

A History of Northumberland Table Tennis Association by Aubrey Drapkin

CHAPTER NINE

Into the twenty first century

2000 - 2001

The management of the Association was unchanged for season 2000/01 with the same officers and directors in place. Lesley Blakey declined an invitation to join the board but carried on as their secretary.

The only change was in the secretary of the veterans county team where Jimmy Scope replaced Maurice Cheek.

The revised rules and regulations that were drawn up in the previous season were formally adopted at the Annual general meeting.

The entry fees for the Northumbria league were increased to £51 per team.

As usual the only leagues affiliated to the county were the Northumbria league which continued to be organised by them and the Tynedale league. That has not changed up to the time that this history was written.

Another thing that has not changed is the formation of the Northumbria League into five divisions being a Premier Division and then Divisions One, Two, Three Four and Five, and the organisation of a handicap cup competition.

2000/01 saw a slight increase in the number of clubs to twenty-seven and the number of teams increased by three to fifty. The number of teams entered by North Shields YMCA was one less than in the previous season at nine and Cramlington Table Tennis Club now had eight teams. Newton TTC still entered four teams.

Pauline Long still supplied publicity material to the Evening Chronicle on a weekly basis and also continued to send monthly copy to Table Tennis News. The practice of supplying Northumbria League club secretaries with monthly up to date league tables and players individual statistics also continued.

Friday evening coaching sessions organised at North Shields YMCA and at College Street continued and there was an attempt to start an Advanced Training Centre at College Street under the guidance of Peter McQueen with four attempts being made but with little or no participation by the best juniors or cadets.

Coaching sessions by Alan Hedley continued at Cramlington, coaching sessions were held at Marden Bridge School and Peter Yeung, a former Byker Community Centre player, commenced coaching and organising in the west end of Newcastle.

Another former player Keith Patterson was coaching at Walbottle Community Centre where an exhibition of table tennis was also held.

Sports Leader/teacher as well as level two coaches courses were funded by Newcastle City and held at Gibson Street but coaches that attended had to undertake to coach in the Newcastle area.

Keith Wilson ran a four week level 2 course at both Walbottle and Welbeck schools.

The Regional representative, Mark Smith, continued to be involved during the year.

Four players took part in the Regional Junior and Cadet Trials held in Teesside when Kevin Wilson was fifth in the Junior Boys and qualified to attend the National Trials as did David Graham who finished in third place in the Cadet Boys. The two others who attend were the cadet boys Adam McCormack and Daniel Busby.

With the junior county team being withdrawn from the County Championships because of lack of players of the required standard, teams were entered in the North East Section of the National Junior and National Cadet leagues which were held in Billingham.

Kevin Wilson was unavailable for the juniors but the other junior players had a number of wins and gained valuable experience.

Likewise, the cadet squad of David Graham, Adam McCormack, Ben Thompson and Daniel Busby gained experience when playing in the cadet league.

The premises at College Street were under-utilised, although several clubs and teams expressed an interest in playing there.

Players from the teams at Blaydon, Byker Community Centre and North Shields YMCA got together to form a proper College Street club.

The Northumberland Association of Boys Clubs championships were once again held and Shaun Jackson won his way through to the National Finals where he reached the semi finals of the Junior Boys Singles.

Alan Morpeth received an award for services to table tennis but there was sad news with the death of Ron Wilson. Ron, who had moved to Leeds several years earlier, had been a former league player, committee member who took the county junior side to away matches on a regular basis, and as a National Umpire had helped with many tournaments.

At county level the senior team held their own to finish in third place in the County Championships Senior Division 1A whilst the veterans finished in fifth place in the County Veterans Division 1A.

Whilst there was no junior team in the County Championships a Northumbria League team was entered in the Carter Cup competition who played well but did not progress from the initial group, losing to Bradford and to Hull.

The veterans Northumbria league side of Geoff Salter, Bob Dodds and Malcolm Lusk beat Halifax, Liverpool and Grimsby to advance from the initial group but lost at the next stage.

The Senior Northumbria League squad of Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold, Geoff Salter, Tony Gelder, Eddie Smith and Gary Sangster reached the penultimate stage of the Wilmott Cup.

Eddie Smith started at number nineteen in the National Senior Men's Ranking List but by the end of the season had dropped down to number thirty three.

Success came the way of Andrew Wilkinson when he won the Men's Singles at the National Inland Revenue Championships which were held at Nottingham University. He won the Men's Band 1 event at the Clare Pengelly Memorial Grand Prix in Taunton and did likewise at the South Yorkshire Open Grand Prix in Sheffield. He was also a runner up with Mark Smith in the Men's Doubles at the Blackpool Open Grand Prix.

The Coach Lane Premises of Newcastle University were booked for the Northumberland Closed Championships, but it was then found that the date clashed with both the final day of the English Open and with the Durham Open and was not therefore suitable.

There were problems finding a suitable date on which the Coach Lane premises were available and eventually the championships were held at Cramlington Table Tennis Club venue, the Sporting Club Cramlington based at Cramlington High School.

Alan Morpeth was the organiser and Aubrey Drapkin the referee and there was an entry of fifty-seven competitors but only three of them were female.

The event was successful, especially the cadet singles that was included and afterwards a result sheet was issued by Aubrey Drapkin.

Dave Godbold (Birtley) won the Open Singles and also the Men's Doubles partnered by his club team mate Eddie Smith who also won the Handicap Singles.

The winner of the Ladies Singles was Pauline Long (DSS) who last won it in 1977/78. and whose first win the event was in 1969/70.

North Shields YMCA player Malcolm Lusk won the Veterans Singles and Steve Penman (North Shields YMCA) won the Band 1 Singles. Cramlington's Mike Daniels and Steve Ralph triumphed in the Band 2 and Band 3 Singles respectively.

Other Cramlington players to gain success were Kevin Wilson who won the Junior Boys Singles and David Graham who won the Cadet Singles. Birtley's Gary Sangster who won the Open Singles Consolation event.

The Newcastle Open, now a fully-fledged Grand Prix tournament, was held at Eldon Leisure Centre in December 2000 and the arrangements were controlled by Mike

Johns of the English Table Tennis Association with Aubrey Drapkin as the referee. Financially it was supported by Newcastle Council.

In addition to the tournament England internationals Alan Cooke and Nicola Deaton put on a 'come and try it' session on the preceding Friday.

The tournament attracted an entry of 146 and everything went well.

The Men's Singles was won by Alan Cooke (Derbyshire) and the Women's Singles by Staffordshire's Helen Lower. John Hilton of Cheshire won the Veteran Men's Singles with Cleveland's Jane Durham winning the Veteran Women's Singles. Derbyshire also had success in the doubles events with Cooke and Michael Isherwood winning the Men's Doubles and Nicola Deaton the Women's Doubles partnered by Kubrat Owolabi from Middlesex.

The Under 21 Men's Singles winner was Gavin Rungay of Scotland and the Under 21 Women's Singles winner was Noelle Lennon of Ireland.

Men's Banded Event winners were Ryan Owen of Wales in Band 1, Scotland's Niall Cameron in Band 2 and Stuart Matthew in Band 3, Simon Nutch of Yorkshire in Band 4, Lee Davies of Wales in Band 5 and Leo Veinsreider of Surrey in Band 6. Andrea Glover of Ireland won Women's Band 1 whilst Scotland's Laura Rungay won both the Women's Bands 2 and 3. There was also a Women's Band 4 Singles in which Lauren Springthorpe of Lincolnshire was successful.

Birtley Sports Club won the Premier Division of the Northumbria League for the third year in succession and Washington Table Tennis Club 'B' team were the winners of Division Two.

Cramlington Table Tennis Club swept the board in everything else with the Stingers winning the second division, the Tigers the third division and the Rejects the fourth division. Just for good measure the Tigers also won the Handicap Cup, beating the Rejects in the final.

Financially there was a deficit of £133 but the Association was still in a healthy position with £4679 to carry forward to the following year.

Once again there were four divisions in the Northumbria Summer League with North Shields YMCA replacing Birtley as the winners of the first division.

The second division was won by Saint Judes by the closest of margins over Cramlington Codgers. Both teams were level on points and also level on games so it was decided by the team that had the best ratio of match points actually played.

The third division winners were Cramlington Stingers and D.S.S. 'B' team were successful in Division Four.

2001 - 2002

No changes were made to the management of the Association for 2001/02 and John Thompson continued to be the Newcastle Schools representative.

There were changes, however, in those looking after the County senior and junior teams. Dave Godbold replaced Karen Henry for the seniors and Alan Hedley took over the juniors from Peter Wilkinson.

There was no change in the number of clubs and teams in the Northumbria League but Cramlington Table Tennis Club with eight now had the largest number of teams. North Shields YMCA were down to seven and Newton TTC were up to five.

Publicity remained in the hands of Pauline Long but the Evening Chronicle reports were moved from a Wednesday night to the Saturday Pink. Regular reports continued to be supplied by her to Table Tennis News and Dave Scholfield continued to supply club secretaries with monthly updates of the Northumbria league tables and players averages.

There was a fair amount of coaching during the year and Mark Smith was involved for a while until he no longer held the position of Regional Coach and demonstrations were given at John Spence High School in North Shields in which he was involved.

Peter Yeung was coaching at a new sports centre in the west end of Newcastle, Steve Penman at Benfield School in Walkergate and coaching took place at four venues in Alnwick.

Terry Wilkinson was involved in the coaching at Whitley Bay High School, Alan Hedley continued to hold sessions in Cramlington and Michael Marsden from Darlington was appointed as coach at Ashington Community High School.

Andrew Wilkinson was also active by coaching college students on Sundays and he also commenced regular sessions at John Spence High School.

The Friday evening sessions at North Shields YMCA continued as did those on Friday evenings at the College Street premises.

Towards the end of the season it was decided to try to employ a part time development officer on a regular basis and funding was received from Newcastle City and from the English Table Tennis Association Northern Region who contributed £4000 each. Keith Wilson was appointed and was to commence at the start of the following season and with a wider remit than just Newcastle.

The College Street premises now required major repairs and these were carried out during the year. A Disability Awareness Day was held there during the season.

John Spence High School gained Sports College status and Benfield School obtained ten tables with coaching taking place three times per week.

A multi team competition between teams from Ashington Community High School and John Spence High School was initiated.

Eight prospective county umpires attended a course and seven of them passed the written exam, some going on to successfully pass the practical exam.

On the junior front a squad of young players took part in a competition at Greencroft School in Stanley with two teams from Durham and two from Conwy.

Those involved were David Graham, Adam McCormack, Paul Smith, Daniel Busby, Abbas Jamal, Louise Graham and Emily Richardson but they did not win any matches. However they all enjoyed the experience and all of them showed good promise.

It was decided not to send any players to the Area Junior and Cadet Trials but a team consisting of Adam McCormack, Ben Johnson and Jan Cheung represented the Northumbria league in the North Area Cadet league which was held in Billingham.

Eddie Smith and Andrew Wilkinson featured in the higher positions in the National Rankings with Eddie starting the season at number thirty-two, going up slightly to twenty-eight at one stage but ending the season at thirty-one.

Andrew appeared at thirty-nine in November 2000, went to thirty-two in the December but finished the season in forty-third place.

At the Newcastle Grand Prix Andrew won the Band 1 Men's Singles event.

Veteran Dave Godbold did well when he entered the World Veterans Tournament which was held in Lucerne, only just missing out on a bronze medal in the Over 40s Men's Singles.

In the County Championships the senior team were weakened by the retirement from county play of some leading players and they were relegated from Senior Division 1A, finishing second bottom.

The juniors competed in Junior Division 3 but without any success.

It was a different story however with the veterans team. The squad of Ian Robertson, Malcolm Lusk, Geoff Salter, Bob Dodds and Pauline Long won Veterans Division 1A and were promoted to the Veterans Premier Division for the very first time.

The only entries into the National league Knock Out Competitions were the senior men in the Wilmott Cup and the veteran men in the Alec Brook Trophy.

The men were represented by Andrew Wilkinson, Eddie Smith and Dave Godbold and did extremely well to finish as runners up to the Wembley Middlesex league.

The veteran side of Geoff Salter, Malcolm Lusk and John Williamson lost to the Norwich League in the semi finals.

This year the Northumberland Closed Championships were held at Ashington Community High School and the entry was slightly down with fifty-one competitors. Alan Morpeth was the organiser and Aubrey Drapkin the referee. Overall there was a good atmosphere and a good standard of play. Unfortunately, there was a case of equipment abuse during the final of the Handicap Cup Singles. At a later, directors meeting the player in question was warned as to his future behaviour.

A results booklet was again produced by Aubrey Drapkin.

Andrew Wilkinson of North Shields YMCA was the winner of the Open Singles and Karen Henry, also North Shields YMCA, won the Ladies Singles.

The Birtley pairing of Eddie Smith and Dave Godbold retained the Men's Doubles title, Geoff Salter (Birtley) was the winner of the Veterans Singles and Steve Penman of the D.S.S. club won the Handicap Singles.

Washington's Darren McVitie was the winner of the Band 1 Singles with Mark O'Connor of North Shields YMCA winning the Band 2 event and Newcastle University student G. Thompson winning the Band 3.

Cramlington Table Tennis Club's Adam McCormack won both the Junior Singles and the Cadet Singles.

The Newcastle Grand prix was held at Eldon Leisure Centre in November 2001 and was again organised by the E.T.T.A. This time there was a complete lack of involvement with Northumberland officials.

Alan Cooke was involved in a 'come and try it' session in conjunction with the tournament which was attended by forty people.

The tournament was very successful but did not finish until 10.00p.m. on both days.

Derbyshire's Alan Cooke was the winner of the Men's Singles for the third year in a row.

Three other players retained the titles that they won in the previous year. Gavin Rungay of Scotland in the Under 21 Men's Singles, Laura Rungay in the Women's Band 2 Singles and Jane Durham of Cleveland in the Veteran Women's Singles.

Ireland's Na Liu won both the Women's Singles and the Women's Band 1 Singles.

The Doubles winners were Alan Cooke and Bradley Billington of Derbyshire in the Men's and Helen Lower of Staffordshire partnered by Dorke Nagy of Hungary in the Women's.

Nigel Eckersley of Cheshire was the winner of the Veteran Men's Singles.

The Under 21 Women's Singles winner was Alice Howard of Cheshire and the Women's band 3 Singles winner was the Yorkshire player Amanda Bell.

The Men's banded event winners were Eddie Smith of Northumberland in Band 1, Scotland's Euan Liddle in Band 2 and James Russell in Band 3, Shaun Bibby of Yorkshire in Band 4 and Derbyshire's Andy Henry in both Band 5 and Band 6 Singles.

Birtley Sports Club relinquished their hold on the Northumbria League championship after winning it for the previous three years, North Shields YMCA being this year's winners.

Byker Community Centre won Division One, Westgate won Division Two, Newcastle University were the champions of Division Three and Whitehouse Lane 'B' won Division Four.

The Handicap Cup final between the two Cramlington Table Tennis Club sides, Codgers and Knights, was won by the Codgers.

Financially the year saw a surplus of £721 being made despite the expenditure on major repairs at College Street and the loss of the Wenade sponsorship.

The total expenditure on College Street was actually down by £752 and there was a saving of £736 on the expenses of the representative teams. This meant there was now a balance of £5400 to carry forward to the following year.

The Northumbria Summer league again had four divisions with thirty-two teams taking part.

The first division was won for the second year running by North Shields YMCA, D.W.P. won Division Two, North Shields YMCA 'C' team were successful in Division Three and the Division Four winners were Whitehouse Lane 'B' team.

2002 - 2003

The only change in the directors of the Association for 2002/03 was that Ray Lydall resigned. Malcolm Lusk took over from Jimmy Scope as secretary of the veterans team and unfortunately there was now no schools representative following the resignation of John Thompson.

Keith Wilson took up the part time paid development officer appointment for one year.

The format of matches had now changed from 21 up and best of five games to 11 up and best of three games and it had been feared that this would cause a reduction in the number of teams, especially those with older players.

However, this season there were sixty-one teams from twenty-seven clubs taking part in the Northumbria league. Whilst the number of clubs remained the same the number of teams actually increased by two.

Cramlington Table Tennis Club now had another two teams making ten in all. North Shields YMCA still had seven teams and Newton T.T.C. now had six.

Pauline Long continued to deal with publicity in the Evening Chronicle and Table Tennis News and Dave Scholfield continued to circulate monthly league tables and players records to the clubs.

There was now a new Regional Development Officer in Mark Willerton but he was rarely involved with Northumberland.

Coaching at Benfield School in Walkergate received a huge boost with the receipt of an Awards for All grant of £5000. This enabled them to have an excellence centre under the supervision of Keith Wilson.

Keith was also involved at North Tyneside College but he concentrated his efforts with primary and junior schools. He was also instrumental in resurrecting the Newcastle Schools league.

Newcastle City overlooked the work that Keith did and he had to give a regular full report to them as well as to the association.

The established Friday night coaching sessions at North Shields YMCA and College Street continued as did the coaching at Cramlington TTC.

Andrew Wilkinson continued to coach at John Spence High School and Michael Marsden was again the full time coach at Ashington Community High School, now called Ashington Sports College.

The Schools League started by Keith Wilson operated at Ashington Sports College and at Westgate Community School in Newcastle and consisted of two divisions. Ashington 'A' team won Division A and John Spence 'A' team were the winners of Division B.

A squad of four players, Adam McCormack, Fan Cheng, Kevin Watson and Ben Thompson formed the Northumbria league cadet team that played in the North East Division of the National Cadet League at Billingham.

A team representing the Northumbria League was also entered in the National Junior League North East Division that was also played at Billingham.

Alan Ransome, now the chairman of the English Table Tennis Association met the members of the board at a meeting in December 2002 and made a good impression.

Sadly there were two instances where players died whilst taking part in Northumbria League matches. They were Norman Moore of Saint Charles and John Taylor of North Shields YMCA who died within three weeks of each other.

The following season Norman's widow Sheila donated the Norman Moore Memorial Cup which was to be awarded annually to the winner of the Junior Boys Singles event at the Northumberland Championships.

Eddie Smith and Andrew Wilkinson continued to feature in the top fifty of the Men's National Ranking list with Eddie starting the season at thirty-one and rising at one point to twenty four before ending the season at thirty-five.

Andrew started and finished at number forty-two but at one point reached thirty-two.

Several of the veteran players did well in tournaments organised by the Veterans English Table Tennis Society. Malcolm Lusk reached the semi finals of the Over 40s Men's Doubles at the Midland Masters where he also got to the quarter finals of the Over 40s Men's Singles.

He also repeated the performance at the Northern Masters in Blackpool and was an Over 40s Men's Singles quarter finalist at The Eastern Masters.

Pauline Long won the Over 60s Women Singles Plate at both the Eastern Masters and the Northern Masters where Geoff Salter got to the quarter finals of both the Over 40s Men's and Over 50s Men's Singles events.

The North Eastern Masters tournament was held for the first time and staged at Seaburn where Pauline Long was runner up in the Women's Over 50s Singles and Doug Lawrence a quarter finalist in the Men's Over 70s Singles.

Geoff Salter, Malcolm Lusk and John Williamson all played in the Veterans British League for Thompson Insurance and achieved promotion as runners up in Division Two.

There was success for Frank Lasek at the Newcastle Grand Prix when he won the Men's Band 6 Singles and was runner up in the Veteran Men's Singles. Pauline Long was a semi finalist in the Veteran Women's Singles.

In the County Championships the senior team were in Senior Division 2A and narrowly failed to gain promotion.

The competition was played on one weekend in Cheshire at Halton and Northumberland were represented by Andrew Wilkinson, Eddie Smith, Dave Godbold, Caron Guthrie and Pauline Long.

The veterans team played in the Veterans Premier Division for the very first time but found the opposition slightly too strong for them and just failed to remain in.

The team was Ian Robertson, Malcolm Lusk, Bob Dodds, and Christine Robinson. Jimmy Scope replaced Ian Robertson in some of the matches.

The non-inclusion of Pauline Long meant that her record of having played in every match since the formation of the veterans county team came to an end.

The junior team were outclassed in the Junior Division Three, finishing bottom.

In the National League Competitions the Northumbria League senior side won their group at Huddersfield in the Wilmott Cup but then had to withdraw from the later

stages because of the lack of players of suitable standard due to injuries and unavailability.

The junior side of David Graham, Fan Cheng and Adam McCormack lost in their initial group of the Carter Cup to Sunderland, Darlington and Leeds despite David Graham winning six of the eight matches that he played.

The veterans side of Malcolm Lusk, Geoff Salter and John Williamson won through their opening group of the Alec Brook Trophy by defeating Silksworth, Hallam and Sunderland and then progressed to the semi finals only to lose out to the Norwich League.

A successful Northumberland Closed Championships was held at the Sporting Club of Cramlington again organised and refereed by Alan Morpeth and Aubrey Drapkin respectively and the number of entrants was more than had taken part in recent years.

A results booklet was once again made available after the tournament.

The Saint Gabriels club provided the winners of both the Open Singles and the Ladies Singles in Dave Robson and Lynne Herrington. Birtley's Eddie Smith and Dave Goldbold once again won the Men's Doubles and Dave also won the Handicap Singles.

The Veterans Singles winner from North Shields YMCA was Malcolm Lusk. The Banded events were won by Steve Penman (DWP) in Band 1, Alan Hedley (Cramlington TTC) in Band 2 and as in the previous year the Newcastle University student G. Thompson in Band 3.

Cramlington's David Graham was the winner of the Junior Singles and Adam McCormack the winner of the Cadet Singles. This was the second year running for Adam.

The Newcastle Grand Prix was now organised by Northumberland County and sponsored fully with a free venue at Eldon Leisure Centre by Newcastle City.

Aubrey Drapkin and Keith Wilson were heavily involved in the organisation and Aubrey was also the referee.

On the Friday prior to the tournament England stars Desmond Douglas and Matthew Syed as well as Para Olympian Mark Polmer held an afternoon session at Westgate Sports Centre with children with disabilities and special needs.

Later they held a session at Benfield School with the Northumberland Excellence Squad and in the evening took part in a Charity Challenge Night to help sixteen year old Rachel Johnson raise funds to play for England in the World Transplant Games.

Taster sessions were also held at both venues but there was a disappointing attendance at both centres which was probably due to the lack of promotion by the centres.

There was an entry of 125 men and 23 women for the tournament which was a huge success from a playing and spectator point of view as well as financially and there was a large crowd present for the Men's Singles and Women's Singles finals.

The Chinese player Tang Jiang Feng won the Men's Singles and Barbara Kiss of Hertfordshire was the winner of the Women's Singles.

Durham's Tony Gelder won the Veteran Men's Singles and Jane Durham of Cleveland won the Veteran Women's Singles for the third year running.

The Under 21 Men's and Women's Singles events were won by Shaun Marples of Derbyshire and Karen Shepherd of Cheshire.

The Women's Banded Singles events winners were Gillian Edwards of Scotland in Band 1, Andrea Harrison of Lancashire in Band 2 and Helen Parton from Devon in Band 3.

There were once again six banded singles events for the men and the Band 1 was won by Gary Tandler from Essex.

The other winners were Steve Dixon of Lancashire in Band 2, Stephen Roberts of South Yorkshire in Band 3, Antony Whelan of Cheshire in Band 4, South Yorkshire's Stephen Crosby in Band 5 and the Cramlington TTC. player Frank Lasek in Band 6.

Birtley Sports Centre regained the Northumbria league Premier Division title and Newton TTC won Division One.

The second division was won by Newcastle University, the third division by Cramlington Trojans and the fourth division by North Shields YMCA 'F' team.

Newton 'E' team were the Handicap Cup winners, defeating Cramlington Corinthians in the final.

The outstanding amount of sponsorship money from Wenade was never received and had to be written off in the year.

However, there was a surplus for the year of £380 mainly due to increased subscription fees for entry into the Northumbria league and it meant that the total assets of the association stood at £5780 at the end of the year.

The Northumbria Summer league for 2003 saw twenty eight teams playing in four divisions of seven teams each. North Shields YMCA again won the first division with the other winners being Saint Judes in Division two, Oxhill 'C' team in Division Three and Saints in Division Four.

2003 - 2004

Nigel Coe was appointed as a director or 2003/04 season and Peter Wilkinson replaced Dave Godbold as secretary for the senior county team.

Cramlington TTC continued to expand and now had twelve teams in the Northumbria League whilst North Shields YMCA were down to six teams. Newton TTC now also had six teams.

The total number of clubs was twenty six which was a reduction of one from the previous season. The total number of teams also showed a reduction of one, standing at sixty.

A new club was Fatfield Amateur Table Tennis Society, known as FATTTS and the following season was to become Old England with three teams but retaining the name FATTTS for one of their teams. They are still members of the league at the present time.

Publicity continued to be handled by Pauline Long with weekly articles continuing to be published in the Evening Chronicle and monthly copy in Table Tennis News.

There was now not so much in the way of coaching taking place but there was regular coaching with the emphasis on younger players at Cramlington TTC, Oxhill Youth Club, College Street and North Shields YMCA.

Michael Marsden was still involved with the coaching at Ashington Sports College.

With regard to College Street the association was persuaded by Newcastle City Council to give up the tenancy and move to Benfield Centre of Sporting Excellence in Walker.

This move turned out to be a disastrous one with all of the promises of access and suitable facilities being broken by Newcastle City so the lease at College Street was re-negotiated despite problems with the heating system.

The building remained the association's only fully controlled premises and re-opened in the summer for two league teams and for general practice.

Four young players, Adam McCormack, Andrew Dryden, Kevin Watson and Sinceing Ngai, all took part in the junior and cadet ranking trials held in Sunderland but none of them progressed qualified for the national trials.

Kevin Watson also represented the Northumbria League team in the Northern section of the National Cadet league along with Jason Pu, Graham Barnes and Alan Sibley.

Cramlington Table Tennis Club organised a junior tournament at their premises for their own members plus any youngsters who attended schools in Newcastle and Tyne and Wear.

Sunderland's Anthony Barella won all three events that were held with Kevin Watson being runner up in both the Junior and Cadet Singles and Debbie Dawson the runner up in the Under 13 Singles.

The county senior team was made up of Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold, Caron Guthrie and Christine Burke, who was making a comeback. They

finished second in County Championships Senior Division 2A, just narrowly missing out on promotion.

Dave Godbold, Malcolm Lusk, Ian Robertson, Geoff Salter and Christine Robinson formed the veteran team squad that played in the Veterans Division 1A. They had a great season, winning the division and promotion the Veterans Premier Division.

The junior side, who were sponsored by aalco to the tune of £100, showed a lot of promise even though they finished bottom of Junior Division 3B. They were represented by David Graham, Adam McCormack, Kevin Watson, Sinceing Ngai and Stephanie Down.

The top players were unavailable to represent the Northumbria League side on the date of the first group of the Wilmott Cup but it was felt that it was better to field a weakened team than to concede. They were represented by Malcolm Lusk, Michael Marsden and Gary Sangster and actually beat Liverpool but lost out to both Hull and Huddersfield.

Similarly, the veterans side were not at full strength in the Alec Brook Trophy but the team of John Williamson, Jimmy Scope and Bob Dodd finished second in their group to qualify for the next stage.

Unfortunately, because of a clash of fixtures they then had to withdraw.

Adam McCormack, Fan Cheng and Andrew Dryden played for the junior side in the Carter Cup but went out in the first round.

The best tournament performance by Northumberland players was the success of Malcolm Lusk at the English National Championships where he won the Veteran Men's Doubles partnered by John Hilton.

Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold and Malcolm Lusk featured in the National Ranking lists.

Eddie and Andrew both made progress in the Senior Men's list, Eddie starting the season at number 35 and gradually moving slightly higher to finish the season at 28 while Andrew started at 41 and progressed to 29.

In the Veteran Men's rankings Dave Godbold started at 23 and did really well to reach 11 by the end of the season. Malcolm Lusk came in at 36 during the season and finished at 25.

Andrew Wilkinson won the Band 1 Men's Singles at the Newcastle Grand Prix where both David Graham and Rod Roberts reached the semi finals in Men's Bands 5 and 6.

Dave Godbold had a number of good performances in veterans events as well as winning the Veterans Singles at Newcastle.

He lost in the final of the Veteran Men's Singles at the Halifax Open Summer Veterans tournament and at the City of Liverpool Grand Prix tournament.

In the Veterans English Table Tennis Society events he won the Over 40s Men's Doubles with Keith Rodger of Cleveland at the North East Masters held at Seaburn Centre and was runner up to John Hilton in the Veteran Men's Singles at the Blackpool 2 Star Satellite Grand Prix event.

Malcolm Lusk lost in the semi finals of the Veteran Men's Singles at the Halifax Summer Veterans tournament and in the VETTS events was runner up in the Over 40s Men's Doubles with Kent's Joe Kennedy at the North East Masters and semi finalist in both the Over 40s Men's Singles and Doubles at the Northern Masters in Blackpool.

There was success for Geoff Salter at both Seaburn where he won the Over 50s Men's Doubles with Surrey's Derek Holman and at Blackpool where he won the Over 50s Men's Singles.

Pauline Long was runner up in the Over 50s Women's Singles Plate competition at Seaburn and at Blackpool Ian Robertson was runner up in the Over 50s Men's Doubles and John Williamson was runner up in the Over 40s Men's Singles Plate.

Geoff Salter was selected to play for Scotland in the Six Nations Veterans tournament.

The Northumberland Closed Championships at the Sporting Club, Cramlington had a good overall entry of forty nine men but there were only four women.

Aubrey Drapkin was the referee, and all went well.

This year a separate Northumberland Junior Tournament was also held at Cramlington.

Andrew Wilkinson (North Shields YMCA) won the Open Singles and the Men's Doubles partnered by Eddie Smith (Birtley) whilst Lynne Herrington who was this year unattached to any club retained the Ladies Singles title.

Washington's Geoff Salter was successful in the Veterans Singles and young Andrew Dryden from John Spence School won the Handicap Singles.

Steve Penman (DWP) was again the winner of the Band 1 Singles, North Shields YMCA's Peter Wilkinson won the Band 2 Singles, and Cramlington TTC's Stephen Ross and John McRoy won the Bands 3 and 4 events.

All of the winners at the Junior Tournament were from Cramlington TTC and the Norman Moore Memorial Cup was presented for the first time to the winner of the Junior Boys Singles, David Graham.

Debbie Dawson won the Junior Girls Singles, Kevin Watson won the Cadet Singles and Jason Pu was successful in the Under 13 Singles.

Despite a slight reduction in the number of entrants to 130 due mainly to three other events clashing with it, the Newcastle Grand Prix was very successful.

England International Alan Cooke of Derbyshire won the Men's Singles for the fourth time in five years and a previous winner Helen Lower of Staffordshire won the Women's Singles.

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2004 - 2005

There were no changes whatsoever in the management of the association or in the various secretaries of the county teams for 2004/05 season but unfortunately Ronnie Bell died during the year.

Alan Morpeth resigned at the end of the season after having been involved either as an officer or committee member for over fifty years. He was presented with a television set complete with wireless headphones.

Despite a reduction of four clubs in membership of the Northumbria League there was actually one more team than in the previous season. Cramlington TTC continued to grow and now had fourteen teams in membership. North Shields YMCA and Newton TTC both still had six teams.

Newcomers were the East Herrington, Sunderland based club Saint Chads who are still in membership at the current time.

Pauline Long continued to get publicity in the Evening Chronicle and in Table Tennis News and a County website was set up and running by the end of the season.

The regional Development Officer Mark Willerton had his area reduced and was no longer to cover Northumberland, Durham and Cleveland. Those counties were now covered by a new R.D.O. in Phil Webster from Cleveland.

Phil Webster, along with Alan Hedley held a meeting with representatives for Sport Development at Blyth Valley Council which resulted in table tennis being included in Blyth Valley Summer Sports Programme. Two hour sessions were held at the Sporting Club of Cramlington on Wednesday afternoons for six weeks during the summer of 2005.

Michael Marsden left Ashington Sports College and coaching was taken over by the teachers.

Coaching events were held in Alnwick under the supervision of John Ainley and coaching still took place at the College Street premises.

Several young players took part in the Junior Trials at Ormesby and also in a Junior 2 Star tournament that was held in Billingham.

A cadet team was entered in the Northern Section of the National Cadet League and they progressed well.

Aubrey Drapkin refereed a regional tournament at Ormesby which had a small entry but was very successful.

Eddie Smith and Andrew Wilkinson continued to feature in the higher places of the Senior Men's National Rankings, but both slipped down the order with Eddie finishing at number 31 and Andrew at 43.

Dave Godbold was still very highly ranked in the Veteran Men's list reaching number 10 at one stage and ending the season at 11.

Malcolm Lusk was in the twenties at the start of the season but unfortunately suffered a serious achilles heel injury which put him out of action for a considerable length of time. Geoff Salter appeared at number 26.

Geoff and Dave were also members of the Thompson Insurance team that won the Premier Division of the Veterans British League. Jimmy Scope and John Williamson played for the second team who finished in fourth place.

Once again Geoff Salter was selected for Scotland to play in the Veterans Six Nations tournament that was held in Widnes.

Several players did well at the Newcastle Grand Prix with Eddie Smith runner up in the Men's Singles, Dave Golbold winning the Men's Band 1 and Rod Roberts winning the Men's Band 6. Geoff Salter was runner up in the Veterans Singles and Pauline Long runner up in the Women's Band 3 event.

Geoff was runner up in the Over 50s Men's Singles at the VETTS Northern Masters in Blackpool and there was a measure of success for several players at the VETTS Western Masters in Hereford. Ian Robertson was runner up with a scratch partner in the Over 50s Men's Doubles, Gordon Bissett was runner up in the Over 70s Men's Singles and Jimmy Scope won the Over 50s Men's Plate.

Geoff was also a runner up at the North East Masters at Crowtree Leisure Centre in Sunderland in both the Over 50s Men's Singles and Doubles. In the same tournament Malcolm Lusk was a semi finalist in the Over 40s Men's Doubles, Ian Robertson a runner up in the Over 50s Mixed Doubles and Ray Lydall runner up in the Over 70s Consolations.

The county senior side narrowly missed out on promotion to the County Championships Senior First Division when they finished as runners up in Senior Division 2A. They were represented by Andrew Wilkinson, Eddie Smith, Dave Godbold, Caron Guthrie and Karen Henry.

The county veterans team of Malcolm Lusk, who was replaced by Ian Robertson after his injury, Geoff Salter, Dave Godbold and Pauline Long managed to avoid relegation from the County Championships Veterans Premier Division.

The junior side showed good promise but were second bottom in County Championships Junior Division 3B.

In the Alec Brook Trophy the Northumbria League veterans Men's team of Dave Godbold, Geoff Salter and John Williamson defeated Castleford, Hull and Matlock before losing to a strong Liverpool League side.

Pride of place went to the Northumbria League senior Men's team of Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold and Eddie Smith who triumphed in the Wilmott Cup. Victories over Sunderland, Stockton, Hull and Lincoln saw them progress to the finals session where they defeated Team Progress, Bournemouth, Nottingham then Wembley and Harrow league to win the cup.

The Sporting Club at Cramlington was now the regular home of both the Northumberland County Championships and the Junior Tournament with Aubrey Drapkin the referee for both.

Feed back received after the senior tournament indicated that it was the most enjoyed for several years. Result booklets were circulated after both tournaments.

Eddie Smith (Birtley) triumphed in the Open Singles and in the Men's Doubles, again partnered by Andrew Wilkinson (North Shields YMCA). The Ladies Singles was retained by Lynne Herrington, now of Old England and Neil Herrington who played for Birtley won the Veterans Singles.

Bob Morse of Alnwick TTC was the winner of the Handicap Singles.

Four banded events again took place with Keith Weatherby (now playing for St.Chads) the winner of the Band 1. Band 2 was won by John Donnelly of Byker Community Centre, Band 3 by Nigel Rodgers of North Shields YMCA and Band 4 by Cramlington TTC's Wally Ray.

The senior tournament also included a Junior Singles which was won by Kevin Watson of Cramlington TTC and a Cadet Singles in which another Cramlington player, Thomas Beckwith, came out on top.

There was a good entry for the Junior Tournament and the winner of the Norman Moore Memorial Cup in the Junior Singles was Andrew Dryden of North Shields YMCA. Sinceing Ngai (unattached) won the Junior Girls Singles.

The winner of the Cadet Singles was Janie Dent of Oxhill Youth Club while Jason Pu (Cramlington TTC) won the Under 13 Singles. Junior Boys Band 2 was won by Thomas Beckwith of Cramlington and Junior Boys Band 3 by Stephen Hannah.

The Newcastle Grand Prix at Eldon Leisure Centre had a similar entry to the previous year and received good coverage on local television and in the Chronicle.

The Hungarian Gergely Urban was the winner of the Men's Singles beating Eddie Smith in the final and the Essex player Natalie Bawdon triumphed in the Women's Singles and the Veterans Singles was won by Ian McLean of Norfolk. The Under 21 winners were Devon's Craig Bryant in the Men's and Karen Shepherd of Cheshire in the Women's.

Dave Godbold won the Men's Band 1 and Gemma Lloyd of Cheshire was the Women's Band 1 winner.

The other Men's banded events winners were Chris Beckley of Surrey in Band 2, Steve Crosby of South Crosby in Band 3, Derbyshire's Sam Perry in Band 4, Philip Wilkinson of Lancashire in Band 5 and Northumberland's Rod Roberts in Band 6.

The Women's Band 2 was won by another player from Cheshire Lorna Harper who made it a double by also winning the Band 3.

For the third year in succession Birtley were the winners of the Northumbria League Premier Division. Tyne Dock won Division One, DWP 'B' team finished top of Division Two, North Shields YMCA 'E' team won Division Three and Cramlington Magpies were the winners of Division Four.

In the Handicap Cup final Old England FATTs defeated North Shields YMCA 'C' team.

Despite a surplus being made in the previous year subscriptions for entry into the Northumbria League were slightly increased and another surplus was achieved in the sum of £537 increasing the net assets to carry forward to £6995.

The 2005 Summer League again had twenty nine teams in four divisions with Washington TTC 'B' team winning the first division. College Street 'B' team won Division Two, North Shields YMCA 'B' team were victors in Division Three and Old England Crocks won the fourth division.

2003 - 2004

Nigel Coe was appointed as a director or 2003/04 season and Peter Wilkinson replaced Dave Godbold as secretary for the senior county team. Cramlington TTC continued to expand and now had twelve teams in the Northumbria League whilst North Shields YMCA were down to six teams. Newton TTC now also had six teams.

The total number of clubs was twenty-six which was a reduction of one from the previous season. The total number of teams also showed a reduction of one, standing at sixty.

A new club was Fatfield Amateur Table Tennis Society, known as FATTS and the following season was to become Old England with three teams but retaining the name FATTS for one of their teams. They are still members of the league at the present time.

Publicity continued to be handled by Pauline Long with weekly articles continuing to be published in the Evening Chronicle and monthly copy in Table Tennis News.

There was now not so much in the way of coaching taking place but there was regular coaching, with the emphasis on younger players, at Cramlington TTC, Oxhill Youth Club, College Street and North Shields YMCA.

Michael Marsden was still involved with the coaching at Ashington Sports College.

With regard to College Street the association was persuaded by Newcastle City Council to give up the tenancy and move to Benfield Centre of Sporting Excellence in Walker.

This move turned out to be a disastrous one with all of the promises of access and suitable facilities being broken by Newcastle City so the lease at College Street was re - negotiated despite problems with the heating system.

The building remained the association's only fully controlled premises and re - opened in the summer for two league teams and for general practice.

Four young players, Adam McCormack, Andrew Dryden, Kevin Watson and Sinceing Ngai, all took part in the junior and cadet ranking trials held in Sunderland but none of them progressed qualified for the national trials.

Kevin Watson also represented the Northumbria League team in the Northern section of the National Cadet league along with Jason Pu, Graham Barnes and Alan Sibley.

Cramlington Table Tennis Club organised a junior tournament at their premises for their own members plus any youngsters who attended schools in Newcastle and Tyne and Wear.

Sunderland's Anthony Barella won all three events that were held with Kevin Watson being runner up in both the Junior and Cadet Singles and Debbie Dawson the runner up in the Under 13 Singles.

The county senior team was made up of Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold, Caron Guthrie and Christine Burke, who was making a comeback. They finished second in County Championships Senior Division 2A, just narrowly missing out on promotion.

Dave Godbold, Malcolm Lusk, Ian Robertson, Geoff Salter and Christine Robinson formed the veteran team squad that played in the Veterans Division 1A. They had a great season, winning the division and promotion the Veterans Premier Division.

The junior side, who were sponsored by aalco to the tune of £100, showed a lot of promise even though they finished bottom of Junior Division 3B. They were represented by David Graham, Adam McCormack, Kevin Watson, Sinceing Ngai and Stephanie Down.

The top players were unavailable to represent the Northumbria League side on the date of the first group of the Wilmott Cup but it was felt that it was better to field a weakened team than to concede. They were represented by Malcolm Lusk, Michael Marsden and Gary Sangster and actually beat Liverpool but lost out to both Hull and Huddersfield.

Similarly, the veterans side were not at full strength in the Alec Brook Trophy but the team of John Williamson, Jimmy Scope and Bob Dodd finished second in their group to qualify for the next stage.

Unfortunately, because of a clash of fixtures they then had to withdraw.

Adam McCormack, Fan Cheng and Andrew Dryden played for the junior side in the Carter Cup but went out in the first round.

The best tournament performance by a Northumberland player was the success of Malcolm Lusk at the English National Championships where he won the Veteran Men's Doubles partnered by John Hilton.

Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold and Malcolm Lusk featured in the National Ranking lists.

Eddie and Andrew both made progress in the Senior Men's list, Eddie starting the season at number 35 and gradually moving slightly higher to finish the season at 28 while Andrew started at 41 and progressed to 29.

In the Veteran Men's rankings Dave Godbold started at 23 and did really well to reach 11 by the end of the season. Malcolm Lusk came in at 36 during the season and finished at 25.

Andrew Wilkinson won the Band 1 Men's Singles at the Newcastle Grand Prix where both David Graham and Rod Roberts reached the semi finals in Men's Bands 5 and 6.

Dave Godbold had a number of good performances in veterans events as well as winning the Veterans Singles at Newcastle.

He lost in the final of the Veteran Men's Singles at the Halifax Open Summer Veterans tournament and at the City of Liverpool Grand Prix tournament. In the Veterans English Table Tennis Society events he won the Over 40s Men's Doubles with Keith Rodger of Cleveland at the North East Masters held at Seaburn Centre and was runner up to John Hilton in the Veteran Men's Singles at the Blackpool 2 Star Satellite Grand Prix event.

Malcolm Lusk lost in the semi finals of the Veteran Men's Singles at the Halifax Summer Veterans tournament and in the VETTS events was runner up in the Over 40s Men's Doubles with Kent's Joe Kennedy at the North East Masters and semi finalist in both the Over 40s Men's Singles and Doubles at the Northern Masters in Blackpool.

There was success for Geoff Salter at both Seaburn where he won the Over 50s Men's Doubles with Surrey's Derek Holman and at Blackpool where he won the Over 50s Men's Singles.

Pauline Long was runner up in the Over 50s Women's Singles Plate competition at Seaburn and at Blackpool Ian Robertson was runner up in the Over 50s Men's Doubles and John Williamson was runner up in the Over 40s Men's Singles Plate.

Geoff Salter was selected to play for Scotland in the Six Nations Veterans tournament.

The Northumberland Closed Championships at the Sporting Club, Cramlington had a good overall entry of forty-nine men but there were only four women.

Aubrey Drapkin was the referee, and all went well.

This year a separate Northumberland Junior Tournament was also held at Cramlington.

Andrew Wilkinson (North Shields YMCA) won the Open Singles and the Men's Doubles partnered by Eddie Smith (Birtley) whilst Lynne Herrington who was this year unattached to any club retained the Ladies Singles title.

Washington's Geoff Salter was successful in the Veterans Singles and young Andrew Dryden from John Spence School won the Handicap Singles.

Steve Penman (DWP) was again the winner of the Band 1 Singles, North Shields YMCA's Peter Wilkinson won the Band 2 Singles, and Cramlington TTC's Stephen Ross and John McRoy won the Bands 3 and 4 events.

All of the winners at the Junior Tournament were from Cramlington TTC and the Norman Moore Memorial Cup was presented for the first time to the winner of the Junior Boys Singles, David Graham.

Debbie Dawson won the Junior Girls Singles. Kevin Watson won the Cadet Singles and Jason Pu was successful in the Under 13 Singles.

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2005 - 2006

Nigel Coe took over from Alan Morpeth as County Secretary and Ray Lydall returned as a director for 2005/06 season. There were no other changes in the management of the association, but Jimmy Scope resigned as a director in the February.

The Northumbria League now had twenty four clubs in membership, an increase of two but the number of teams was one less than the previous year at sixty. Newton TTC and North Shields YMCA both had one less and now had five teams each. On the other hand, Cramlington TTC had an extra one and now had fifteen teams in the league.

The club known as 'the ministry' at Benton had changed their name again and were now called Newcastle Estates Sports and Leisure Club, NESLC for short.

The Chronicle continued to print Pauline Long's copy in the Saturday Pink but it returned to the main paper in February. She still sent copy to Table Tennis News.

On the coaching front a two star coaches course was held at the Sporting Club Cramlington which was attended by twenty people hoping to become qualified. In the event nineteen of them completed the course with eighteen going on to do the practical for Level 2 qualification and one for the Teaching Certificate.

Cramlington TTC received an Awards for All grant which funded the course.

John Ainley was now coaching at six schools in Alnwick and some of the teachers at Kings School, Tynemouth started a table tennis club.

Teachers at South Beach First School in Blyth had funding to start a club and a new club was started at Riding Mill although it was not involved in playing in any league.

Eight candidates took the County Umpires exam with eight qualifying as County Umpires and three as League Umpires.

A cadet team was entered in the Northern section of the Cadet National league and performed with a great deal of credit to finish mid table.

Aubrey Drapkin was referee at the Northfield Junior 2 Star tournament in Billingham and some of our young players took part, being the first time that any of them had played in a tournament.

Ryan Richardson actually won his group in the Under 13 Boys Singles and Chris Killen got through to knockout stage of the Junior Boys Singles, eventually being runner up in the Consolation event.

Others who took part were Jack Harrison and Callum Patterson in the Cadet Boys Singles and eight years old Dean Richardson in the Under 11 Singles.

Several young players also took part in the Junior and Cadet regional Trials in Ormesby.

Alnwick Table Tennis Club received the Premier Club award as Regional Club of the Year.

By January 2006 the operation of the premises at College Street was no longer financially viable and Newcastle Council were asked for an early release from the lease. It was actually due to be renewed in September 2006, but Newcastle Council agreed to a release without penalty and the premises were vacated on 30th April 2006.

With regard to the equipment, Oxhill Youth Club took three tables and eight barriers for £230 while Blaydon Youth Club paid £90 for one table and four barriers. The remainder was transferred to Saint Georges.

The senior county team of Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold, Caron Guthrie and Christine Burke won the County Championships Senior Division 2 A which was played over one weekend.

Dave, Caron and Christine also played for the county veterans team along with Geoff Salter and Ian Robertson in the County Championships Veterans Premier Division but finished second bottom and were relegated.

The county junior side played without any girls in the first weekend of the County Championships Junior Division 2A and with only one in the second weekend. They finished bottom of the league but those that played showed steady improvement.

The Northumbria League teams had little success in the Wilmott Cup or in the Alec Brook Trophy competitions.

Several veteran players participated in events run by the Veterans English Table Tennis Society, the VETTS.

Dave Goldold won the Over 40s Men's Singles at the Northern Masters in Blackpool and was also runner up with Geoff Salter in the Over 40s Men's Doubles.

Jimmy Scope was runner up in the Over 50s Men's Singles plate competition at the Eastern Masters. He did likewise in Wolverhampton at the Midland Masters where Pauline Long also reached a final, losing in the Over 60s Women's Singles plate.

Dave Godbold played well at the North East Masters in Sunderland where he was the winner in three Over 40s events. As well as the Men's Singles he won the Men's Doubles with Chris Blake and the Mixed Doubles with Lynne Herrington.

Also at Sunderland, Chris Thorp lost Dave in the semi finals of the Over 40s Men's Singles and Dave Bissett was the winner of the Over 40s Men's Singles plate competition.

Both of the County Closed tournaments ran smoothly but it was disappointing that only one girl entered the junior one.

Andrew Wilkinson, now playing for Washington, was the winner of the Open Singles at the senior event and also took the Men's Doubles with Birtley's Eddie Smith for the third year running.

There was success for the Old England Club with Lynne Herrington making it four years in succession as winner of the Ladies Singles title and Neil Herrington winning the Handicap Singles. As expected Birtley's Dave Godbold was the Veterans Singles winner.

Birtley also supplied the winner of the Band 1 Singles in Dale Aitkenhead. Nigel Rodgers of North Shields YMCA won the Band 2 Singles, having won Band 3 in the previous year, and Cramlington TTC supplied the winners of both the Band 3 and Band 4 Singles in Kevin Watson and Graeme Boxwell.

Kevin also received the Norman Moore Memorial Cup when he won the Junior Singles at the junior tournament.

Cramlington also supplied the winner of the Cadet Singles, Thomas Beckwith, and the Under 13 Singles winner Debbie Dawson.

One hundred and seventeen men and twenty five women entered the Newcastle Grand Prix at which Aubrey Drapkin was the referee. It was again a successful tournament and received positive reports at the following E.T.T.A. National Council and also in Table Tennis News.

The Men's Singles was won by Fabio Mantegazza of Italy and the Women's Singles by Lindsey Thornton-Reynolds from Lancashire.

Both of the Under 21 events were won by Durham players, David Meads in the Men's and Claire Wilson in the Women's.

Northumberland had two winners with Dave Golbold coming out on top in the Veterans Singles and Eddie Smith winning the Men's Band 1 Singles in which Bart Vermoesen reached the semi finals.

Sarah Perks from Nottinghamshire won the Women's Band 1 Singles and Scotland's Corrina Whitaker took the Women's Band 2 title.

The other Men's winners in the banded singles were Martin Rogers, also of Nottinghamshire in Band 2, Matt Dodds from South Yorkshire in Band 3, Derbyshires' Warren Slaney in Band 4, Paul Savins from Bedfordshire in both Band 5 and Band 6.

There were new champions in the Northumbria League with Washington TTC winning the Premier Division. College Street were the winners of Division One, Oxhill Youth Club won Division Two, Byker Community Centre 'B' team triumphed in Division three and Cramlington Lions won Division Four and in the Handicap Cup final they defeated the previous year's winners Old England FATTS.

Financially the year was a disaster. There was a deficit of £2210 mainly because insurance on the College Street premises had not been paid since 2004 which resulted in a bill of approximately £1900. The association was of course still in a healthy position with £4785 being carried to the next year.

There were four divisions again in the Summer league with thirty two teams taking part. The first division saw Washington 'A' replace their 'B' team as champions, Tyne Dock won the second division, Cramlington Tigers the third and Westgate won the fourth.

2006 - 2007

Bob Atwell resigned as a director at the start of 2006/07, Dave Godbold replaced Malcolm Lusk as secretary for the veterans county team and Dave Scholfield, Nigel Coe, Alan Hedley and Jimmy Scope were appointed as Development Officers. In addition, Nigel Coe was appointed as National Councillor instead of Aubrey Drapkin.

There was a reduction of two clubs and two teams in the Northumbria league although both North Shields YMCA and Cramlington TTC both had one extra team making six and sixteen respectively. Newton TTC again had five teams.

Fees for entry into the Northumbria League now stood at £60 per team.

Pauline Long continued as before with publicity and was assisted in submitting her articles by Dale Aitkenhead who was able to email them for her.

Steve Cavanagh, the manager of Eldon Square Recreation Centre, started a club and affiliated it to the county.

Cramlington TTC now had three evenings per week at the Sporting Club and there was a good influx of young players and a small club was formed at John Spence High School in North Shields.

There was some coaching at Northumbria University by Chris Loxton and three coaches attended an Open Day at Percy Hedley Sports Centre in Killingworth to promote table tennis for people with disabilities.

Both Junior and Cadet teams were entered in the Northern sections of the Junior National league although the Junior one was cancelled at short notice and entries from the North East were included in the event played in Widnes. Northumberland's Kevin Watson won four of the seven matches that he played, and Alan Sibley played well but did not win any.

Four youngsters entered the Northfield Junior 2 Star tournament in Billingham where 12 year old Ryan Richardson got to the semi finals of the Under 13 Boys Singles event. He was later selected to play for the Northern Region side.

Two of the newly qualified umpires officiated at the British League premier Division at Ormesby where they gained valuable experience.

In the County Championships both the seniors and veterans had good seasons. The senior squad of Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold, Christine Burke, Caron Guthrie and Karen Henry having been promoted from the second division in 2005/06 narrowly missed out on gaining promotion for the second year running when they finished as runners up in Senior Division 1A.

Dave Godbold, Caron Guthrie and Christine also featured in the veterans squad that just failed to get back to the Veterans Premier Division when they were runners up in Veterans Division 1A. The other members of the veterans squad were Chris Thorpe, Geoff Salter, Ian Robertson and Jimmy Scope.

Because of the lack of girls, it was not possible to enter a junior team.

The National League team competitions were suspended for this season.

Dave Godbold and Eddie Smith did exceptionally well in the veterans events at the English National Championships with Dave winning the Veteran Men's Singles, then he beat Eddie in the final. The pair then combined to be runners up in the Veteran Men's Doubles.

Both of them played for the Thompson Insurance team that won the Veterans Men's British League title.

At the Newcastle Grand Prix Andrew Wilkinson won the Restricted Singles, a new event, and was also a losing semi finalist in the Men's Singles. Eddie Smith was runner up in the Men's Band 1 Singles, Dale Aitkenhead a semi finalist in the Men's Band 5 Singles and Pauline Long a semi finalist in the Women's Band 3 Singles.

In the VETTS Northern Masters tournament at Blackpool Dave Godbold was a losing semi finalist in the Over 40s Men's Singles and Ian Robertson a losing semi finalist in the Over 50s Men's Singles. Pauline Long was runner up in the Over 60s Women's Singles plate competition as well as being a losing semi finalist in both the Over 40s Women's Singles plate competition and the Over 50s Women's Singles plate competition.

The President, Harry Dignan, made a donation for use in recognising successful young players. The association added to it, purchased a cup, and had it engraved 'The Harry Dignan Cup'. Aubrey Drapkin took it to show Harry who was delighted and they decided it would be presented annually to the winner of the Cadet Singles at the junior tournament. Unfortunately, Harry was unable to attend this year's tournament because of his immobility.

Both the senior and junior tournaments were again very successful although there were only forty entries in the senior event. Thirty-two took part in the junior one.

Andrew Wilkinson (Washington TTC) retained both the Open Singles title and the Men's Doubles title with team-mate Eddie Smith. It was the seventh time that the pair had won the event and with various partners Eddie had won it fourteen times and Andrew had been victorious ten times.

There was a poor entry for the Ladies Singles which was won by Pauline Long (Newcastle Estates Sports and Leisure Club) who had first won the event thirty-seven years previously in 1969/70.

Eddie Smith won the Veterans Singles and the banded singles events winners were Washington's Jimmy Scope in Band 1, Mick Bull of North Fire in Band 2, Steve Todd of North Shields YMCA in Band 3 and Brian Philip of Cramlington TTC in Band 4.

The Handicap Singles was unique in that two German players contested the final. Both Nico Krause and Ralf Bauer were members of Cramlington TTC and Krause ran out the winner.

At the junior tournament Calum Main of Dumfries, a regular player for Cramlington TTC., received the Norman Moore Memorial Cup as winner of the Junior Singles and the Cadet Singles winner, Anthony Walton of Sunderland, became the first winner of the Harry Dignan Cup.

The two Richardson brothers, also both Cramlington TTC players, were successful in the events for the younger ages with Ryan winning the Under 13 Singles and Dean the Under 10 Singles.

At the Newcastle Grand Prix at Eldon Leisure Centre there was a one-hour coaching slot with a 'come and try it' session each day in a separate room to the competition.

The tournament had an entry of 147 men and 24 women and everything went well.

The staff at Centre were happy with the whole weekend, the representatives present from the E.T.T.A were happy with the organisation and the press coverage was pleasing.

The winner of the Men's Singles was Alex Perry from Devon and Marcia Ma from Middlesex won the Women's Singles. Dave Godbold won the Veterans Singles for the second year running and the winners of the Under 21 Singles were Bradley Evans of Buckinghamshire in the Men's and Caroline Hallows of Cheshire in the Women's.

As mentioned elsewhere a new event was the Restricted Singles which was won by Andrew Wilkinson.

Abdul Wuraola from Surrey was the winner of the Men's Band 1 Singles with Stephanie Donnelly from Cheshire doing likewise in the Women's Band 1 Singles.

The Band 2 Men's Singles winner was Gerry Campbell of Scotland and Karina Le Fevre of Cleveland won both the Women's Band 2 and Band 3 Singles.

The Men's Band 3 Singles winner was another Scotsman, Craig Hardie.

Men's Band 4 Singles was won by Tony Vaughan of Cheshire, Men's Band 5 Singles by Gavin Maguire from Ireland and Men's Band 6 by Danny Lowe of Derbyshire.

Washington TTC retained the championship of the Northumbria league with victory in the Premier Division.

The other division winners were Blaydon Youth Club 'B' in Division One, Newton TTC 'B' in Division Two, Old England FATTS in the third division and North Shields 'F' team in Division Four.

Ouston Community Centre 'B' team won the Handicap Cup, beating North Shields YMCA 'D' team in the final.

There was a turn round of some £4154 in the financial position compared with the previous year. A surplus of £1944 was achieved giving £6729 to carry forward. This was achieved mainly to a reduction in county match expenses of £1581, a surplus on the tournaments of £600, a reduction in administration costs of £318 and a saving of £1326 on expenditure previously incurred on the College Street premises.

The Summer League 2007 again had four divisions with eight teams in each one.

Silksworth Community Centre were the winners of the first division, Cramlington Stingers were winners of the second division, Whitehouse Lane won Division Three and Cramlington completed a double when the Lions won Division Four.

The sad news was received in July 2007 that Alan Morpeth had died. Many members of the association attended a celebration of his life which was held at Christ Church, North Shields.

At the Annual Conference prior to the 2007/08 season Dave Scholfield made a shock announcement that he was resigning as Chairman, League Secretary, Development Officer and also as a director of the association. He had not previously indicated that he intended to do so and no one at the meeting was able to say at such short notice that they would take on any of the roles. It was decided that the directors would consider the situation at their next meeting and make the necessary appointments.

At that meeting Aubrey Drapkin agreed to take on the position of chairman and also agreed to be secretary of the summer league.

Adrian Barnes had indicated to the directors that he was willing to be responsible for dealing with the Northumbria League results and tables. He was duly confirmed as Northumbria League Secretary by the meeting and he was later also appointed as a director.

Nigel Coe took over from Aubrey Drapkin as County Umpires Secretary.

During the course of the year Karen Henry and Nigel Rodgers were both appointed as directors and Graeme Boxwell agreed to maintain the county website.

2007 - 2008

Season 2007/08 saw an increase of one club and two teams in the Northumbria League making the number up to sixty from twenty-three clubs. Cramlington TTC still had sixteen teams, Newton TTC still had five teams, but North Shields YMCA were down one team to five.

Matt Stanforth was appointed as the new North East Regional Coach based in Cleveland and towards the end of the season Tony Taylor from Durham was appointed as Regional Development Officer for the North East.

On the development front talks were held with representatives of Northumbria University who were planning a new sports centre and the possibility of having facilities for table tennis was discussed.

A promotional event was held at the Odeon Cinema at Silverlink to publicise the film 'Balls of Fury' with tables being set up in the foyer and members of the public being invited to 'have a go'. This turned out to be a useful way of promoting the association.

The newly appointed Regional Development Officer, Tony Taylor, arranged with Northumberland Sport News that they would create a page for table tennis on their main website and Alan Hedley agreed to supply copy.

A meeting was held with the Tynedale League with a view to try to revive interest in that league which now only had four or five teams.

Talks were also held with the newly appointed competition manager for Northumberland Schools with a view to promoting the sport within their schools.

Aubrey Drapkin had a meeting with the sports manager at All Saints College in West Denton and gave advice on starting up a table tennis club. Some of their pupils entered the Northumberland Junior Tournament accompanied by a teacher who was also given advice. They eventually held an Open Day at which table tennis was featured.

Ray Lydall met with teachers at Churchill Community College in Wallsend who had started a table tennis club and required a coach. One of their teachers visited Cramlington Table Tennis Club and had discussions regarding coaching with Cramlington's Steve Ralph.

As with All Saints College some of the Churchill College pupils entered the Northumberland Junior Tournament.

Publicity continued as previously with Pauline Long supplying copy to the Chronicle and also producing copy for Table Tennis News which was now sent by email by Olive Drapkin.

Grame Boxwell continued to update the website.

The Richardson boys, Ryan and Dean did well in the Junior and Cadet Regional Trials held in Billingham and Jack Highmoor also took part. Ryan finished in second place in the Cadet Boys event and Dean in third place in the Under 11 event. Both qualified to play in the next stage in Derby but they did not then progress to the national finals.

The Richardson boys were both selected to play for the Northern Region team in Doncaster.

A team was entered in the North East Division of the National Cadet league which was played at Billingham and they finished in third place.

Four Cramlington TTC young players, the Richardson brothers, Ellis Cooper and Ben Dawson as well as Jack Highmoor from Westgate TTC played in the Northfield 2 Star tournament in Billingham. Jack was runner up in the Junior Boys Consolation Singles.

Cramlington TTC held a Junior and Veterans tournament which was open to players other than just their own members and consisted of singles events only. The finals of the junior events saw Jamie Dent defeat Ben Dawson in the Juniors, Ryan Richardson beat Debbie Dawson in the Under 15s, Ellis Cooper win against Dean Richardson in the Under 13s and Niall Morris win the Under 11s with victory over Dean Richardson.

In the finals of the veterans events the Richardson boys' father Barry beat Nigel Coe in the Over 40s, Mike Dunn beat Nigel Coe in the Over 50s and Aubrey Drapkin in the Over 60s, and Steve Ralph defeated Barry Richardson in the Handicap event.

Brian Philip was appointed as the Northumberland Schools representative.

Aubrey Drapkin was appointed as Assistant Referee at the European Six Nations tournament at Lilleshall College.

County Umpires Steve Ralph, Adrian Barnes, Ken Brown and Nigel Coe all gained valuable experience when they umpired at the British League Premier Division at Ormesby where Aubrey Drapkin was the referee, at the Northfield Junior 2 Star tournament and at the Stockton Junior 4 Star tournament.

It was decided to recognise the work that Dave Scholfield had done for the Association and a crystal piece inscribed with “thanks for ten years service” was presented to him.

Cramlington Table Tennis Club, who now had 95 members and had purchased sixteen tables, surrounds and nets, thanks to a £10,000 grant received from DITA Trust through the Landfill Communities Fund, were granted permission to stage a 2 Star tournament in the following season.

Aubrey Drapkin was the 'Guest of Honour' at the Sunderland League annual dinner and presentation night.

Dave Godbold reached number five in the Veterans National Ranking List at one stage during the season and finished in the top ten. Eddie Smith also reached the top ten.

Both of them did well at the English National Championships with Eddie reaching the final of the Veteran Men's Singles only to lose to Abdul Wuarola of Surrey whilst Dave reached the quarter finals. They combined to reach the final of the Veteran Men's Doubles, a repeat of the previous year but this time they won it.

Several players travelled to a tournament in Dumfries where Calum Main who played for Cramlington was based. Geoff Salter was the star of the show, winning the Men's Singles, the Veteran Men's Singles and the Men's Doubles. Steve Penman was runner up in the Men's Singles and Jimmy Scope the runner up in the Veteran Men's Singles. Calum Main duly won the Junior Boys Singles.

Geoff Salter was once again selected to play for Scotland in the Veterans Six Nations Tournament which was held in Llandudno.

Eddie Smith had a good measure of success in the Veterans English Table Tennis Society tournaments. He won the Over 40s Men's Singles at the Western Masters in Hereford and at the Midland Masters in Wolverhampton.

He was runner up in the same event at the Northern Masters in Blackpool where he was also runner up in the Over 40s Men's Doubles with Steve Hall of Somerset.

At the North East Masters in Seaburn it was Dave Godbold that won the Over 40s Men's Singles, beating Eddie in the final but they combined to win the Over 40s Men's Doubles. Keith Weatherby was the winner of the Over 40s Men's Singles plate competition.

The senior county team were playing in County Championships Senior Division 1A and finished in fourth place out of eight teams. They were represented by Eddie Smith, Andrew Wilkinson, Dave Godbold, Caron Guthrie and Karen Henry.

It was a disastrous season for the county veteran team who were relegated from the County Championships Veteran Division 1A. The organisation of the team was not at its best and they ended up failing to turn out a team for the first weekend of the competition. Then because of a clash of fixtures with the senior side they fielded a weakened team for the second weekend.

The Northumbria League only had a senior team in the national K.O competitions. That team defeated Sunderland but then lost to Stockton.

A cup was purchased for the Open Singles event at the Northumberland Closed Championships and with the approval of Alan Morpeth's widow Joyce was named the Alan Morpeth Memorial Cup. Two of Alan's daughters Sheila and Alison were at the championships and they presented the cup to the winner, Andrew Wilkinson of North Shields YMCA.

Alan had been a lifelong member and organiser of the North Shields YMCA club and Andrew had begun there as a young player and had played there for many years being helped by Alan. Therefore, it was very appropriate that Andrew was the first winner.

Coverage in the Chronicle was excellent and included a picture of the presentation. A copy was obtained and framed and given to Joyce Morpeth.

Lynne Herrington of Old England won the Ladies Singles, Dave Godbold of Birtley won the Veterans Singles and Dan Dodds of Oxhill Youth Club won the Handicap Singles.

N.E.S.L.C's Steve Penman was the winner of the Band 1 Singles and the other three banded events were all won by Cramlington TTC players. Ralf Bauer won Band 2, Ryan Richardson won Band 3 and Ken Brown won Band 4.

The only doubles event now held was the 'Fun Doubles' in which those who entered were divided into two sections, top and bottom according to their gradings for the tournament. Then a draw was made for partners with one player from the top section being drawn to play with one player from the bottom section. This was done at the tournament immediately prior to the start of play. It turned out to be successful and the winners were Barry Richardson and Ken Brown, both from Cramlington TTC.

A separate Junior Tournament had now become a regular thing, being played on a Friday night. Jamie Dent of Oxhill Youth Club was the winner of the Junior Singles and the other events were all won by players from Cramlington TTC.

Ryan Richardson was victorious in the Cadet Singles, Ellis Cooper in the Under 13 Singles and Dean Richardson in the Under 11 Singles.

Another very successful Newcastle Grand Prix was held at Eldon Leisure Centre with one hundred and seventy competitors taking part.

Northumberland's Eddie Smith was runner up in the Veterans Singles and Scotland's Calum Main who also played for Cramlington TTC was runner up in both the Men's Band 5 and Men's Band 6 Singles.

As usual the banded events took place on the Saturday with six events for the men and three for the women.

Damien Nicholls from Shropshire, who also went on to win the Under 21 Men's Singles, was the winner of the Men's Band 1, Scotland's Craig Hardie won Band 2, Sean Madden from Yorkshire won Band 3 and the winners in the other men's events were Durham's Graeme Barella in Band 4, his brother Anthony Barella in Band 5 and another Durham player, Michael Hahn in Band 6.

The Women's Band 1 went to Karina Le Fevre from Cleveland, Melissa Wright from South Yorkshire won Band 2 and also Band 3.

On the Sunday the winner of the Men's Singles was Stewart Crawford from Scotland and a Chinese player Shu Ying Xu triumphed in the Women's Singles.

The Veterans Singles winner was Durham's Darren McVitie, the Under 21 Men's Singles was won by Damien Nichols, Rachel Jamieson from Essex won the Under 21 Women's Singles title and Yorkshire's Steve Denny won the Restricted Singles.

In the Northumbria League a formal complaint was lodged about the bad behaviour of a player at a league match. A disciplinary hearing found that he had been guilty, and he was warned that any repetition of such behaviour would lead to immediate suspension.

Birtley won the Premier Division, Byker Community Centre won Division One, North Fire 'B' team won Division Two, Cramlington Magpies were the winners of Division Three and the fourth division was won by Maccabi.

North Fire were also successful in the Handicap Cup with their 'A' team getting the better of Ouston Community Centre 'B' team in the final.

A reduction in county match expenses and general expenditure during the year saw a surplus for the year of £2587 being £643 more than in the previous year. This meant that there was now the sum of £9316 to carry forward.

Thirty two teams again entered the Summer League which again had four divisions of eight teams. The winners of Division One were Saint Chads, the second division was won by North Shields YMCA, the third division by Saints and Newcastle Community won Division Four.

2008 - 2009

For 2008/09 Harry Dignan had resigned as President because of health problems and Ray Lydall was appointed. Ray, however, ceased to be a director.

Dale Aitkenhead replaced Adrian Barnes as Northumbria League Secretary, there were no longer any Development Officers and Karen Henry took over from Dave Godbold as secretary for the veterans county team.

The directors now were Aubrey Drapkin (Chairman and Summer League Secretary), John Donnelly (Vice Chairman), Brian Pierce (Treasurer), Nigel Coe (National Councillor, County Secretary and County Umpires Secretary), Dale Aitkenhead, Pauline Long (Publicity Secretary), Peter Wilkinson (Coaching Officer), together with Alan Hedley, Adrian Barnes, Nigel Rodgers, and Karen Henry.

Peter Wilkinson continued as secretary for the senior county team and Alan Hedley continued as secretary for the junior team.

Sadly, Harry Dignan died in October 2008.

The Northumbria League again had 23 clubs taking part but the number of teams dropped by four to fifty six. Cramlington TTC still had sixteen teams, North Shields YMCA still had five but Newton TTC were down one to four. Newcastle Community Club, later known as North East Chinese Association, joined the league and are still members.

The League handbook was produced 'in house' by Aubrey Drapkin with help from his wife Olive at first. It was all prepared, typed, copied, and approximately 200 collated and stapled. This continued to be the case up to and including 2016/17.

The same applied to the Summer League handbook although in much fewer numbers. Pauline Long continued to send weekly copy to the Chronicle which was also sometimes printed in The Journal but by the end of the season payment for the copy was no longer received.

The practice of sending a monthly newsletter to clubs was re-introduced. Copy sent to Table Tennis News was often not printed by them and Pauline eventually ceased sending it.

Cramlington TTC continued to encourage young players and held its own junior tournament with twenty-six youngsters taking part.

Coaching was being carried out at both Bothal School and at Hirst Middle School in Ashington and also in Morpeth but the main advance in coaching youngsters and getting them to take part in league play came with the introduction of the Premier 4 Sport scheme.

This was arranged by the English Table Tennis Association in conjunction with the Premier League football clubs in order to benefit youngsters. The football clubs also had similar arrangements with badminton, judo and volleyball. Each Premier league Club appointed a table tennis 'hub club' and a number of 'satellite' venues in schools where coaching was carried out.

Alan Hedley was appointed as the person in charge of dealings with the Newcastle United Foundation and Cramlington TTC were appointed as the hub club.

The first schools interested were All Saints College, Churchill Community College, St. Mary's School in Newcastle and Joseph Swan School in Gateshead and a start was to be made during the following season.

Teams of youngsters were entered in the North East Section of the National Junior and Cadet leagues. The squad of Ryan Richardson, Alex Guttridge, Jack Highmoor and Debbie Dawson finished as runners up in the junior league.

Two teams were entered in the cadet league with the first team of Ryan and Dean Richardson and Ellis Cooper winning the first division.

The second team squad of Karim Jazeri, Rahul Vadehra, Ryan Guttridge and Omar Elkad were runners up in the second division.

Ryan Richardson won the cadet boys event at the Northern Region Junior and Cadet Trials and Ellis Cooper came third in the Under 13 Boys event where Dean Richardson narrowly missed out. Both Ryan and Ellis then played in the National Trials where they both gained valuable experience.

Several of the youngsters also played in a tournament in Scarborough and in the Northfield Junior 2 Star Tournament in Billingham where Alex Guttridge was runner up in the Junior Boys Consolation Singles.

Ryan Richardson was again selected to play for the Northern Region.

Cramlington TTC gained the distinction of achieving the English Table Tennis Association Premier Club 'Clubmark' status.

The Northumberland Schools representative, Brian Philip, organised the first Northumberland Schools tournament for many years which was held at the Sporting Club, Cramlington.

By the end of the season Brian was leaving the area and Steve Ralph was appointed in his place.

The first Cramlington 2 Star Junior Tournament was sponsored by aalco and held at the Sporting Club, Cramlington with players from Northumberland, Durham, Cleveland and Dumfries taking part in ten events.

Paul Smith from Middlesbrough won the Junior Boys Singles, Ryan Richardson doing well to reach the semi finals. The Junior Girls Singles took the form of a single group with three girls finishing level on the ratio of matches won or lost and also on level on games ratio before being decided on points ratio in favour of Danielle Horsley, also from Middlesbrough.

Stockton's John Bousfield won the Cadet Boys Singles, beating Ryan Richardson in the final, and the Cadet Girls title went to the Dumfries player Nadine Wright. Paul

Smith also won the Under 13 Boys Singles, Rebecca Richardson of Thornaby won both the Under 13 Girls Singles and the Under 11 Girls Singles with James Finlay of Billingham winning the Under 11 Boys Singles.

Two boys' consolation events were also played and another Billingham boy, Phillip Chadwick won the Juniors. James McCabe of Morpeth beat Rahul Vadehra of Newcastle in the Cadets.

Nigel Coe qualified as a Level 2 tournament organiser during the year. Daniel Nicholson became a League Umpire and Alan Hedley, Brian Philip and Owen Ruddick all qualified as Development Officers.

Aubrey Drapkin was Assistant Referee at the National Junior and Cadet Tournament which was held at Loughborough College.

County Umpires Nigel Coe, Ken Brown, Steve Ralph, League Umpire Peter Yeung and Owen Ruddick (not qualified) all umpired at several events during the season including British League events at Hartlepool and at Ormesby.

Early in 2009 Aubrey Drapkin held a course for new umpires at Cramlington TTC.

Eddie Smith reached number four in the Veteran Men's National Rankings by the end of the season. He again did well at the English National Championships, retaining the Veteran Men's Doubles title, this time with Darren McVitie of Hartlepool.

Unfortunately, Dave Godbold's season was cut short because of a knee operation.

Andrew Wilkinson was player of the tournament at the European Revenue and Customs Tournament played in Poland where he won the Men's Singles and the Men's Doubles and was runner up in the Mixed Doubles.

Nearer to home he beat Steve Penman in the final of the Men's Singles at the Sunderland Tournament where three of our junior players were also in finals. Ryan Richardson beat his brother Dean to win the Cadet Boys Singles and Dean was also a runner up in the Under 13 Boys Singles, this time losing out to Ellis Cooper.

A number of our veterans took part in the European Veterans World Championships in Croatia.

Eddie Smith played with Neil McMaster at the Veterans English Table Society Northern Masters in Blackpool where they won the Over 40s Men's Doubles.

They also played together at the North East Masters in Seaham but this time had to be content with being runners up. Eddie went one better when he won the Over 40s Men's Singles.

Once again Geoff Salter was picked for Scotland to play in the Veterans Six Nations tournament, this time in Perth.

The county senior team squad of Andrew Wilkinson, Dale Aitkenhead, Gary Sangster, Bart Vermoesen, Caron Guthrie and Karen Henry retained their place in the County Championships senior first division and the veterans did likewise in the County Championships veterans second division. The veterans squad was Geoff Salter, Dale Aitkenhead, Jim Stamas, Jimmy Scope, Caron Guthrie, Pauline Long and Karen Henry.

The Northumbria League representative two-man team of Dale Aitkenhead and Jim Stamas went out of the Wilmott Cup at the first stage, losing to both Stockton 0 -3 and to Middlesbrough 2-3, Dale winning the two.

The Northumberland Championships and Northumberland Junior Tournament were once again successful. There were forty seven competitors in the senior competition and thirty nine in the junior one. Thanks, were expressed to young Matthew Layton who did an excellent job helping with the paper work.

Both Mrs Sheila Moore and Mrs Dorothy Dignan attended the junior tournaments and presented the trophies, Mrs Moore the Norman Moore Memorial Cup to the Junior Singles winner and Mrs Dignan the Harry Dignan Cup to the winner of the Cadet Singles. Both of them also gave the winners a small gift.

Andrew Wilkinson, now playing with NESLC, won the Open Singles and retained the Alan Morpeth Memorial Cup and North Fire's Karen Henry was successful in the Ladies Singles.

Eddie Smith (Birtley) was the winner of the Veterans Singles and Nico Krause of Cramlington TTC won the Handicap Cup for the second time in three years. He also won the Fun Doubles with James Bradbury of North Shields YMCA as his partner and the Band 3 Singles.

Steve Penman (NESLC) was again the winner of the Band 1 Singles making it the seventh time that he had been successful in that event. The other banded singles winners were Washington's Rod Roberts in Band 2 and Ellis Cooper of Cramlington TTC in Band 4.

The winners in the junior tournament were all members of Cramlington TTC, Ryan Richardson doing the double, of the Junior Singles and the Cadet Singles. Ellis Cooper won the Under 13 Singles with Jack Quinn winning the Under 11 Singles.

Another successful Newcastle Grand Prix tournament was held at Eldon Leisure Centre despite a small reduction in the number of players taking part.

On the Saturday Andrew Wilkinson was the winner of the Band 2 Men's Singles and Scotland's Calum Main who was still playing for Cramlington TTC was runner up in the Men's Band 4 Singles.

Star of the weekend was Matt Ware from Hampshire and his success started on the Saturday when he won the Men's Band 1 Singles. He followed this up on the Sunday with success in the Men's Singles and for good measure also won the Under 21 Men's Singles.

The Chinese player Shu Ying Xu won the Women's Singles for the second year running, the Under 21 Women's Singles winner was another Hampshire player Hannah Hicks.

Darren McVitie (Durham) won the Veterans Singles for the second year in succession and the Restricted Singles winner was James Brown from Yorkshire. Hannah Hicks was also successful in the Band 1 Women's Singles.

The other Women's banded events were won by Chloe Whyte of Cleveland in the Band 2 Singles and Jasmin Ould of Kent in the Band 3 Singles.

Derbyshire's Daniel Lowe won the Men's Band 3 Singles, Lincolnshire's Paul Johnson was the winner of the Men's Band 4 Singles, Edward Fambely of Yorkshire won the Men's Band 5 Singles and the winner of the Men's Band 6 Singles was another player from Kent, Robert Worrall.

NESLC were the winners of the Northumbria league Premier Division and Newton TTC were the winners of Division one. The second division was won by Mortimer Community Association with Saints winning Division Three and the Chinese club, Newcastle Community, were successful in Division Four.

The Handicap Cup winners were Westgate who defeated Cramlington Knights in the final.

The year saw a small deficit being recorded in the accounts with the balance carried forward still a healthy £9242.

The Summer league again had thirty two teams taking part in four divisions and the first division was won by NESLC. Cramlington Stingers won Division Two, Newcastle Community won Division Three and Cramlington Lions won Division Four.

2009 - 2010

There was no change at all in the directors or the various secretaries of the representative teams for 2009/10 season and there were again twenty-three clubs taking part in the Northumbria league.

The number of teams was one more than the previous year at fifty-seven. North Shields YMCA were now down to three teams whilst Newton TTC still had four and Cramlington TTC again had sixteen.

Publicity was still in the Chronicle on a weekly basis thanks to Pauline Long's reports and really good coverage was given by them for the Newcastle Grand Prix.

Nigel Rodgers was now sending copy to Table Tennis News but eventually ceased to do so as it was not being printed.

He also assisted Graeme Boxwell with the county website until late in the season when Paul Blay agreed to set up a new one.

A regional junior coaching event took place at the Sporting Club, Cramlington under the direction of the Regional Coach, Matthew Stanforth with the help of Alan Hedley.

The number of youngsters participating in the Regional Elite Coaching sessions was on the increase and a Regional Training Day was also held by Matthew Stanforth at Cramlington.

Alan Hedley attended a Coach Education Day organised by the ETTA at Billingham.

In an attempt to promote the sport more in North Tyneside Ray Lydall arranged a meeting between the Regional Development Officer, Tony Taylor and representatives of North Tyneside Council.

Four young players took part in the National Under 11 - 14s tournament, Jack Quinn in the Boys Under 11 Singles, Dean Richardson in the Boys Under 13 Singles, and both Ellis Cooper and Adam Curran in the Under 14 Boys Singles.

With regard to the safeguarding of young players the ETTA Child Protection Policy was formally adopted.

The Premier 4 Sport scheme got under way in March 2010 with the first schools involved being All Saints College, Whickham School and Churchill Community College. Heaton Manor was added at a later date and an Easter Sports Camp was organised at Whickham school.

Alan Hedley was appointed as ETTA Coach and Support Officer for Newcastle United Foundation.

Steve Ralph and Alan Hedley organised a Northumberland Schools team event at the Sporting Club, Cramlington.

Three teams were entered in the North East section of the Junior and Cadet National leagues, one in the juniors and two in the cadets.

The junior event had insufficient entries and was combined with the North West, being played at Blackpool for the first weekend and at Preston for the second one. The team of Alex Guttridge and the Richardson brothers, Ryan and Dean, did well to finish as runners up.

Dean also played for the cadet first team along with Ellis Cooper and Lee Eadington and they went one better by winning the Cadet League.

The second team squad was Adam Curran, Ryan Guttridge, Akshay Papary and Harry Dungate and they finished in the top six.

Aubrey Drapkin was appointed as the referee for the National Junior and Cadet Championships that were held in Sheffield.

The Cramlington Junior 2 Star Tournament was again hosted by Cramlington TTC and sponsored by aalco with seven events being staged.

Ryan Richardson won the Junior Boys Singles, Ellis Cooper was runner up in the Cadet Boys Singles to Ashley Scott of Cleveland, Dean Richardson was the winner of the Boys Under 13 Boys Singles and Jack Quinn beat Adam Shafiq in the final of the Under 11 Boys Singles. There was also a Junior Boys Consolation event that was won by Cleveland's Jonathan Walker.

Kayleigh Forster of Cleveland swept the board in the girl's events, winning the Junior Girls Singles, the Cadet Girls Singles and the Under 13 Girls Singles.

Eddie Smith featured at the top of the National Veteran Men's ranking list, starting the season at number two and finishing at number four. He won the Veterans Singles at the Newcastle Grand Prix and the Over 40s Men's Singles at the VETTS North East Masters tournament where he was also runner up with Neil McMaster in the Over 40s Men's Doubles.

Geoff Salter won both the Over 60s Men's Singles and Over 60s Men's Doubles at the VETTS Eastern Masters in Norwich and he was once again selected for Scotland in the Over 60s Men's Singles at the Six Nations Veterans tournament in the Isle of Man where he won a gold medal.

Jim Stamas won the Over 40s Men's Singles Consolation event at both the Eastern Masters and the Midland Masters.

Veteran players Dale Aitkenhead, Jim Stamas, Richard Wilson and Geoff Salter formed a new team, Border Reivers, to play in the Veterans British League Division 2B and did very well to only just narrowly fail to be promoted.

A number of young players took part in the Stockton 4 Star Junior tournament.

The County Championships Senior Division 1A was played over one week end and staged at the Sporting Club, Cramlington. It turned out to be a resounding success, being excellently organised by Nigel Coe.

The Northumberland squad of Andrew Wilkinson, Eddie Smith, Jim Stamas, Neil McMaster, Karen Henry, Christine Burke and Bart Vermoesen, who was playing for the final time before returning to Belgium, retained their place in the division.

Eddie, Neil, Jim, Karen and Christine also represented the veteran team along with Geoff Salter and they finished in third place in the County Championships Veterans Division 2A.

It was not possible to organise a Northumbria League senior team for their opening matches in the Wilmott Cup and they withdrew.

Alex Guttridge and Dean Eadington represented the juniors in the Carter Cup at Hull but were unable to win any matches.

The Northumberland Closed senior and junior tournaments were again both successful with forty-four players taking part in the senior one and thirty in the junior. Mrs Dignan was again able to attend and present the Harry Dignan Cup at the junior tournament.

After a gap of four years Eddie Smith (Birtley) regained the Open Singles title at the senior tournament and also won the Veterans Singles event. Karen Henry of North Fire retained the Ladies Singles title. The winner of the Handicap Singles was Lee Eadington of Byker Community Centre and the Fun Doubles went to Frank Lasek of North Fire and young Adam Curran of Cramlington TTC.

Once again four banded events took place with the Band 1 Singles winner being Steve Penman of NESLC for the third year in succession and the eighth year in total. The other three winners were all from Cramlington TTC, Alex Guttridge winning Band 2 Singles, Dean Richardson Band 3 Singles and Akshay Pabary Band 4 Singles.

The Richardson boys dominated the junior tournament with Ryan winning the Junior Singles and Dean both the Cadet and the Under 13 Singles.

Layla Shafiq won the Junior Girls Singles and Jack Quinn was the winner of the Under 12 Singles.

As the Newcastle Grand Prix had not had very many entries from local players in the past it was decided that entry to the banded events would be free for players in the Northumbria league although they would still have to pay the administration fee and the tournament licence fee.

This year the entry was up considerably on the previous year and included the England Number 2, Darius Knight. However, he made an early exit from the Men's Singles, losing to the eventual winner Scotland's Niall Cameron.

Scottish players had a good weekend with victories in three other events. Craig Hardie was successful in the Men's Band 1 Singles, Calum Main who was also still a Cramlington TTC player won the Men's Band 3 Singles and Hasitha Samaraweera won the Men's Band 6 Singles.

The Women's Singles was won by Lindsey Reynolds of Lancashire and the Veterans Singles by Eddie Smith. The Under 21 Men's Singles was won by Matt Ware of Hampshire, a repeat of the previous year. Melissa Wright of South Yorkshire won the Under 21 Women's Singles as well as the Women's Band 1 Singles which had been combined with the Women's Band 2 Singles because of the low number of entries for those events. The Restricted Singles winner was Stephen Munson from Buckinghamshire.

A French player, Wilson Huart, triumphed in the Men's Band 2 Singles, Lewis Williams from Wales was the winner of the Men's Band 4 Singles and South Yorkshire's Peter Morgan won the Men's Band 6 Singles.

A disciplinary hearing had to be arranged in connection with an event that took place in the Northumbria League when two players had an argument in a match which culminated in one of them throwing his bat which narrowly missed the other. The one who threw his bat was warned that any such behaviour in the future would occur an immediate suspension and the other one told that he should not provoke opponents with comments or actions.

NESLC won the Premier Division, Cramlington Casuals won Division One, Tyne Dock won Division Two and the Chinese Club Newcastle Community were successful in Division Three. The Cramlington club were winners of both Division Four and the Handicap Cup, the fourth division winners being the Ravens who also won the cup, beating Cramlington Dragons in the final.

The accounts for the year were again satisfactory, showing a surplus for the year of £305 with £9547 now being carried forward.

Thirty teams entered the 2010 Summer league with N.E.S.L.C. again winning the first division. Tyne Dock won Division Two, Byker Community Centre 'B' won Division Three and the winners of Division Four were Sacriston TTC 'B' team.