

A History of Northumberland Table Tennis Association
By Aubrey Drapkin

CHAPTER FOUR

The Fifties

1950-1951

The start of the fifties saw the Association continue where the forties left off with sixty-five clubs in membership having one hundred and fourteen teams in nine divisions for season **1950/51**. There were two new teams who were to stay in the League for a long time in Saint Anthony's Old Boys, who were also to make a most impressive start, and South Shields Corporation. The former continued for twenty-three years until 1973 whilst the South Shields outfit remained until 1972.

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

A couple of changes were made to the Club Match Regulations with the regulation regarding postponements being simplified to allow any team in any division to have permission to postpone in exceptional circumstances granted to them by the Executive Committee. However, they had to apply in writing not less than fourteen days prior to the date of the original fixture.

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

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

Teams continued to be four a side with the method of play continuing as follows: A v W X Y, B v W X Z, C v W Y Z and D v X Y Z

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

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

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

In an effort to improve the standard of play of the leading players plans were made for intensive practice throughout the summer at the Sir James Knott Youth Centre. Messrs Ashforth and Kertzman applied to act as coaches to the Local Education Committee and this was agreed to.

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

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

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

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

There was sad news in January 1951 when the Committee were informed of the death of Ken Nicholson. The following tribute appeared in the Executive Committee Report for the year - 'It was a very great shock to learn of the death of Mr. K. A. Nicholson. Mr. Nicholson was, without doubt, largely instrumental in the founding of the present Association and chiefly responsible for the framework of the constitution and was from the inception until last year Honorary Treasurer. Those of us who were fortunate enough to be associated with him appreciate the time he devoted to our activities and though having many and varied interests none of them occupied his conscientious attentions more than the furtherance of Table Tennis. He was for many years a respected member of the National Executive and his understanding of constitution must have been of considerable assistance in that particular sphere. It is much to be regretted that the war years resulted in him losing his place on that body.'

On the financial front it was decided to run a Donation Scheme to make sure that the Association remained on a stable footing and this was left in the hands of a sub committee consisting of Littlejohn, Helm and Waugh. It proved to be successful, raising some £28 which resulted in the Association having a surplus of approximately £22 at the end of the financial year.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1951-1952

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The County teams were not as successful as hitherto and the support was very disappointing. In the newly formed Second Division North the first team finished sixth out of seven whilst the newly formed second team competed in the old Northern division finishing second out of four. Neither of the League representative teams progressed past the zone finals of the Wilmott Cup and the Rose Bowl.

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

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

Philomena Heppell (Revac) won the Women's Singles at the Hartlepool's Open Tournament and went on to become the first Northumberland player to gain a National Honour. She was picked, along with Doreen Spooner of Middlesex and Jill Rook of Surrey to play for England Juniors against Wales at Aberdare in a mixed junior international. The three girls were, in fact, the first ever junior girls to gain international honours. The match was won by England with Philomena only playing in one match. According to the English Table Tennis Association's

official magazine, Table Tennis News, her success came as a complete surprise! This was the start of a long and successful time for Philomena.

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

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

The outstanding player was, undoubtedly, Johnny Hillyer, who according to the Executive Committee Report for the season, through keenness and natural ability proved himself, at the time, to be Northumberland's most promising player for many years. He won the Men's Singles, the Men's Doubles with K.Snaith (Newcastle YMCA) and the Mixed Doubles with Miss D.Smith (Revac).

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

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

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

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

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

Revac won the newly formed Ladies League.

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

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

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

1952-1953

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

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

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

The new E.T.T.A. scheme for umpires meant that the official umpires of the County were all qualified County Umpires and a County Umpires Secretary was appointed being Mr. Adam Coffey. Those qualified were J.R. Waugh, A. Coffey, D W Scarth, G W McDougal, and Sid Holt. The latter was eventually to play a major role in the administration of the Association.

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

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

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

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

With regard to playing conditions a rule was brought in to the effect that all teams in divisions one, two and three had to have tables, lighting and conditions which, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, were of reasonably high standard. However it in no way described what amounted to 'reasonably high standard'.

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

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

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

During the regional stages of the competition Huddersfield had only offered Sunday dates for their home match with Northumberland and the Executive Committee agreed that Northumberland deprecate Sunday play and the secretary wrote to the E.T.T.A. accordingly. There is no record of any reply being received and the match went ahead with Huddersfield being beaten 6 - 2.

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

An Exhibition was again held at the City Baths Hall with star players Richard Bergmann, Johnny Leach, the Rowe twins, Ken Stanley and the Chilean player Vicente Gutierrez together with Jack Carrington. A full house was treated to a great evening when according to the E.T.T.A. magazine items ranged from the mirth provoking astonishing clowning of Gutierrez to a terrific duel between Bergmann and Leach. The executive committee were of the opinion that the Chilean proved to be the highlight of the season. The crowd were also treated to the appearance of another Chilean, Newcastle United's F.A.Cup winning star George Robledo. The night was also financially successful, bringing in a profit of £51.

One of the Daily Mirror Area events was staged at the Sir James Knott Centre in North Shields in March 1952 when two local players, Jack Oughton (Hebburn) and Daniel Knaresborough (Newcastle) qualified for the National semi finals. This event was also very successful and both the E.T.T.A. and the Daily Mirror reported that the organisation was of the highest standard and infinitely superior to the other three centres.

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

The Central Council of Physical Recreation requested that Philomena Clark be permitted to take part in a show in Berwick to play against Scotland's Helen Elliot. Permission had been granted by both the E.T.T.A. and the Scottish T.T.A. and the Executive Committee had no hesitation in agreeing to the request.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the financial side there was a surplus for the year of £112 thanks mainly to a profit on the Exhibition of £51 and the re introduction of the Donation Scheme which brought in approximately £48. At the end of the year the total cash at the bank and in hand amounted to approximately £196.

1953-1954

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

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

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

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

The divisions remained the same and there were eight teams at the commencement of the Ladies League but unfortunately one was to drop out part way through the season.

A team was entered in the County Championships Division Two North again but there was no second team following the disbanding of the County Championships Northern Division. Unfortunately it turned out to be another poor season with only one match being won.

The League representative team failed at the first hurdle in the Wilmott Cup but the ladies reached the quarter finals of the Rose Bowl losing out once again 4 - 5 to the Manchester League.

The continued lack of support for the County team's home matches was discouraging.

The Daily Mirror Regional Events were again held at the Sir James Knott Youth Centre and this year saw thirty two competitors including Northumberland's Pat Tindale, Ron Hunter and Miss Keating-Payne. Pat Tindale excelled, winning through to the National Finals at the Albert Hall in London where he lost narrowly to the eventual winner.

Philomena Heppell again made a name for herself by reaching the final of the Yorkshire Open Women's Singles before losing to Adele Wood of Lancashire and winning the Women's Doubles with Pam Mortimer of Yorkshire. Tindale, who was sponsored by the County, was runner up in the Boys Singles.

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

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

The E.T.T.A. Secretary had telephoned Johnny Waugh to ask if Northumberland would be prepared to host the Norwegian team for a few days before they took part in the World Championships at Wembley. This was agreed to and the Norwegians were provided with a pleasant and interesting visit which had been most appreciated. Unfortunately there is no record as to whether a proposed match against them ever took place. However it was to be the forerunner of a long association with the Heros Club of Bergen.

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

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

With Johnny Hillyer not taking part the honours this time went to Revac's young Pat Tindale who won the Men's Singles, the Men's Handicap Singles and the Men's Doubles with Adam Coffey also of Revac. Coffey also took the Mixed Doubles title partnered by another Revac player, Mrs. D. Ormond.

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

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

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

In the league North Durham retained the First Division title in what was to be the final year of their existence, Whitley Bay YMCA won division two and Vickers Sports Club topped the third division. Vickers' second team won division 4a and South Shields Corporation were successful in division 4b. The three fifth divisions were won by North East Marine 'B', Sandersonians and Northex with the North Eastern title once again going to Blyth YMCA 'C' team.

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

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

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

1954-1955

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

The treasurer, Mr Littlejohn, had moved to Preston and the finances were taken over by Rowley Ormond. Adam Coffer found that because of pressure of business he could no longer carry on as Match and Tournament Secretary and Dave Robson was appointed in his place. Dave had been a member of the Executive Committee since 1950 and he was to be very much involved with the affairs of the Association in the future, going on to be County Secretary from 1958 until 1968 as well as being the County representative at the E.T.T.A. He had also qualified as a County Umpire and was added to the county list. Messrs Ormond and Robson were replaced as Executive Committee Members by Adam Coffer and Mr N W Boyd and Miss Baitey became the Ladies representative with Mrs E.S. Turnbull also co-opted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pat also reached the final of the Daily Mirror Tournament where he came up against Ernest McLeish from Hinckley in what turned out to be a superb spectacular with a defender having the last word against an explosive hitter. After losing 18 - 21, 18 -21,

Pat levelled by taking the next two games 21 -9, 21 -15 only to lose out 20 - 22 in the fifth and deciding game. He was later picked as a reserve to the English Junior team to play in an International Tournament in Germany at the end of the season.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Johnny won the Men's Singles and also the Men's Doubles with Newcastle YMCA's Ron Hunter. Philomena took the Women's Singles title for the fourth year running and the Women's Handicap Singles for the third year running as well as the Women's Doubles, partnered by club mate Mrs A. Coffey and the Mixed Doubles with K. Smith of West End Boys Club. J. Rourke of Vickers Sports Club was the winner in the Men's Handicap Event, Harry Lawson from the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance was successful in the Veterans Singles and Pat Tindale won both the Youths and Boys Singles titles.

In the League the First Division champions were North Shields YMCA whose only loss was by default and not from defeat! They also looked like doing the double when they led by four games to one in the final of the Knock Out Cup but Newcastle YMCA hit back to win 5 - 4.

Saint Anthony's Old Boys were successful in two divisions with their B team winning the Second and their C team coming out on top in Division 4b. New club names to appear on the League trophies were Maccabi whose B team won Division Three, Vickers Apprentices (Walker) who took 4a, Cullercoats YMCA who were top of Division 5a without dropping a single point, Bells Close Methodist winning 5b, and a team participating in the League for the very first time in Lansdowne Social Club who finished top of 5c.

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

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

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

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

Publicity had again been given by the Kemsley Press.

The season ended on a very sad note with the death in May of the President, Mark C Robson. As a pioneer of the game it had been largely because of his suggestions that table tennis had been introduced to the county.

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

1955-1956

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

the later years his many varied interests had precluded him from devoting the same amount of time as previously. In the event he was to hold the position of President for the next thirty years.

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

L.W.Robson, Harry Lawson, R.Smith, Syd Holt, N.W.Boyd, R.S. Bell and Miss Baitey were all re-elected to the Executive Committee with A.Punshon, A.Wilson and Mr G.O.Pearce being added. Unfortunately Mr. Scarth's job saw him transferred to Manchester in the September and he was then replaced as Chairman by Adam Coffey with Mr. N.W.Boyd replacing him as Vice Chairman until the end of the season.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the Yorkshire she won the Women's Singles beating Miss A.Wood of Manchester in the final and then being losing finalist in the Mixed Doubles final partnered by the winner of the Men's Singles, Brian Kennedy. At the Hartlepoons' she again was successful in the Women's Singles, won the Women's Doubles with Miss J.Preston of Knaresborough who she had beaten in the Singles final and again partnered the winner of the Men's Singles in the Mixed. This time it was Ron Allcock of Manchester and once again she had to be content with them being runners up.

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

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

Great difficulty was occasioned through having to play a Rose Bowl match on the same day and at the same venue, Sir James Knott Youth Centre, North Shields, as the preliminary rounds.

As a result some of the matches had to be left over and with excellent co-operation of the Vickers Sports Club officials the outstanding matches and the finals were completed in their premises.

Ron Hunter of Newcastle YMCA was outstanding in winning the Men's Singles, the Men's Doubles with Pat Tindale (Revac) and the Mixed Doubles with Philomena Heppell (St.Anthony's Old Boys). Philomena duly won the Women's Singles, the Womens Handicap Singles and helped Mrs. A. Coffey of Revac to retain the Womens Doubles title. The Mens Handicap Singles was won by E.Peter of Newcastle YMCA, the Youths Singles duly went to Pat Tindale and D.Cunningham of Newcastle YMCA was successful in the Boys Singles.

North Shields YMCA retained the Division One championship in the League and also played against Newcastle YMCA in a repeat of the previous year's final, this time winning to complete the double. Vickers Sports Club were the winners of Division Two with their 'B' team being successful in Division 4b. The Third Division winners were Revac'C' team, 4a was won by Ministry of Works and the three Fifth Division winners were British Legion (5a), West Denton Association 'B' (5b) and BBC House Boys Club (5c).

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

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

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

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

The main tables were Jaques, Rose, Barna Match and Alec Brook and cost between £23 and £45 according to quality. Normal bats cost approximately ten shillings (50p) and a new controversial sponge bat was twelve shillings and sixpence (63p). Balls were advertised in the handbook by Murtons Stores in Newcastle at anything from four pence to one shilling and three pence each (under 2p to 6p). The match balls mainly used were either Halex or Villa.

Table tennis clothing retailed at between fifteen shillings and one pound one shilling and sixpence for men's shirts (75p to £1.07) and thirty shillings (£1.50) for men's shorts. Women's shirts cost between fifteen shillings and eighteen shillings and sixpence (93p), skirts at one pound nineteen shillings and sixpence (£1.97) and shorts at twenty-two shillings and sixpence (£1.12). The average weekly wage at the time was just over nine pounds.

1956-1957

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

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

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

Stan Lawson had to be replaced on the Executive Committee and this brought in another person who was to be a stalwart of the association in Harry Dignan. L.W.Robson, N.W. Boyd and Miss Bailey were replaced by D.Davidson and Mrs. Patterson leaving one vacancy to be filled. It was decided to ask a Mr. Weightman but he declined the invitation and eventually a Mr. Basil Moore was appointed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was success for junior Jimmy Tindale of Gateshead YMCA when he won the Junior Singles at the Hartlepoons' Open. He was also selected, along with D.Mawson of Whitley Bay YMCA, Colin Archbold and D.Ward (BBC House B.C.) to take part in National Junior Trials in Sunderland but unfortunately the performances of all four were disappointing.

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

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

Vickers Sports Club again kindly agreed to stage the finals. Johnny Hillyer (Revac) regained the Men's Singles title and also won the Men's Handicap event. Ron Hunter (Newcastle YMCA) and Pat Tindale (Revac) retained the Mens Doubles crown.

In the absence of Phil Clark, the Women's Singles was won by Mrs R. Ormond (Revac) who also partnered Revac's Mrs. J.R.Waugh to success in the Women's Doubles. Mrs.D.Ward (Gateshead YMCA) won the Women's Handicap Singles. She also won the Mixed Doubles partnered by Ron Heslop of Gateshead YMCA. Another Gateshead YMCA player, Jimmy Tindale was successful in the Youth's Singles whilst Colin Archbold of BBC House Boys Club won the Boys Singles.

Revac won the First Division of the League, Gateshead YMCA 'B' team won Division Two and Blyth YMCA 'B' team won Division Three. The fourth divisions were won by Vickers Sports

Club 'D' and Lansdowne with the winners in the fifth divisions being Whitley Bay YMCA 'C', Hedley Sports and Newcastle YMCA 'D'.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When the Newcastle contingent embarked on the homeward journey about forty people went to the quay to wave them goodbye. All in all a very successful time even if the results were disappointing and perhaps more importantly the visit cemented ties of friendship which were to last for over twenty years.

1957-1958

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

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

During the year news was received of the death of one of the Vice Presidents, Mr.W.R.Archbold. In the early days of the association he had done sterling work, first as Assistant Secretary and later as General Secretary. It had been largely due to his enthusiasm that the association prospered pre - war and survived during the war years.

A major change took place in the method of play in the league matches although teams were still made up of four players. Previously each player played against all three of the opposing side giving twelve singles matches in total but this was changed to eight singles and four doubles.

Twelve matches were still to be played but each player now had to play in two singles only but also in two doubles matches. The order of singles play (where A,B,C,D are the home side and W,X,Y and Z are the away side in order of merit) was C v Z, D v Y, B v W, A v X, D v Z, C v Y, B v X, and A v W.

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

The committee were concerned that serious consequences might arise in the near future so far as representative matches were concerned if the quality and quantity of ladies' play did not improve. Clubs with lady members were asked to try to put teams into the Ladies League or failing that to ask their lady members to take part in frequent American Tournaments organised by the committee. The standard of play of the top ladies could not be queried in view of the Rose Bowl results but it again proved impossible to re-start the Ladies League and there is no record that the proposed tournaments took place.

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

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

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

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

The team consisted of Mrs Phil Clark, Miss L. Hamilton and Mrs D. Baston. Miss M. Semple played instead of Mrs. Baston in the first round match. Miss L. Hamilton was not eligible to play for the County side without special licence from the County Championships Committee but this had to be refused when Edgar Reay of Durham objected.

February saw the reciprocal visit by the players from the Heros Club in Bergen. This time the 'North Sea Cup' was won which gave Newcastle satisfaction but this was much less important than the cementing of the association with the Heros Club. Successful arrangements, including a reception at which the Lord Mayor of Newcastle and the Lady Mayoress attended were attributed almost solely to Dave Robson who was ably assisted by Adam Coffey.

Dave Robson commented that although it was a success some lessons had been learned which might improve their attempt. He also was disappointed that there had been a lack of publicity for which he blamed the local press rather than neglect by the committee.

Mrs Phil Clark appeared to have lost very little of her former consistency and was again on the Open Tournament trail, winning the Women's Singles events at the Hull Open, The Hartlepoons' Open, the East Yorkshire Open and the Yorkshire Open. She also was successful in the Women's Doubles in the latter.

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

This year the staging of the preliminary rounds of the Closed Tournament was moved from the Sir James Knott Youth Centre to the M.P.N.I. No2 Canteen in Benton, commencing at 1.00p.m. This proved to be most successful. With twelve tables side by side and controlled from one point it was considerably expedited. It was hoped that the advantages of the change would prove to be sufficiently attractive to ensure increased entry in future. The finals were again held at Vickers Sports Club.

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

Ron Hunter of Newcastle YMCA claimed three titles, winning the Men's Singles, the Men's Handicap Singles and the Mixed Doubles with Miss L.Hamilton of St. Anthony's Old Boys. The Men's Doubles event was won by the Revac pairing of Johnny Hillyer and Roland Earl. Mrs Phil Clark (St.Anthonys Old Boys) was successful in the Women's Singles and combined with Miss L.Hamilton to win the Women's Doubles. The Women's Handicap Singles was won by Miss M Semple of M,P.N.I., the Youths Singles by Dave Armstrong of West Denton and the Boys Singles by L.McFarlane of Newcastle YMCA. Newcastle YMCA an Postal Clerks, both members of the League since 1936 won divisions for the very first time, the YMCA winning the First Division and Postal Clerks triumphing in Division Two. St.Anthonys Old Boys won two divisions with their 'C' team coming out on top in Division three and their 'D' team winning Division 4a. The Division 4b winners were West Denton Association 'B' with the fifth divisions going to Blyth YMCA 'C' team, Lemington Glassworks 'B' and Thompson (Contractors) South Shields.

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the administration side of things Johnny Waugh who had been involved since 1933 and had been General Secretary for the last ten years and Mr.R.Farrow, Records Secretary for the last nine years, both resigned from their posts at the end of the season.

1958-1959

This meant that there had to be changes for the 1958/59 season and Dave Robson replaced Johnny Waugh with his position as Match and Tournament Secretary being taken over by Alan Morpeth.

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

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

Mr. R.Farrow continued on the Executive Committee and was joined by Mr. C.B. Fairless who replaced Mr. B G R Moore. Dave Robson also replaced Johnny Waugh as E.T.T.A. Representative.

Two new Vice Presidents were appointed in Mr. G W Wilde of Gateshead and Mr. C L Mellows of Cramlington. Unfortunately Dave Robson had to resign as General Secretary in the November and Adam Coffey stood in for the remainder of the season. The duties of the chairman were taken on by the Vice Chairman, Stan Lawson with Harry Dignan acting as Vice Chairman and Mr P Chaplin being co-opted onto the Executive Committee.

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

The only change in the rules was that the entry fees were increased form ten shillings (50p) to seven shillings and sixpence (75p) per team and one hundred and thirteen teams from fifty eight clubs, a slight decrease from the previous season took part in the league.

The only change to the number of divisions was that a Ladies League was re-introduced. There was not any change to the method of play.

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

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

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

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

Both P.Chaplin and Stan Denton were referred to the Northumberland Associaion of Mixed Clubs organisers who had requested assistance with a coach in preparation for their Regional competition. Unfortunately P.Chaplin's job meant that he had to leave the area at the end of the season.

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

Complaints were made to the E.T.T.A. about the way in which the Umpires Scheme affected the county and a reply was received referring them to Edgar Reay of Durham who was the North East Representative. He attended one of the Executive Committee meetings but it appears that the matters discussed and Edgar Reay asked to refer back to the E.T.T.A. seemed to refer more to the financial spending of the E.T.T.A. which the committee felt were of no benefit to the county.

1958/59 was a disastrous season for the County team who lost all five of their matches and finished bottom of the Second Division. It was pleasing, however, that 130 people turned up to watch one of their home matches.

Even though the North Sea Cup had not been won a very successful visit to Bergen took place in the February.

No team was entered to represent the Northumberland League in the Wilmott Cup but a team of ladies was entered in the Rose Bowl. Unfortunately they did not, like the County team, have the services of Phil Clark and went out in the first round to Leeds.

There is no record of any Northumberland player being successful in any Open Tournaments in this year. Phil Clark did not play at all in the season.

A very successful County Championships was held at the M.P.N.I. canteen with ten events, including the reintroduction of the Veterans Singles, taking place. Ron Hunter (Newcastle YMCA) and Miss L.Hamilton (St.Anthony's O.B.) were the stars of the tournament. Ron winning the Men's Singles for the second year running, the Men's Doubles with Jack Oughton (Gateshead YMCA) and the Mixed Doubles with Miss Hamilton, also for the second year running. Miss Hamilton was the Women's Singles champion and also won the Womens Doubles, partnered by Mrs.D.Ward (Gateshead YMCA). Stan Lawson (MPNI) was successful in the Men's Handicap event and Miss M.Semple, also MPNI, took the Women's Handicap title. Adam Coffey (Revac) won the Veterans Singles with the Youths Singles going to D.Mawson of Whitley Bay YMCA. Gateshead YMCA's Colin Archbold was the Boys Singles winner.

The League Title was retained by Newcastle YMCA who won the first division and also beat Gateshead YMCA in the final of the K.O. Cup. All of the other divisions went to separate clubs with Lansdowne top of the Second Division and South Shields YMCA winning the Third Division. The two fourth divisions were won by Lemington Glass Works and Blyth YMCA 'C' team with the three Fifth Division winners being Tynemouth NALGO, Swan Hunters and Dunston Hill Hospital whilst Blyth Town Co-op won the North Eastern Division for the first time.

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

The Association was once more grateful to the Newcastle Chronicle and to the South Shields Gazette for publishing the league tables and mention was also made of Tyne Tees Television for their support of the Association. Unfortunately there is no record of what the TV company covered.

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

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

1959-1960

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

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

The rule regarding submission of scorecards was changed to state that score cards had to be in the hands of the records secretary within seven days of a match being played.

Stan Lawson continued as Chairman, Harry Dignan as Vice Chairman and Adam Coffey as General Secretary and the E.T.T.A. representative was Stan Lawson. J.Arkless, R.S.Bell, A.Punshon, G.O.Pearce all came off the Executive Committee and with Harry Dignan now being Vice Chairman there were five vacancies which were filled by Stan Denton, Ronnie Heslop, J L Mundy, W D Robson and Ron Patterson. Dave Robson was co - opted onto the committee in the November and took over all of the arrangements for the visit of the party from Bergen.

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

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

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

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

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

The League representative sides had similar results to the previous season with the men beating Stockton in the first round of the Wilmott Cup but then losing to Huddersfield. The Women again narrowly lost to Leeds in the opening round of the Rose Bowl.

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

Dave Robson organised a very successful weekend over Easter for twenty-six visitors from the Heros Club in Bergen with the Lord Mayor of Newcastle receiving them at the Mansion House and then attending a dinner in their honour together with the Lady Mayoress, On the playing side seven events took place with Northumberland winning 5 - 2 to regain the North Sea Cup. Pat Tindale excelled by defeating the Norwegian National Champion.

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

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

Pat Tindale and Miss Hamilton were both prominent in the Hartlepoons Open with Miss Hamilton winning the Women's Singles, the Women's Doubles with Northumberland's Mrs. D.Ward and the Mixed Doubles with Pat. Pat lost out to Durham's W.Barker in the final of the Men's Singles but won the Mens Doubles with his Northumberland colleague Roland Earl as well as the Mixed Doubles.

Durham's Edgar Reay received the highest honour that the English Table Tennis Association can give which at the time was described as the Knighthood of Table Tennis and a letter of congratulations on behalf of the Northumberland was sent to him.

The M.P.N.I. Canteen in Longbenton was again the venue for the Northumberland Closed Championships held in February and featuring the same ten events as the previous year.

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

Pat Tindale (Revac) was successful in the Mens Singles and Roland Earl won another title, taking the Men's Doubles partnered by Revac team mate Johnny Hillyer. The Men's Handicap was won by B.Craike of Balkwell St.Peters and North Shields YMCA's Harry Dignan was the Veterans winner. There was an excellent final in the Boys Singles between Bill Young (Gateshead YMCA) and A.Purvis which was won by the fourteen year old Young. The previous year's Boys Singles winner, Colin Archbold, also from Gateshead YMCA, took the Youth's Singles title.

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

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

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

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

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

Gateshead YMCA were the winners in the Knock Out Cup.

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

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