side struggled in their division, winning only one match, drawing one and losing three.

The Northumberland League side of Burn, Lennie and Ransome beat Whitehaven 9 - 0, had a walk over against Doncaster, and beat Huddersfield 6 - 3 before losing out 2 - 7 to Manchester.

The Rose Bowl side of Doreen Ward, Eileen Chape and Francis Kauffman had a walk over against Hexham beat Grimsby 6 - 3 but lost to Lowestoft 2 - 8. Both of the League's junior teams went out in the first round. The boys lost to Hull in the Carter Cup and the girls went out to Liverpool in what was the first time that a girls' team had been entered in the Bromfield Trophy.

Brian Burn, Stuart Lennie and Arnie Warents went to Greece under the captaincy of Harry Dignan to represent the British Y.M.C.A. in the International Y.M.C.A. championships where they won all of the titles.

A Northern Premier League was formed with teams representing Northumberland, North East Summer League, Hexham, Carlisle, Whitehaven and South Shields.

The Northumberland team finished as runners up, losing only to the North East Summer league but no record was kept of who actually played for the Northumberland side, but it was made up of mainly second string players.

The students at Newcastle University again organised the Tyneside Closed Tournament which was well supported by Northumberland's county players.

Stuart Lennie won the Men's Singles, Phil Clark the Women's Singles, Brian Burn and Lennie the Men's Doubles and Lennie and Eileen Chape took the Mixed Doubles. The Consolation Singles was won by Frank Mitchinson.

A Newcastle Sports Council was formed, and Northumberland Table Tennis Association were represented on it.

The organisation of the Inter Town League was taken on by Bill Hodgkins with Hebburn, North Shields, Wallsend, South Shields, Newcastle, Hexham, Gateshead and Prudhoe all taking part. There was an improvement on the previous season, but several matches were again not played. Newcastle were the winners in what turned out to be the last year in which it was played.

Dave Robson again organised the Northumberland Youth league in which there were three divisions of six teams. The winners of the three divisions were Morpeth Chantry, Longbenton 'A' and Walbottle Campus. A play off was then held which was won by Longbenton 'A'.

Maureen Heppell and Brian Burn brought more honour to the County when they were involved both nationally and internationally.

Maureen finished top in the England Junior Trials but must have been disappointed to find herself at junior number two at the start of the season but by February she had won six senior women's titles. She did rise to number one junior and also to number three in the senior women's list.

She was in the England team that played Czechoslovakia and in the team that beat the Netherlands 7 - 2. She also featured in the England Junior team that beat West Germany 6 - 4. She represented England in the Czech and East German Open Tournaments as well as the West German Invitation event where she got to the semi finals of both the Girls Singles and Doubles.

At the English Junior Open she reached the semi finals of the Girls singles before losing to the German player, M.Rester. She also represented England at the European Youth Meeting where she reached the final of the Girls Doubles with Karenza Mathews and also the quarter finals of the Girls Singles.

At Senior level she was selected to play for England in the World Championships in Stockholm but must have been disappointed when after playing in the first two matches against Luxemburg and Bulgaria and winning both her sets in straight games she was never called upon again.

Brian was also selected to represent England in the Netherlands Open where he reached the quarter finals of the Men's Doubles, the West German Invitation where he won the Boys Singles and the European Junior in which he reached the semi finals of the Boy's Doubles partnered by Yorkshire's Alan Hydes. Those two paired up again to get to the semi finals of the English Closed.

On the tournament scene Maureen won the Women's titles at the North of England, Cumberland, Merseyside, Lancashire, Midland and Northumberland as well as being runner up at the Hull and East Riding. She was also winner of the Doubles at the Cumberland, Hull and East Riding and Middlesex and the winner of the Mixed Doubles at the Cumberland, Hull and East Riding, Merseyside, Lancashire and Northumberland. She claimed eight Junior Girls Singles titles - the East of England, North of England, North Middlesex, Cumberland, Hull and East Riding, Merseyside, Lancashire and Midland, just losing out in the final at the Middlesex.

Brian Won the Senior Men's Singles at the Pontefract Open and reached the final at the South Yorkshire, and the semi finals at the Scottish and the North of England, where he also reached the final of the Youths Singles. He did particularly well in doubles winning the Men's at the Lancashire,, South Yorkshire, Yorkshire, North East England and Northumberland. He also got to the final on five occasions - the Hull and East Riding, Merseyside, Pontefract, Scottish and Stevenage as well as the semi finals at the North of England. Wins were achieved in the Men's Mixed Doubles at the North Middlesex and the Cumberland.

Several other Northumberland players did well in Open Tournaments with Stuart Lennie partnering Brian to success in the doubles events at the Cumberland and the Yorkshire, the pair also reaching the doubles final at the Pontefract and Stevenage. He also reached the semi finals of the Men's Doubles at the South Yorkshire and the final at the Northumberland. At the Pontefract Open he reached the final of the Men's Singles where he was beaten by Brian.

Alan Ransome lost in the semi finals of the Men's Doubles at the South Yorkshire and in the semis of the Men's Singles at the Northumberland.

E.Samson reached the final of the Girls Singles at the Pontefract, and Theresa Heppell reached the semi finals of the Girls Doubles with Nancy Ferguson at the Yorkshire Junior.

Valerie Baker got to the semi finals of the Womens Singles at Pontefract where she also lost in the final of the Women's Doubles. She also reached the semi finals of the Women's Doubles at the North East of England. In the Girls Singles she reached the final at both the Hull and at the Northumberland.

Young Malcolm McMaster was runner up in the Boys Singles at the Northumberland.

The two veterans, Harry Dignan and Len Heppell also had a measure of success. Harry won the Veterans Singles at the Hull and East Riding and at the Lancashire, beating Len in the final on both occasions, while Len was also Veterans Singles runner up at the Merseyside and at the Midland.

The Closed Tournament was held once more at the M.O.S.S. (previously called M.P.N.I.) Canteen in Longbenton and seven players from North Shields YMCA were title winners.

Stuart Lennie won the Men's Singles, Joe McLeod the Men's Doubles with Peter Whiteman of Revac, Nancy Ferguson partnered Maureen Heppell (Westonians) to success in the Women's Doubles, Eileen Chape won the Mixed Doubles with Stuart Lennie, the Women's Handicap was won by Vicky Breeze, Charlie Grassie came out on top in the Junior Boys Singles and Brian Burn retained the Youths Singles title. As expected, Maureen Heppell was the victor in the Women's Singles and her father (also Westonians) was successful in the Veterans Singles, wresting the title from Harry Dignan who had held it for the previous five years. The Men's Handicap Singles winner was Ron Kettlewell of M.O.S.S., and Valerie Baker of South Shields Corporation won the Girls Singles.

The Northumberland Open was also staged at the M.O.S.S. venue when Lancashire's Kevin Forshaw retained the Men's Singles title and the Yorkshire pairing of Lesley Proudlock and Cynthia Duncome were again successful in the Women's Doubles.

There was success for local players Maureen Heppell and Brian Burn with Maureen taking the Women's Singles whilst both of them were partnered by Yorkshire's Alan Hydes to win the Mixed Doubles and the Men's Doubles events. The Junior Boys Singles was won by Brian Mitchell of Lancashire and Miss L.Forbes of Yorkshire came out on top in the Junior Girls. The Veterans Singles was won by another Yorkshire player, Steve Nunn.

Problems still abounded in the administration of the Northumberland League with the Newcastle University causing many of them and having many complaints made against them. They eventually received a warning that they had to improve if they were to be allowed to stay in the league.

Unfortunately, there had also been no improvement in the completion of scorecards.

The Executive Committee were certain that steps needed to be taken if the league was to be satisfactorily run in the future as they were of the opinion that it was becoming too large to handle and that there did not seem to be any 'new blood' around. To that end they formed a Decentralisation Sub Committee to look at the way forward. This sub-committee had a few lengthy meetings and were not really sure about how things could be improved. At the end of the day they came up with the a proposal that for one year only entries would be restricted to the number of teams needed to fill eleven divisions, that trials would be held using computer methods with a view to improving the administration and that they would await the outcome of the formation of the new Newcastle League which held an inaugural meeting on 18th April 1967. Little did they know at the time that the number of teams entered in the league had reached its peak.

The E.T.T.A. Master Points Scheme was brought into operation whereby players could collect points based on their league results to become progressively club, league, county, tournament, national masters. After amounting their first 250 points (200 for women) they would get a certificate from the administrator bearing the E.T.T.A. crest showing that they were an official club master and a permanent record card for subsequent points and possible higher classification if they continued to collect them.

Honours in the League were well spread with only North YMCA winning more than one title being for the fifth year running the first division and the Knock Out Cup. Tyne Dock Y.C. and South Shields Corporation won the two second divisions, the former on their first year back in the league. The third divisions went to Saint Lawrence, Byker Community Centre and Tynemouth NALGO and the winners of the fifth divisions were West Allotment B.C. 'B', North Shields Boys Club 'B', South Shields YMCA and Marine Park 'C'. Longbenton Youth Club and Willington Quay 'B' were the winners of the two fifth divisions.

The new J.R.Waugh trophy for work done for the Association was presented to the secretary Dave Robson.

The high cost of the handbook and of administration meant that there was a financial deficit for the year of approximately £89.

A new Tyneside Section of the North East Summer League came about in the summer of 1967 for the third and fourth divisions with Llew Baker of South Shields Corporation as the organiser. North Shields Boys Club 'A' and 'B' teams were the winners of these.

1967-1968

When entries were received for the Northumberland League **1967/68** season only two had to be refused to adopt the suggestion by the decentralisation committee that ten divisions was to be the maximum. This was a big drop from the previous year and as the season progressed several actually resigned and the season ended with only 129 teams.

Teams continued to be composed of four players and the system of play continued to be the same as in the previous few years.

Ron Patterson had resigned as Handbook Secretary and his place was taken by Tony Dott and Bill Dixon took over as Northumberland League secretary in place of Michael Lynch. D.Barron had resigned as Master Points Secretary and this position was left vacant.

Dave Robson was elected as National Councillor and he was actually on the E.T.T.A. Tournaments Committee.

Three new Vice Presidents were elected being Mrs. E. Robson of Whitley Bay, Mrs Madge Waugh of Whitley Bay and D.W.Scarth of Tynemouth.

There were changes to the Executive Committee with K.Griffin, Mrs E Robson, B.Reid and Bill Hodgkins being replaced by Ram Bhalla, Arthur Chilvers, J.Wray and Michael Lynch. The latter, however, resigned in the September and Mrs Audrey Buck was co - opted in his place. The qualified umpires remained as the previous year with many more still needed.

In an attempt to lessen the load on the Executive Committee it was decided to share the load between a County Management Sub Committee and a League Management Sub Committee.

The County Management Committee was made up of Arthur Chilvers, Llew Baker, Alan Ransome (North Premier League), Len Heppell (Hexham League), D.J. McLeary (Berwick League), Ram Bhalla, J.Richardson, Miss E Smith, Dave Robson, Alan Morpeth and Bill McMaster (Newcastle League).

The League Management Committee consisted of Bill Dixon, Syd Holt, Stan Denton, Terry Wilkinson, Miss E Smith, W.Kidd, J.Wray, Arthur Chilvers, Mrs Audrey Buck, Miss Pauline Jackson, A.Nichol and R.Power.

As a result of the financial deficit in the previous year a proposition to increase the entry fees into the Northumberland league from £ 1.10.00 (£1.50) to £2 was agreed at the Annual General Meeting.

The newly formed Newcastle League joined the Berwick League and the Hexham League in being affiliated to the County as did the Northern Premier League.

Coaching sessions at Bradford for the top players again took place and the Association again encouraged their leading players to attend.

Harry Dignan as Coaching Officer had a very busy time with many and varied events taking place.

The National Coach for the Area, Peter Simpson attended a coaching rally at Valley Gardens, Whitley Bay and a similar rally was held under the auspices of the Newcastle Education Department. two sessions of coaching for school teachers from Newcastle were also arranged. Encouragement on the coaching scene was received from the Northumberland Education Authority as well as from Peter Simpson.

Junior Trials were held and Charlie Grassie, Barry Thomas, P.Jackson, F.Wood, Nancy Ferguson and Theresa Heppell were all nominated for the Northern Area Trials at Bradford.

Apart from working out special footwork exercises for Maureen, Len Heppell was now coaching some of Newcastle United's footballers in speeding up their movements.

The Northumberland Youth league once again came under the umbrella of Dave Robson and was again most successful. There were two divisions of five teams each and one of six teams. The divisional winners were Bedlington Westridge, Walbottle Campus 'B' and Whitley Bay Campus. Play offs were held at Whitley Bay Grammar School and Walbottle Campus 'B' were the eventual winners.

The highlight of the season and what Dave Robson described as his 'Swan Song' was the staging of an international match against Czechoslovakia at the Lightfoot Stadium, the first ever international to be held in Northumberland.

A great deal of work had to be done to stage this match with Messrs Lawson, Holt and Warents looking after the provision of programmes and tickets, Dave Robson and Miss Atkinson reception and hospitality, ticket sales by Lawson, Dignan and Mrs Waugh, press and publicity by Warents ,and equipment and hall arrangements also by Dave Robson himself.

Wrights Biscuits of South Shields and W.D. and H.O. Wills both provided souvenir gifts for the teams and officials and a preview of the match was aired by television on the evening before the match.

England were represented by their number one ranked man Denis Neale of Yorkshire, their number ten Alan Hydes, also of Yorkshire, Karenza Smith the number two woman from Middlesex and Maureen Heppell who at that stage was the number four woman.

The Czech side was an extremely strong one of Jaroslav Stanek, Vlado Miko, Marta Luzova and Jitka Karlikova who won the match 8 - 1 and then went on to easily win three other matches against England in different parts of the country.

Englands sole success was when Smith defeated Luzova 21- 15, 21 -17 although Maureen Heppell only narrowly lost her match against Karlikova, going down 21 -19. 10 -21, 20 -22. The umpires were National Umpire G.Darley, County Umpires R.Richardson and C.Warley, all of whom were from the Yorkshire Table Tennis Association.

The Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Alderman Roy Hadwin and the Lady Mayoress were the main guests along with Tom Harrison, the E.T.T.A. President and Vaclav Vebr, the Deputy President of the European Table Tennis Union.

Dave Robson did a good job in arranging this match but unfortunately it was less of a success than had been hoped for. The attendance was 503 but there was poor support from the association's own members, the hall was not really suitable and was extremely cold.

The newly formed Newcastle League got under way with two divisions. Eight teams, M.O.S.S. Benton, Newcastle Y.M.C.A., Saint Lawrence, Longbenton Youth Club, Montagu and North Fenham Boys Club, Tyne Lead, Saint Anthony's Old Boys and Kenton Civil Service made up the first division. M.O.S.S. Benton 'B', Callers, Transco, Vickers Apprentices, Antonian Youth Club, Newcastle NALGO, Saint George's, Rutherford College, Postal Clerks and Longbenton Youth Club 'B' were in a second division of ten teams, although Saint Lawrence 'B' took over from Transco half-way through the season.

The Newcastle University students once again staged the Tyneside and District Open tournament which was refereed by Syd Holt. Arthur Chilvers was the winner of the Men's Singles and Phil Clark triumphed in the Women's Singles. The Men's Doubles was won by the combination of Peter Whiteman and Ran Bhalla with Peter also winning the Mixed Doubles partnered by Phil.

The feeling of the meeting at the Annual General Meeting had been that we needed better coverage of local affairs in our own magazine, 'Sandwich', better circulation of it and better coverage in the Evening Chronicle. Arnie Warents had outlined the difficulties in obtaining better coverage in the Chronicle which were mainly caused by the late score cards and poor completion of them meaning that league tables could not be regularly produced or up to date. He did however continue to do his best and was also still getting regular articles in the E.T.T.A. magazine Table Tennis News.

At one stage he reported to the Executive Committee a letter that he had received for publication in 'Sandwich' being very critical of the committee and the association in general (which eventually was disclosed as coming from Brian Burn) and asked for advice on whether to publish it or not.

Unfortunately, it appears that Arnie sometimes got over enthusiastic at matches and became very boisterous and, in the opinion of some, was out of order. A complaint along these lines by Woodlands Park about his behaviour at a match that he was not actually playing in was made to the Executive Committee and those with a vested interest left the room.

After discussion it was decided to reprimand him for his ungentlemanly conduct, warn him of his future conduct, and demand that he apologise over the table to Bill Dixon of Woodlands Park when the latter returned to the room.

When all members of the committee returned the Chairman informed him of the decision and he, although not happy about the decision, apologised to Bill. He then said that he wished to resign as Publicity Secretary because he was dissatisfied with the decision and also that because of domestic difficulties he was unable to fulfil the duties properly. He agreed to carry on as editor of the 'Sandwich' magazine.

He was thanked for his past efforts and Alan Morpeth then agreed to combine the publicity duties with his own until someone new could be found.

The County Senior team had its best ever season in the County Championships being unbeaten in Division Two North. After playing a draw with Lancashire in their first match they went on to win all of the other five to finish as runners up.

They narrowly lost out in the play offs for a place in the Premier Division when they beat Warwickshire and Worcestershire but lost to Kent, finishing second on sets average. Brian Burn, Arthur Chilvers, Maureen Heppell had been the mainstays of the team with Alan Ransome, Peter Hoyles, Ram Balla Bhalla, Stuart Lennie (only played one, being now based in Glasgow), Francis Kauffman, Doreen Ward, Valerie Baker, Eileen Chape and Nancy Ferguson were all involved in getting the team to the play offs.

The team selected for the play offs was Brian Burn, Arthur Chilvers, Stuart Lennie and Maureen Heppell. Unfortunately, Maureen was unavailable, being on international duty in France, and her place was taken by Phil Clark

The Junior team had a poor time only winning one match, playing a draw in one and losing on three occasions.

Quick exits were made from the Rose Bowl, Carter Cup and Bromfield Trophy competitions, all of the teams losing in the first rounds to Spalding, Middlesbrough and Birmingham respectively.

However, the men did well in the Wilmott Cup with victories over Carlisle, Leeds, Huddersfield, Burnley, and Hull to reach the semi finals before losing out 7 - 2 to the Birmingham League. Those involved were Ransome, Hoyles, Bhalla, Lennie, Peter Whiteman and Burn.

The team that played in the Northern Premier League also did well beating Hexham, Newcastle, South Shields, Carlisle and West Hartlepool but losing out to both Middlesbrough 'A' and 'B' teams.

Sixteen members and officials along with one or two guests where special hospitality arrangements had been offered made the trip to Bergen for the North Sea Cup competition. This turned out to be one of the most successful and enjoyable visits and the North Sea Cup was won but when they got home it could not be found. It eventually transpired that they had left it behind in Bergen and it was duly sent across to Alan Morpeth.

On the international front Maureen Heppell, now a senior, reached number three in the England Women's rankings and was included in the England squad for the season. She was selected to play for England against Czechoslovakia in a match at Oxford as well as the one in Newcastle, played in the Quadrangular tournament against Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. She also was selected for the European Team Championships in Lyons where she won two and lost two in the team events.

Away from table tennis she announced her engagement to Brian 'Pop' Robson, the Newcastle United footballer who was also not a bad table tennis player.

At the English Closed tournament Maureen unfortunately was ill and had to withdraw but Brian Burn, partnered by Yorkshire's Alan Hydes got through to the semi finals of the Men's Doubles. He also got to the semi finals of the Consolation Singles at the English Open tournament.

On the Open Tournament scene' away from Northumberland, Maureen won the Women's Singles at the North of England, the Cumberland, the Yorkshire and the Teesside as well as reaching the final at the East of England, Merseyside and Middlesex. At the Cumberland she also won the Women's Doubles and the Mixed Doubles and she was also successful in the Mixed at the East of England as well as reaching the final of the Women's Doubles at the Merseyside and the Mixed at the Yorkshire. For good measure she also won the Women's Under 20 event at the Kent Open.

Brian won three Men's Singles titles, coming out on top at the Hull and East Riding, the Pontefract and the Teesside. Like Maureen he won the Under 20 event at the Kent Open and he also won the Mixed Doubles at both the Pontefract and the Teesside.

With Alan Hydes as his partner he won the Men's Doubles at the Middlesex and the Lancashire and got to the final at the Sussex and at the Yorkshire. He won the same event at the Pontefract with Tony Boasman of Lancashire and the Teesside with Harry Dignan.

Peter Hoyles won the Doubles at the Teesside with Arthur Chilvers and also reached the semis of the Doubles at the Pontefract.

Arnie Warents got to the final of the Mixed Doubles at Pontefract, Harry Dignan won the Veterans at the Teesside, beating Len Heppell in the final who also got to the final at the Merseyside.

Several Northumberland players reached semi finals with Phil Clark at the Teesside (losing to Maureen in the Women's Singles), Valerie Baker in the Women's Doubles at the Hull and East Riding and Nancy Ferguson in the Girls Singles at the Cumberland. Alan Ransome was beaten by Burn in the semi final of the Men's Singles at Pontefract and young Ian Robertson lost in the semi final of the Boys Singles at the Cumberland.

The Northumberland Open Men's Singles was won by the top English player Denis Neale of Yorkshire, Brian Burn, again with Alan Hydes as his partner won the Men's Doubles, Hydes also partnering Maureen Heppell to victory in the Mixed Doubles.

Maureen completed a hat trick by taking the Women's Doubles with Pat Dainty of Yorkshire and winning the Women's Singles. Harry Dignan won the Veterans Singles and the Junior Boys events went to N.D.Marshall (Yorkshire) and Miss L.Forbes of Yorkshire won the Junior Girls Singles for the second year running.

All of the England squad players had been invited to enter free of charge but only Neale, Hydes and Heppell entered. The organisation ran smoothly and once again W D and H O Wills provided prizes for the main events.

As with the Open the Northumberland Closed was again staged at the M.O.S.S. Canteen but this year the entry was rather less than in previous years. As expected the main events, Men's Singles and Women's Singles, were won by Brian Burn (N.Shields YMCA) and Maureen Heppell (Westonians) with Nancy Ferguson (N.Shields YMCA) and Maureen retaining the Womens Doubles title that they achieved in the previous year.

Newcomers Barry and Gordon Thomas of Reyrolles triumphed in the Men's Doubles with Arthur Chilvers (M.O.S.S. Benton) and Valerie Baker (S.Shields Corporation) landing the Mixed Doubles title. North Shields YMCA's Harry Dignan regained the Veterans crown, Frank Wood of Hexham won the Boys Singles, Nancy Ferguson triumphed in the Girls Singles and Brian Burn was the winner of the Youths Singles for the third year running.

The Mens Handicap Singles went to Peter Whiteman (Revac) and the Women's Handicap Singles title was won by Pauline Jackson of M.O.S.S., Benton.

Revac had a very strong First Division squad in Pat Tindale, Ram Bhalla, Peter Whiteman backed up by Jim Jackson and Norman Wilkinson and they duly won that division. Their 'B' team were the winners of Division 2b with Saint Lawrence taking Division 2a. The third divisions were won by M.O.S.S. Benton 'C', Reyrolles 'D' and Hayhole Works whilst the fourth division winners were Gosforth Civil Servants, Vickers Apprentices, Whitley Bay YMCA and Revac 'D' team.

The final of the Handicap Cup saw Revac defeat North Shields YMCA 5 - 4.

It had been a very difficult season in the administration of the league a great deal of arguments and dissention amongst the members of committees which actually led to the Secretary having to issue a statement concerning the leakage of committee meeting information before it was made public. He reminded everyone that it was not until all members of a committee had been advised of the information by the circulation of the minutes that it remained private. No discussion with those outside of the committee about matters discussed in meetings should, unless sanctioned by the chairman, take place before the receipt of the minutes and that any confidential matters should be identified at the meeting and circulated separately to members of the relevant committee.

He also reminded members of committees that anyone not abiding by those guidelines would be considered guilty of misconduct. With regard to the running of the league the problems encountered in previous seasons persisted and were even worse with late and/ or poorly completed score cards, many postponements and failure to notify the records secretary of re-arrangements.

Because of pressure of work with other matters the Records Secretary was unable to deal with the Master Points Scheme and he suggested that it be dropped unless it was found that the computer scheme previously suggested was able to give satisfactory results.

The Executive Committee proposed that in future changes be made to the Officers in that the post of General Secretary should become that of County Secretary and that the post of Records Secretary be taken over by a League Secretary and his committee.

Resignations were received before the end of the season by the General Secretary Dave Robson, the Treasurer, Roly Ormond, and Messrs Wray, Chilvers and Kidd from the Executive Committee with Mr Kidd being deemed to have resigned under rule 7 (f) concerning non-attendance at meetings. In addition, Arnie Warents had previously resigned as Publicity Secretary.

Record was made of the excellent work that Dave Robson had done during his spell as general Secretary.

The J.R.Waugh Award was made to the retiring Treasurer, Roly Ormond.

Financially the year showed a small deficit of approximately £29, leaving funds standing at £184.

1968-1969

The proposed changes to the Officers were approved at the following Annual General Meeting when Alan Morpeth was appointed to the post of County Secretary and Syd Holt became the League Secretary. Bill Dixon was appointed as Treasurer and Brian Burn appointed as Publicity Secretary. The vacancies on the Executive Council were filled by R Power, Pauline Jackson, Mrs Audrey Buck and A.Nichol.

Pauline Jackson was to be involved with the affairs of the Association until the end of the 1989/90 season and again from 1995/96 to 2010/11, most of the time as Publicity Secretary.

The County Management Committee was reduced by two with Arthur Chilvers and Dave Robson no longer involved while Miss E Smith, W.Kidd, J.Wray and Arthur Chilvers were no longer on the League Management Committee. Dave Robson continued as National Councillor and was again appointed by the E.T.T.A. to the Tournaments Committee and to the County Boundaries Committee.

The number of clubs in the Northumbria League was up slightly but the number of teams reduced by another three to 133. The number of divisions was unaltered. Saint Charles, later to be known as Saints, were one of the new teams and they are still in membership to this day.

A change to the regulations meant that in order for a player to be transferred from one club to another written application was needed with the agreement of both clubs involved and a fee of five shillings (twenty-five pence) needed to be paid. No transfers were allowed after 1st January.

The Northumberland Youth Association League was again run under the control of Dave Robson with sixteen teams taking part in three divisions. The winners of the divisions were Bedlington Westridge, Walbottle Campus 'A' and Whitley Bay Campus with the Walbottle team winning the pay offs.

Coaching was again very prominent with many active groups in the area. Northumberland County and Newcastle City Education Committees were both contacted and it was hoped that coaching in schools would become effective from the following season. Regular Thursday night sessions were arranged at the Lightfoot Stadium.

Harry Dignan qualified as a Diploma 2 Star Coach and was appointed by the E.T.T.A. as an official assessor.

Junior Trials were held at North Shields YMCA to enable selection for the Northern Area Junior Trials at Stockton with Ian Robertson, Chris Shepherd, Frank Wood, Dave Armstrong, J Murray, Bob Appleby along with Joan Newham and Maria Sheals being recommended. Only Ian Robertson and Dave Armstrong impressed on the day.

At a later date Robertson and Shepherd were invited to attend the Northern Counties Top Junior Practice at Leeds.

The County side were strengthened by the inclusion of the Duncomes, Peter and Cynthia who had moved to Newcastle, and for the second year running won Division 2 North of the County Championships. The full squad was Brian Burn, Stuart Lennie, Alan Ransome, Arthur

Chilvers, Ram Bhalla, Peter Duncome, Maureen Heppell and Cynthia Duncombe. This time they defeated Hampshire and Staffordshire in the play offs to gain promotion to the Premier Division.

Unfortunately, the men were beaten in the second round of the Wilmott Cup by Huddersfield after accounting for Whitehaven in the first.

The Women's squad of Maureen Heppell, Cynthia Duncombe, Pauline Jackson and Phil Clark beat North Yorkshire, Lowestoft and Birmingham to reach the final of the Rose Bowl but lost out to Central London.

The Juniors won three matches in the Junior North Division but lost two to finish third and the boys were beaten by Middlesbrough in the first round of the Carter Cup.

A team was not entered in the Bromfield Trophy as it was felt that there were no girls of sufficiently high enough standard.

The top three county players, Brian Burn, Stuart Lennie and Alan Ransome along with Harry Dignan and Alan Morpeth were invited to go to Bergen by the Bergen Association who paid their fares and provided hospitality. It turned out to be a very enjoyable and successful visit with the North Sea Cup being won against a side that were all Norwegian internationals and Lennie won the Individual K.O. competition.

A team of players who were just below county standard played in the Northern Premier League and only lost out to a Middlesbrough team.

Whilst Arnie Warents continued to be editor of the 'Sandwich' magazine an editorial committee was elected with a request that the magazine should contain more local news and also have more publicity for the lower divisions of the Northumberland League. The committee consisted of Arnie as editor along with Pauline Jackson, Leo Gowan and Brian Burn. All seemed to work well and the magazine continued throughout the season.

The new Publicity Secretary suggested that having copy in the Journal would be a better bet than in the Chronicle. He thought that there would be more space available and he was told to go ahead as the Chronicle was not considered to be satisfactory. He did so and a satisfactory working arrangement was agreed which resulted in good coverage with regular reports being printed.

Regular reports also appeared in the E.T.T.A. magazine Table Tennis News with the contributor merely being named as 'Geordie'. There is no record of who that was.

Newcastle University once again organised their Tyneside Closed Tournament which attracted approximately eighty entries with the Men's Singles being won by Arnie Warents and the Women's by Joyce Turnbull who also won the Mixed Doubles with Ram Bhalla. Arthur Chilvers and Peter Hoyles were successful in the Men's Doubles. The consolation singles were won by Roland Earl and S.Maskerry.

Maureen Heppell started the season as England number three but fell away to number seven as the season progressed. She did play for England against the Netherlands at both Crystal Palace and Wellingborough. In Open tournaments she won the Women's Singles at the Cumberland,

the Lancashire and the Midland Counties as well as being a finalist in the Middlesex, Merseyside, Kent, South Lanarkshire and Buckinghamshire. In Doubles she won the Womens at the Cumberland with Doreen Schofield of Cheshire and at the Midland Counties with the Hungarian player, M.Nemeth. In the Mixed she was successful at the Middlesex with Alan Hydes of Yorkshire, at the Cumberland with Brian Burn, at the Middlesex with local player L.Haslam and at the North of England again with Alan Hydes.

Brian Burn won the Men's Consolations Singles at the English Closed and on the tournament scene reached the final of the Men's Singles at the Cumberland where he also reached the final of the Men's Doubles with Peter Hirst of Yorkshire.

Playing with Alan Hydes he also got to the Men's Doubles finals at the Birmingham and the Lancashire.

A newcomer on the tournament scene was Ian Robertson who was also known by his nickname 'Bennie'. Four Junior Boys titles were his, winning at the Hull and East Riding, the Cumberland, the Birmingham and the Cambridge. He was also a finalist at the Teeside Junior. Boys Doubles, playing with Paul Freeman of Durham, were won at the Lancashire and at the Midland Counties and they reached the final of the Yorkshire Junior. He also played in the Mixed Doubles final at the Scottish Open with Susan Howard of Surrey and in the Junior Mixed Doubles final at the Teeside Junior with Susan Lisle of Lancashire. At the Scottish he also won the Men's Doubles with Laurie Landry of Middlesex.

His performances saw him rapidly rise to number four in the England Junior rankings and selection for England Juniors. Against Germany he played in one singles match which he won and also in the mixed doubles which was also won although Germany won the match 5 - 3. He won one and lost one against Scotland as England won the match 9 - 1. In the England Junior Open he played for England Thirds and won one and lost one in a 2 - 3 defeat at the hands of Sweden.

Stuart Lennie was ranked at number two in Scotland.

Alan Ransome was a runner up in the Men's Doubles at the Hull and East Riding partnered by Nicky Jarvis of Yorkshire and Len Heppell reached the final of the Veterans at the Birmingham.

The Northumberland Open was again most successfully staged at the now named D.H.S.S. Canteen in Longbenton when the E.T.T.A. paid half of the entry fees for any member of the England squad who wished to enter. The offer was taken up by Trevor Taylor, Maureen Heppell and Linda Radford. Southern players Henry Buist and Laurie Landry also entered.

The organisation of the tournament again went very smoothly, and W D and H O Wills once again kindly gave prizes for the winners of the Men's Singles and the Women's Singles. Tony Clayton of Yorkshire triumphed in the Men's Singles and Maureen Heppell won the Women's Singles for the third year running. Brian Burn partnered Trevor Taylor of Hertfordshire and won the Mens Doubles whilst an all Northumberland pair in Maureen Heppell and Cynthia Duncombe took the Womens Doubles title. Maureen completed a hat trick of victories by winning the Mixed Doubles with Stuart Lennie. Ian Robertson won the Junior Boys Singles with Yorkshire's Linda Bashford taking the Junior Girls.

The Closed was also again staged at the same venue and Men's Singles winner was Stuart Lennie of North Shields YMCA, being the third time in six years that he was successful. For

the fourth time in succession and the fifth in six years the Women's Singles was won by Maureen Heppell of Hexham Fandango who was also a winner in the Women's Doubles for the fourth year running, this time partnered by Cynthia Duncombe of Newcastle YMCA. The North Shields YMCA partnership of Brian Burn and Stuart Lennie won the Men's Doubles with Peter Hoyles (Newcastle YMCA) and Cynthia Duncombe tasting success in the Mixed Doubles. The Veterans winner was Roland Earl of M.O.S.S., Benton and at the other end of the age scale Ian Robertson (N.Shields YMCA) was the winner of the Junior Boys and Joan Newham of South Shields Corporation won the Junior Girls Singles. Maureen Heppell was also successful in the Youths Singles, winning that title for the first time.

The submission of score cards to the League Secretary continued to be open to improvement in the Northumberland League and postponements continued to be a headache Nine teams resigning during the season also produced problems but overall the admin improved. Production of league tables, records and master points by computer also made things easier thanks to the efforts of Terry Wilkinson and it was decided to continue with the master points scheme.

Newcastle YMCA triumphed in the first division but were disqualified for some reason in the semi final of the K.O. Cup which was won by Revac. The Ladies K.O. Cup was won by M.O.S.S. 'A' team. Blyth YMCA won Division 2A with Harrogate House being the winners of 2b.

The Third Division titles went to Electrics 'B', South Shields YMCA and B.B.C. House B.C. with the fourth division winners being North Shields YMCA 'D', Harrogate House 'C', Woodlands Park 'B' and M.O.S.S. Benton 'F'.

There was no great change in the financial position with a small deficit on the year of £21 meaning that the funds to carry forward were £163.

1969-1970

1969/70 season saw a reduction in the number of clubs in the Northumberland League with three less than in the previous season and the number of teams dropped to 125. This resulted in the loss of one of the fourth divisions.

Other affiliated leagues remained unchanged in Berwick, Northern Premier, Newcastle and Hexham.

Brian Burn had resigned as Publicity Secretary and was replaced by Joe McLeod while R.Power and A.Nichol took over from Tony Dott as Handbook Secretary on a joint basis. Terry Wilkinson was appointed as Master Points Secretary. The County Management Committee, the League Management Committee and the qualified umpires were all unchanged.

Dave Robson carried on as National Councillor and was again appointed to the Tournaments Committee and the Boundaries Committee by the E.T.T.A.

With regard to the 'Sandwich' magazine Brian Burn resigned from the committee and was replaced by Brian Pierce.

There were a number of changes to the rules and regulations which were mainly financial. The entry fee to the Northumberland League was increased from £2 to £2.10.00 (£2.50), the fee when a team changed the night for home matches after the start of the season was increased

from five shillings to ten shillings (25p to 50p, the entry fee for the knock out competition was increased for one shilling and sixpence to five shillings per team (7.5p to 25p) and a new fine of five shillings (25p) per occasion brought in where a player played more than once in the same week except where it was necessary because of a re- arranged match.

Dave Robson once again organised the Northumberland Youth league in a most satisfactory manner with twenty-four teams playing in four divisions. The four divisional winners were Hartford Youth Centre, Walbottle Campus 'A', Whitley Bay Campus and Blyth Y.M.C.A. The semi finals saw Whitley Bay Campus beat Hartford 7 - 1 and Walbottle Campus 'A' beat Blyth Y.M.C.A. 7 -1 and Walbottle went on to win the championship with an 8-0 victory over Whitley Bay.

Harry Dignan was appointed as Chairman of the National Coaching and Schools Committee (Northern Panel) and he was once again responsible for a great deal of what took place locally.

Regular coaching took place at Whitley Bay including an experimental class for under thirteens and at Wallsend Sports Centre which was nationally recognised as a regional coaching centre. Student Coach sessions were held at Chantry School, Morpeth which went well, and a number of county players qualified as Diploma One Star coaches.

Tests were held at Whitley Bay for Bronze and Silver Proficiency Awards which resulted in 22 Bronze Awards being presented of which six also achieved the Silver Award.

Publicity, now under Joe McLeod who was also co-opted onto the 'Sandwich magazine committee was very disappointing with little coverage now being given in either the Chronicle or the Journal despite copy being sent in by both Joe McLeod and Arnie Warents, and no articles appeared in the E.T.T.A. magazine.

Two Senior County teams were entered in the County Championships now that the first team were in the Premier Division and it was agreed to pay a daily team allowance of ten shillings (50p) each in addition to travel and bed and breakfast expenses.

The first team represented by Brian Burn, Stuart Lennie, Peter Duncombe, Alan Ransome, Maureen Heppell. Cynthia Duncome and Phil Clark fared badly in the Premier Division winning only one match to finish second bottom.

However, the second team of Ron Kettlewell, Peter Hoyles. Arthur Chilvers and Cynthia Duncombe won Division Two North and with the first team being relegated from the Premier Division they qualified for the promotion play offs. Unfortunately, they only won one of the three matches involved and missed out on promotion.

The Juniors won two matches and lost three in the Junior North Division and there was no joy in the Wilmott Cup or the Carter Cup with the Men's League team beating Leeds but then going out to North Yorkshire whilst the Junior Boys lost in the first round to North Yorkshire (Ormesby).

Because of transport difficulties the Junior Girls team was withdrawn from the Bromfield Trophy without playing a match.

It was left to the Ladies League team to carry the flag in the National Competitions with another good performance by defeating North Yorkshire, Chesterfield and Blackpool before losing in the semi finals to Lowestoft. Phil Clark played in three of those matches, Maureen Heppell in two with Florence Kauffman, Pauline Jackson and Nancy Ferguson all being involved in one.

The North Sea Cup was retained when a good party of players from Bergen were entertained on Tyneside and were also entered into and transported to the Yorkshire Open tournament together with some of the Northumberland players.

Maureen Heppell married Brian 'Pop' Robson at Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Hexham with it being a double wedding with her sister Catherine also getting married. Brian's best man was his Newcastle United colleague Frank Clarke and the guests included Alan Ransome, Alan and Joyce Morpeth and several of the Newcastle United players.

Maureen started the season as England number seven but was out of the rankings by February whilst Brian Burn reached number 6 spot in the men's list. Ian Robertson represented England at the European Junior Championships, playing in the individual events and in the team event.

Maureen had a few good results in Open Tournaments with victories in the Women's Singles at the Merseyside and the Teesside and an appearance in the final at the North Middlesex. Playing with Yorkshire's Linda Bashford she won the Women's Doubles at the Teesside and reached the final of the Merseyside where she also won the Mixed Doubles with Mike Johns of Cheshire. With Shelagh Hession of Essex she won the Women's Doubles at the Midland.

Brian Burn tasted success in the Men's Singles at Swindon as well as winning the Mens Doubles with Surrey's Paul Beck. He was Men's Singles runner at the Yorkshire and a runner up in the Men's Doubles at the Oxfordshire playing with Derek Munt of Warwickshire.

Alan Ransome did well in the English Closed tournament to get to the semi finals of the Men's Doubles playing with Yorkshire's Nicky Jarvis and he won the Mixed Doubles at both the Birmingham and Cumberland tournaments with Linda Bashford of Yorkshire. At the Cumberland he also got to the final of the Men's Singles and won the Men's Doubles with Nicky Jarvis. He had a particularly good tournament at the Teesside where he won the Men's Singles, the Men's Doubles with Mike Johns and the Mixed Doubles with Linda Bashford.

Peter Hoyles and Peter Duncome were the runners in the Men's Doubles and Ian Robertson partnered by J.Green of Cheshire the runners up in the Mixed, Ian also reaching the final of the Youth's Singles.

Harry Dignan won the Veteran's Singles at the Teesside.

Brain Robson caused quite a stir in the Birmingham press when he played in the Midland Open and he also played in the Teesside where he reached the semi finals of the Men's Doubles with V.Doran of Yorkshire.

Young Chris Shepherd did well in the News of the World Coaching scheme where he finished seventh.

Both the Open and the Closed tournaments were again held at the Number 1 canteen in Longbenton thanks to the Department of Health and Security and W.D. and H.O. Wills once again provided prizes for the winners of the Men's and Women's Singles. Once again there were few players from outside the Northern area.

Northumberland tasted success in the Men's Singles when Brian Burn beat Alan Ransome in the final, in the Men's Doubles with Peter Duncombe and Peter Hoyles getting the better of Burn and Ian Robertson, the Women's Doubles where Maureen Robson and Linda Bashford (Yorkshire) beat Nancy Ferguson and Pauline Jackson, and in the Mixed Doubles which was won by Ransome and Bashford.

Yorkshire's Susan Lisle won the Women's Singles and also the Girl's Singles, the Boy's Singles was won by Jimmy Walker of Yorkshire and there was also success for Yorkshire in the Veterans Singles when L.Browning defeated Harry Dignan in the final. Peter Hoyles of D.H.S.S.,Benton was the Men's Singles winner at the Closed Tournament and he also won the Men's Doubles partnered by club colleague Peter Duncombe and the Men's Handicap Singles.

Another D.H.S.S.,Benton player Pauline Jackson took the Women's Singles title, the Women's Doubles was won by Phil Clark and Cynthia Duncombe of Hexham Fandango, This was the eleventh time that Phil had been successful in this event. She also partnered Arnie Warents of North Shields YMCA in winning the Mixed Doubles.

The Women's Handicap Singles was won by S.Collins of Whitley Bay Campus and Roland Earl of Blyth YMCA retained the Veterans title.

The Junior Events winners were Dave Armstrong of Newcastle YMCA in the Junior Boys, Janet Priestley of D.H.S.S. Benton in the Junior Girls and Ian Robertson (N.Shields YMCA) in the Youth's Singles.

The Northumberland League ran more smoothly than in the past, and there was far less troublesome but postponed matches, especially in Division One, were still a major problem

A strong D.H.S.S., Benton side won the first division the two second divisions were won by Anglo Plas and St.Anthony's Old Boys with West Allotment, Vickers Apprentices 'A' and Maccabi topping the third divisions. The three fourth division titles were won by Tynemouth NALGO, Vickers Apprentices 'B' and B.B.C. House Boys Club 'B'

The K.O. Cup winners were North Shields YMCA and the Ladies K.O. was won by D.H.S.S., Benton.

With the County Senior side being in the Premier Division of the County Championships expenditure on the County sides shot up from £107 to £257 and despite the increase in fees a deficit of £31 was incurred leaving cash to carry forward at £132.

At this time the average wage was approximately £32 a week and the price of table tennis items saw men's shirts costing thirty one shillings and sixpence (£1.55), Ladies shirts slightly cheaper at thirty one shillings with a pair of shorts costing two pounds twelve shillings and sixpence (£2.63).

A good bat could cost up to two pounds seventeen shillings (£2.85) and match balls cost two shillings and sixpence each (twelve/thirteen pence). Sandwich rubber was approximately six shillings and sixpence (32p) per sheet and pimpled rubber was around two shillings and ninepence (13p) for a sheet. Tables were anything from £36 to £ 59 depending on standard.

The end of the 1969/70 season saw the resignation of the chairman. Stan Lawson announced that he was going to stand down as Chairman at the end of the season and a piece in the 'Sandwich' magazine written by him stated that after being actively involved for twenty years and chairman for most of that time he had decided that it was time to quit. He was well satisfied with his years in office which he felt had been successful, but he was disappointed that county matches were played at home with less than one hundred people watching. He also felt that it was time that more young people took an interest in being on the committee.