

A History of Northumberland Table Tennis Association  
By Aubrey Drapkin

CHAPTER TWO

The Thirties

Now that the Association had been put on a more formal basis the second season in operation was greatly looked forward to and it saw an immediate increase in the number of clubs and teams involved.

The Gentlemen's Section increased to eighteen teams and was divided into two divisions whilst two additional teams took part in the Ladies Section. One of the new entries was from London and North Eastern Railway Divisional Accountants Office, in later years known simply as Revac, who were to remain affiliated to the Association until 1993.

Although there is no record in the minutes of it being agreed to, the Association also affiliated to the English Table Tennis Association.

Apart from the now organised League play thoughts turned to the playing of matches against other Associations. A suggestion was made on behalf of the Sunderland and District Table Tennis Association that a Newcastle team should meet a team from Sunderland Y.M.C.A. with a view to finding out whether the former was strong enough to oppose with advantage a team drawn from the Sunderland League.

This was agreed to but before it could be arranged a request was made to this Association by the English Table Tennis Association that a match be played with the Sunderland and District Table Tennis Association to ascertain whether this Association had any player or players strong enough to justify inclusion in a team to visit Whitby for the Northern trials in **December 1931.**

This was agreed to provided that the Sunderland and District Association also agreed and would be played at Sunderland on 25th November. The team selected for this, the very first representative match played by the Association, was Messrs. B. Kinnair, C.S.Jessitt, J.N.Bovill, W.Milburn, C.N.Chowdary (or failing him, I.C. MacConachie), J.H.Henson and W.Nealings. Reserves selected were N.S.Hudspith, L.Ruddock and F.A.Constable. Unfortunately, there is no record as to the result of this match, or indeed, as to whether or not it was actually played.

There was obviously a feeling that the players of this Association be given the opportunity to play against players from elsewhere as it was also decided to invite the Durham County Association to oppose Northumberland in Newcastle. Again, there is, alas, no record as to the result but the match was played as in February 1932 arrangements were made for a return match.

With regard to the playing of League Matches Bart Kinnair asked the committee whether it would be possible for visiting teams to be allowed the use of the table for a half-hour prior to

a match and whether smoking could be prohibited during play but it was felt that the Committee had no jurisdiction over this.

What was to be, at least throughout the thirties, an annual match between the holders of the Championship of the Gentlemen's Section and a team representing the Rest of the League was agreed to in January 1932 and L.N.E.R. Divisional Accountants Office kindly offered the use of their premises and the Chairman undertook to arrange for ladies to assist with refreshments. This was eventually played on 11th February 1932 together with two ladies singles matches and two Gentlemen's singles matches.

At the same time, to assist with Association funds, it was agreed to run a singles tournament at an entry fee of sixpence (2.5p), games to be forty points up. There were only two events, Gentlemen's Singles and Ladies Singles.

A cup was purchased from Cottam Bros. at a cost of ten shillings (50p) for the Ladies event which became known as the Ladies' Singles Association Cup. An offer, which was accepted, was received from a Mr. G.W.Cottam (presumably of Cottam Bros.) jointly with a Mr .J.C. Metcalf to donate a cup for the Gentlemen's event. This was to be held by the winner for a period of one year and to be known as the 'Comet' Cup and to be returned to the donors each year to be inscribed with the name of the winner.

The final of the Gentlemen's event was an all Blyth affair with W.Cooknell becoming the first Northumberland Gentlemen's Singles champion by defeating G.R.Brennand whilst Miss M. Kay of St. George's beat Miss Sinclair of Ministry of Labour to become the first winner of the Ladies Singles.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. won both divisions of the League and Saint Georges' Presbyterian Church retained the title in the Ladies Section.

As some of the clubs in membership were in the Gateshead District it was not long before the Durham County Table Tennis Association stated that they desired all of those clubs to be affiliated to them but that they had no objection to such clubs having the benefit of membership of this Association for the purposes of match play. This was agreed to by the Executive Committee in May 1932 and at the following Second Ordinary General Meeting it was proposed and agreed that the affiliation to the Durham County Table Tennis Association would be a condition precedent to the right of membership of this Association of clubs playing in the Gateshead district.

The very first President was appointed at the Second Ordinary Annual Meeting in May 1932 with Mr. I. C. Maconachie being elected to the position. Three people were made Vice Presidents - Mr. Arthur Heron, Mr. F.A.Constable who had been unable to offer himself for re-election as chairman, and Mr. Andrew Donaldson of Sunderland. The latter was a Scottish school teacher who had founded the Sunderland Table Tennis Association on **3rd March 1910** who had also been the English Open Champion in 1921.

Mr Bart Kinnair became chairman with Mr E.V.Gardiner and Mr J.Curley as Vice Chairmen whilst Mr J.J.Brennand eventually took over the secretarial duties from Mr. Ken Nicholson leaving the latter free to concentrate upon the job of Treasurer.

After the experience of playing for a season under the first set of proper rules, several amendments were thought necessary and it was decided that each player would play each of the opposition only one game of 21 points up and that matches would be decided on aggregate games. A fixture meeting was brought into being and it was decided that all matches should commence at 7.00 p.m. It was also agreed that the ball adopted by the English Table Tennis Association should be used for all matches.

In September 1932 the Executive Committee confirmed that in accordance with the English Table Tennis Association approved ball, the one to be used for the 1932/33 season was the Villa ball and Mr. Seymour offered to give special terms of two shillings and sixpence (twelve and one half pence) per dozen to members of the Association.

The question of whether players be allowed to play for two teams was discussed but as there was no printed rule against this it was decided to leave the question to the good sportsmanship of the clubs.

Over the years it has never, of course, been possible to keep every member happy and even as early as **May 1933** sections of a letter of criticism were read out at an Executive Committee meeting although details of the criticism or of the response of the committee were never recorded.

As the Association grew quickly over the next few years the rules and regulations were gradually refined and the requirement to have the score cards typewritten soon disappeared.

Other changes saw the Honorary Officers of the Association listed as President, Chairman, General Secretary, Treasurer, Match and Tournament Secretary, Editorial and Publicity Secretary, Record Secretary, and E.T.T.A. Representative with the affairs of the Association being managed by an Executive Committee. This committee was made up of the Officers and Vice Chairmen together with one representative from each affiliated autonomous League.

More flexibility was given to the date on which the Annual General Meeting was held as long as it took place in April or May. The voting at the Annual Meeting was changed to give each team rather than just each club one vote and also gave the representative of any affiliated league one vote for each club in such league.

The subscriptions for clubs and teams remained unaltered throughout the thirties but the charge for individual membership was changed to five shillings (25p) per year.

After the introduction of a handbook it also became a requirement that each club had to subscribe for a minimum of five copies for each team that it entered. The cost of each copy amounted to sixpence in old money being equivalent to two and one-half pence.

The League regulations changed to state that the Laws of Table Tennis as adopted by the International Table Tennis Federation would be observed in all matches. The requirement for teams to have reserves was dropped as was the requirement that the secretaries of home clubs confirm the fixtures with the visiting clubs.

By the 1938/39 season there was no reference in the League Regulations to ladies not being able to play in Gentlemen's teams.

A specific end of season date was fixed with any postponed fixtures unable to be played after 31st March without the permission of the Executive Committee.

Postponements were only allowed in exceptional cases and opponents were to be notified at least four days before the scheduled date of the match.

Players were not allowed to wear light coloured clothing and it was recommended that all members of the same team wore similar clothing.

In order to avoid long and tedious matches a rule was made that stated that an umpire was empowered to declare void any game in which both players were guilty of continued unenterprising defensive play.

Promotion and relegation were brought in with the top two teams in each division below the first being promoted and the bottom two in each division being relegated to the next lower division but being allowed to apply for re- admission if circumstances permitted.

The home clubs were requested to observe regulations regarding the staging of matches with the playing area to be not less than twenty-five feet by fifteen feet and free from all obstructions and spectators.

Adequate lighting was to be provided so that the table should be lit by electric lamps of total wattage of not less than 180, or equivalent gas light, reflected downward and that the light was evenly distributed and should not un-sight the players.

Home clubs were also requested to provide such umpires or end-umpires as were necessary.

The rule relating to the ball to be used was eventually changed to read that the make of ball should be one of those officially approved by the International Table Tennis Federation and that a sufficient number of samples be made available for selection of a specimen satisfactory to both players.

Clubs were initially allowed to play matches against unaffiliated clubs provided that the unaffiliated club intended to seek membership but this was changed and the new rule stated that registered players or clubs were forbidden to take part in competition with any player or club, or in exhibition at any club, or under any auspices not registered or affiliated to the International Table Tennis Federation, without the sanction of the E.T.T.A. Executive Committee.

There was obviously a lot of interest in the Ladies game and Miss Jean Young was nominated to act as representative on the Northern Regional Women's Committee of the English Table Tennis Association.

On the playing front in **1932/33** season representative matches were played against Carlisle and Sunderland and District Table Tennis Association with a team of twelve players representing the Association in the former match whilst a team of seven played against the Sunderland side. W.Cooknell, G.R.Bennand, A.Willis and J.H.Parsons of Blyth Y.M.C.A, together with T.Wight (L.N.E.R.Accountants) J.N.Bovill (Ministry of Labour) and C.N.Choudary (College Road Presbyterian) were selected for both matches. B.Kinnair (Blyth Y.M.C.A), E.V.Gardiner and J.Gibson (L.N.E.R.Accountants), W.Nealings (Ministry of

Labour) and A.Gettins (St. Stephens Church of England) were also selected for the match against Carlisle.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. retained the titles in both the first and second divisions of the League with College Road Presbyterian Church coming out on top in the Ladies' Section.

W.Cooknell was again the winner of the 'Comet Cup' Gents Singles and Miss Jean Young took the Ladies Singles Association Cup title in the tournament.

The Annual Meeting in May 1933 saw a new President in Mr Arthur Heron being elected as Mr. I.C.Maconichie had moved to London. It was decided to create the post of Honorary Editorial Secretary and Mr. T.Wight was duly elected to that position. It was agreed to appoint two E.T.T.A. representatives and these positions were filled by Mr. Ken Nicholson and Miss J.Young. A change in Honorary Secretary was, however, made before the 1933/34 season started as Mr.J.J.Brennand was unable to continue on account of his business activities and Mr.A.E.Stapleton took over.

Mr.Wight, the new Editorial Secretary, made enquiries regarding the printing of a handbook and after reporting his findings to the Executive Committee it was decided to go ahead and have one printed. This was done by a firm called MacDonald of Newcastle upon Tyne and was very compact, measuring 11cm by 7.5cm and had twentyfour pages.

The contents were a list of Officers and Past President, Club information ( premises and secretaries of sixteen clubs),Rules of the Association, Fixtures for season 1933/34 for 'A' Division (Men) comprising of nine teams, 'B' Division(Men) comprising of ten teams, and Ladies Section of six teams,.

It also included the Rules of Table Tennis as adopted by the International Table Tennis Federation and mistakenly described on the contents page as the Rules of English Table Tennis Association, Honours List, Special Events page (Details and date of the Champions v The Rest of Northumberland fixture and date of the Singles Tournaments), and a Notelets page which gave details of the local newspapers which would print table tennis topics and the days on which they would appear.

That page also had a list of advertisers recommended to members and notes regarding a request for details of any suggestions on the game or of any prospective new clubs to be given to the Publicity Secretary ( presumably the Editorial Secretary) as well as an appeal to members to attend the special events. A blank page was left for notes.

Six full pages of advertisements were included and the advertisers were J.Rose & Son of London (Ball and table suppliers for whom Mr.J.J.Brennand was the sole agent for Northumberland) who were selling the balls at £1.63 per gross or specially tested balls at £2.40 per gross, tables at either £6.50 or the higher price of £8.93 for Villa or Jaques ones, whilst a R.D.Jones bat was 22 pence.

Spalding Table Tennis advertising the 'Villa' ball, John Jaques & Son Ltd. of London advertising the 'Tema' ball at £1.12 per gross, tournament posts costing 15 pence and nets at a cost of 5pence each.

Stan Seymour of Market Street, Newcastle advertising a full range of Table Tennis Requisites and other Sports Goods, Lenglens Limited of London selling Lenglens 'Starred Club' balls at £1.43 per gross, and 'The Finest Table Tennis Table - Lenglens 'Vivax' which cost £6.87.

The other advert was for The Newcastle Journal stating Table Tennis Topics would appear on Wednesdays throughout the season, the best Paper for all Sports and Particular attention devoted to amateurs.

The Annual Singles Tournament was held in December 1933 at the L.N.E.R. Central Institute, Forth Banks, Newcastle upon Tyne with the number of points played being 40 up in the rounds, 50 up in the semi finals and 100 up in the final.

The Handicap Singles tournament was held at a later date but there is no record of how the handicaps were fixed or, indeed, the format for play.

G.R.Brennand of Blyth Y.M.C.A. was the Men's singles winner with Miss M. McBride of L. & N.E.R. Accountants Office being successful in the Ladies. The first winner of the Men's Handicap Singles was J.Bradley of Wallsend and the first Ladies Handicap event was won by Miss E.M.Kay of St.George's Presbyterian Church, High Heaton.

County matches at home and away were played against Durham but requests to visit Carlisle and London were turned down on the grounds that the County was not in a position to send a team to either.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. provided five of the Men's team that entertained Durham on 31st January 1934 at Vickers-Armstrong-Whitworth Badminton Hall on Scotswood Road in Newcastle. They were G.R.Brennand, A.Willis, W.Cooknell, T.L.Kinnair and B.Kinnair. E.V.Gardiner of L.& N.E.R. Accountants and N.Hudspith of St.Stephen's Church of England, Scotswood Road completed the side.

A return match in Durham was played on 8th March 1934 when W.Frost and H.Grainge (both Blyth Y.M.C.A.) replaced E.V.Gardiner and N.Hudspith. There is no record of the results of these matches.

The Ladies County team that played Durham at Sunderland on 6th February 1934 was Miss M.McBride, Miss J.Young, Miss D.Hunter, Miss R.Hall ( all L.N.E.R. Accountants Office) and Miss M.Kay, Miss H.Wilson, and Miss S.MacNichol ( all St.Georges Presbyterian Church, High Heaton).

The home match was played at the L.N.E.R. Railway Institute on 7th March 1934 when Miss E.Sanderson ( Reyrolles) replaced Miss R.Hall. As with the Men's matches there is no record of the results.

All players who represented the County were awarded County badges, a practice that continued for many years.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. continued to dominate the League with their 'A' and 'B' teams again finishing on top of the Men's Section First and Second Divisions respectively. L. & N.E.R. Accountants Office Ladies won the Ladies Section.

The administration of the League was not without its' problems with complaints being dealt with by the award of points in nine cases and three matches being declared void.

Arising out of these complaints it was agreed that St.Stephen's Church of England, Scotswood Road be expelled from the League following their continued breach of rules unless a satisfactory explanation and apology was received. Although not recorded such explanation and apology must have been received as St.Stephen's were in the Mens First Division the following season.

It was also agreed that unless St.Georges Presbyterian Church, High Heaton Mens team were better conducted in arranging matches that drastic action would be taken against them It was not made clear in the records as to what such action would be.

In April 1934 Mr. Arthur Heron intimated that he did not wish to stand as President again and he seconded a motion that Mr. Henry Laird be elected President in his place which was agreed. Mr.J.Curley was appointed as a Vice President and Mr. Parkin replaced him as a Vice Chairman.

The **1934/35** season saw another increase in the number of teams playing in the league with once again two Mens divisions and one Ladies division. Handbooks were not replaced but inserts were printed and available to clubs at a small charge of sixpence in old money (two and one half pence) but new clubs were also issued with copies of the original handbook.

Local press interest in the Association's activities continued to grow with regular articles now appearing in the Evening Chronicle, Journal, South Shields Gazette, North Shields Daily News, Blyth News, Hexham Courant and the Whitley Bay Seaside Chronicle.

Three players, G.R.Brennand and A.Willis of Blyth Y.M.C.A. and W.Skeoch of Armstrong Whitworth's, were nominated to take part in International Trials.

County matches were again organised with Durham but no record was kept of the teams selected or the results of these matches.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. were once again top of the Mens Section First Division and they were certainly the outstanding team in the league going on to win the title in every year up to 1938/39 season which was the last one before the hostilities of World War II brought about the cessation of competition. The second division was won by North Durham.

Like Blyth Y.M.C.A., L.& N.E.R. Accountants were the dominant force in the Ladies Section and they too were top dogs right up to and including 1938/39 season.

On the tournament scene Blyth's G.R.Brennand retained the Mens Singles title, Miss E.M.Kay, now of L.& N.E.R.Accountants was successful in the Womens Singles and the Ladies Handicap Singles whilst another Blyth player A.Wedderburn came out on top in the Mens Handicap Singles.

The following year saw a change in Vice Presidents with the appointment of Reverend F.Baker, Stan Seymour and W.S. Bell. A.Heron and J.Curley stood down. Sam Boyd replaced Mr. Parkin as a Vice Chairman. A new position of Assistant Secretary was created which was filled

by H.Conyers Walker but unfortunately he had to resign part way through the season because of ill health and was replaced by Mr. Bill Archbold.

The title of Editorial Secretary was changed to Publicity Secretary and two Official Umpires were added to the list of Officers, the first to be appointed being J.J.Brennand and Johnny Waugh.

The latter was to become a driving force within the Association in the future.

The number of teams for the season **1935/36** rose dramatically with fifty-one competing in six divisions, four Men's Section, one Ladies Section and a new Blyth League. A knock-out competition was also arranged for the first time.

County matches with Durham again took place as well as an Inter League match with Seaham. An exhibition match was also staged at South Shields at their Association's request with Blundell, Miss Young and Miss MacNichol of L.N.E.R.Accountants, Skeoch of Armstrong Whitworth's and Frost of Blyth all taking part.

The Men's Section Second, Third and Fourth Divisions were won by Dunston Saint Nicholas, Benwell Presbyterian Church and Bitumastic Sports Club respectively, Blyth Y.M.C.A. 'C' team winning the Blyth Divisional League. The new Teams (Knock-out) Championship went, unsurprisingly to Blyth Y.M.C.A.

Blyth Y.M.C.A. supplied yet another Men's Singles champion in A.Willis who also won the Men's Handicap Singles. Miss E.M.Kay retained the Ladies Singles title and Miss L.M. Sharp was successful in the Ladies Handicap Singles.

It was common practice at the time for the English Table Tennis Association to encourage County Associations to stage Exhibition Matches in conjunction with themselves when top International players would take part. The highlight of the season was the staging of such an event at the St. James' Boxing Hall in Newcastle upon Tyne on Wednesday 27th November 1935 when a top squad of Hungarian players who had won the world championships were the attraction.

It was decided that Northumberland players G.R.Brennand, A.Willis, Miss E.M. Kay and Miss M McBride would take part along with Edgar Reay and T.E.Ewbank of Durham. Contact was received from a Mr. Robinson of Hull & East Riding who had secured the services of an English International player, Hyman Lurie who was prepared to come to Newcastle if required. It was agreed to ask him on the basis that he would play doubles with the Hungarians. The Hungarian squad was Szabados, Bellak, Leibster and Erlich and arrangements were made for them to stay at the Royal Station Hotel in Newcastle.

Johnny Waugh and Arthur Heron were appointed as the Official Umpires and F.Ashworth was the Announcer for the night.

Steps were taken to make sure that the event was well advertised with posters being purchased including a hand-written one which was placed outside of the hall. Adverts were paid for to be published in the Chronicle on the Monday and Tuesday before the exhibition as well as the Wednesday on which it took place.



The boxing ring had to be extended and a local firm were paid £5.50 to do this, 3000 programmes were purchased, twelve stewards were needed, and it was agreed that Arthur Heron would arrange this with preference being given to the unemployed. The stewards each received a complimentary ticket. It was arranged that four turnstiles would be open with two for ticket holders and two for those who would pay on the night and the services of two policemen to be on duty outside the hall from 6.30p.m. until 10.30 p.m. were acquired. All the officials turned out in Evening Dress.

It turned out to be a great success with an attendance of two thousand and ninety-one spectators.

The following season **1936/37** saw a new Vice President in Mr.M.C.Robson as the only change in the Officials although two changes had to be made during the season with Mr.Parkin resigning his position of Vice Chairman and the Publicity Secretary, Mr.T.Wight also resigning. They were replaced by Arthur Heron and Mr. Johnny Waugh. The General Secretary, Mr. A.E.Stapleton, saw out the season before he, too, resigned. The deep appreciation of the members of the Association were recorded in acknowledgement of the valuable work done by him since the formation of the Association and as Secretary since September 1933.

Only one County match was played that season with A.Willis, W.Cooknell, A.Wedderburn. B.Kinnair and M.Wake of Blyth Y.M.C.A. together with Messrs Leeson of L &N.E.R Accountants and Mincoff of North Durham selected to play against Durham.

As well as winning the Men's top division, Blyth Y.M.C.A. won the Team Knock out Competition and their 'C' team took the Blyth Divisional League.

Other clubs to taste success in the Men's Divisions were L. & N.E.R. Accountants whose 'B' team won the second division with their 'C' team finishing on top of Division Three South, and Newcastle Postal Clerks who won Division Three North.

L.& N.E.R. Accountants, of course, took the Ladies Section title.

In the Individual Competitions A.Wedderburn of Blyth won both the Men's Singles and the Men's Handicap Singles whilst Miss J.Young of L.& N.E.R.Accountants regained the Ladies Singles title with Mrs. J.R.Waugh gaining success in the Ladies Handicap Singles.

By season **1937/38** the number of teams in the league had grown to sixty playing in four Newcastle & District Men's Divisions, one Blyth Men's Division and one Ladies Division.

There were a few changes to the Officials with Mr. T. Wight replacing Arthur Heron who had left the district as a Vice Chairman, Mr. N.Proud appointed as Records Secretary ( a new name for the Assistant Secretary), and Mr. Chris Clark filling a new post of Match and Tournament Secretary and Mr. J.Hall was added to the Official Umpires.

The Ashington Collieries Welfare League affiliated to the County.

During the season the Executive Committee agreed a payment to Mr. A.E.Stapleton for services to the Association in past years and agreed that in future honoraria would be paid to the General Secretary, Match and Tournament Secretary, Records Secretary, Publicity Secretary and Treasurer, the amounts to be decided at the Annual General Meeting.

It was agreed to support a proposal by the Yorkshire Table Tennis Association to the inauguration of a County Championships competition on a regional basis and this went ahead being the forerunner of the eventual national competition.

Matches were arranged for a men's team to play home and away against Yorkshire, Lancashire and Durham and for a ladies side to play home and away against Lincolnshire and Warwickshire.

The men who represented the Association in these matches were Blyth Y.M.C.A.'s A.Wedderburn, G.R.Brennand, W.Cooknell and G.Thompson, L.&N.E.R. Accountants' A.Bulmer, W.Skeoch and H.Blundell and T.Simpson of Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson.

Mrs. J.R.Waugh, Miss J.Young, Miss L.M.Sharp and Miss E.M.Kay, who all played for L.& N.E.R.Accountants, played for the Ladies team.

Following the success of the exhibition with the Hungarians in 1935 a similar event took place at the St. James Boxing Hall, on February 9th 1938, with world champions Hungary again the visitors including Viktor Barna and Laslo Ballak. Durham's Edgar Reay and T.E.Ewbank again took part along with the top Northumberland players with Johnny Waugh acting as the Umpire.

Similar arrangements were made to those in 1935 and once again all of the officials wore dinner jackets.

It was an even bigger success than the 1935 event with the official attendance being 2554. It was also a financial success, contributing just over forty-two pounds to the Association's funds which now stood at approximately fifty-eight pounds.

Apart from the continued success of Blyth Y.M.C.A. in the top Men's Division and L.& N.E.R. Accountants in the Ladies Section, Postal Clerks 'A' team won the Men's Division Two having been successful in the Third Division the previous year and their 'B' team finished top of Division Three South. Swan Hunters Staff Institute had a double success in winning Division Three North and also the Knock-out Cup whilst Blyth Y.M.C.A. 'B' team won the Blyth Divisional League.

For the first time the Individual Men's Singles was won by a player from a club other than Blyth Y.M.C.A. with A. Bulmer of L.& N.E.R. Accountants being successful. He also won the Men's Handicap Singles.

The Ladies Singles was won by Mrs. J.R. Waugh with Miss Robinson of Alnwick Mech. Institute taking the Ladies Handicap title.

The Ashington Collieries Welfare League was won by Morpeth Y.M.C.A.

It would appear that the publicity given to the sport by the holding of the exhibition at St. James Hall had the effect of creating more interest in the Association as the 1938/39 season saw fifty-seven clubs taking part, an increase of fourteen over the previous year.

This meant that there were now five divisions in the Men's Section of the Newcastle & District League and two in the Ladies Section. The Ashington Collieries Welfare League and the Blyth

Divisional League combined to become the North Eastern Mens League The total number of teams taking part was now sixty-seven Men's and sixteen Ladies.

Nearly all of the Officials remained the same, the exception being the position of Publicity Secretary where Mr. F.Ashforth took over from Mr Johnny Waugh. The number of Official Umpires increased to nine who were J.J.Brennand, G.Dellow, T.N.Henderson, T.B.A.Hutchinson, G.Mitchell, W.A.Robinson, C.W.Hall, Rev.S.Bell and Johnny Waugh.

Miss J.Young ceased being an E.T.T.A. representative but was appointed to the National Women's Advisory Committee.

Mr.Ken Nicholson was appointed to the English Table Tennis Association Executive Committee.

It was agreed that Honoraria be paid to certain officials in future and initially the General Secretary received seven guineas (£7.35), the Match and Tournament Secretary five guineas (£5.25) the Publicity Secretary four guineas (£4.20) the Records Secretary and the Treasurer two guineas (£2.10) each.

In an effort to increase the performance of the leading players Hyman Lurie was hired for a coaching session with them that was held in July 1938 with approximately twenty-five men and ten ladies taking part. Mr. Lurie was then asked to nominate the best six men which he did, the players being Bulmer (L.& N.E.R. Accountants) Brennand (Blyth Y.M.C.A.), Simpson (Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson), Wedderburn (Blyth Y.M.C.A.), Henderson (North Durham) and Whitney (Postal Clerks). These players were asked to practice together at least once a week under the supervision of Mr. Ashforth during the close season.

The services of Mr. Lurie for a week were again acquired later in the year in December when he helped the Northumberland squad in taking part in the National Fitness Exhibition which was held in Newcastle. Afterwards he stayed on to again coach some of the leading players. It was later agreed to send, at the Association's expense, Messrs Bulmer, Simpson and Wedderburn to the Leeds tournament.

Men's teams were entered in the County Championships Regional Competition and in the Wilmott Cup (the National Club Competition ) and Ladies' teams in the County Championships Regional Competition and the Rose Bowl, the latter being the National Club Competition for Ladies.

Another successful exhibition was held at the St. James Boxing Hall on 31st January 1939 with Hyman Lurie and another English International, Adrian Haydon being asked to augment the programme.

The season's honours, in what turned out to be the final one before the outbreak of World War II put an end to proceedings, saw Blyth Y.M.C.A. win the Men's Section First Division for the eighth successive year and L.& N.E.R. Accountants make it six in a row in winning the Ladies' Section top flight.

The other Men's Section Division winners were Newcastle Jewish Social Institute in the Second Division, West End Constitutional Club 'B' in the Third Division, Tynemouth U.A.B. in the Fourth Division North and North Durham 'C' in the fourth.

West End Congregational Church were successful in the Ladies' Section second Division and Blyth Y.M.C.A. won the Team Knock-out Championship and their 'B' team finished top of the North Eastern Men's League.

The only Individual Tournaments held were the Men's Singles and the Ladies' Singles, the winners being G Thompson of Blyth Y.M.C.A. and Mrs. J. Fennell of L.& N.E.R. Accountants respectively.

The Annual General Meeting on 28th April **1939** saw a few changes in the persons running the Association with Sam Boyd, who had previously found it necessary to resign as a vice chairman although the reason is not recorded, being replaced by Mr. T.B.A.Hutchinson. Mr.S.H.Mincoff took over as Publicity Secretary from Mr.Ashworth and Mr.R.Thompson became Records Secretary. Mr .C.W.Hall and the Reverend S.Bell ceased to be official umpires but Mr. M.Freedman was added to the list.

It was agreed to organise an Annual Open Tournament and also an Annual Table Tennis Dance but unfortunately these were never able to be held in that year.

The Executive Committee proposed a new and full set of Rules and Conditions for the Knock Out cup which were adopted for both the Men's and the Ladies competitions. Most of the rules contained in them have remained in force up to the present time.

It was agreed to express the unqualified appreciation of this Association of the work done over the previous five years by the Honorary Officers of the English Table Tennis Association and it was also agreed to support a proposition to increase the fees payable to the E.T.T.A.

An agenda prepared for an Executive Committee Meeting on 5th September 1939 was marked 'Hitler Permitting' and included an item headed 'Arrangements in the event of Hostilities'. However, another Agenda was subsequently marked 'Hitler not permitting'.

World War Two broke out on 1st September and the meeting on 5th September attended by Messrs Wight, Archbold, Clark, Mincoff, Thompson and Nicholson along with Miss Young agreed the minutes of the previous meeting and the payment of two accounts. The following minute was also recorded: 'Owing to the International situation, it is agreed, that the activities of the Association be left in abeyance until circumstances are more favourable.'

Although all league play had been suspended at an Executive Committee meeting on 1st March 1940 it was agreed to look at the possibility of holding the County Tournaments. It was decided that if an exhibition was held on behalf of the Red Cross or Chronicle War Fund that the tournaments be advertised in the programmes after which the holding of them would be reviewed. The decision regarding the Red Cross or Chronicle events rested entirely with the Chronicle and there is no record of either having taken place.

The **1940** Annual General Meeting took place as usual on 3rd May, being attended by twenty-two members.

A Mr. Buglass of North Durham complained bitterly about the conduct of the Executive Committee on its lack of initiative during the year. He maintained that they had done nothing to stimulate interest in table tennis since the outbreak of hostilities and had allowed the

activities of the Association to lapse and doubted whether even after the war it would regain the ground lost.

The General Secretary read extracts from articles which had appeared in the local press asking club secretaries to contact him to enable some sort of arrangements to be made to which only two replies had been received including one from Sandersonians whose premises had since been taken over by the military.

However, Mr. Buglass went ahead and proposed a vote of censure on the Executive Committee but as there was no seconder to this motion the matter was dropped.

The President and all of the existing Officers were re- elected with Mr. A.Read also being appointed a Vice President. It was recorded, however, that the services of the Publicity and Records Secretaries were not necessary under present conditions and their nominations were put forward on the understanding that they could be called upon if necessary.

It was agreed that only a nominal subscription of 5p per club be charged based on the application forms for season **1939/40** until further notice.

It was also agreed that the affairs of the Association be left entirely in the hands of the Executive Committee until further notice, but that an Extraordinary General Meeting could be called on the request of six clubs.

It was also recommended to the Executive Committee that they co-opted Mr. Buglass.

Because of the war nothing at all was able to take place and the next meeting of the Executive Committee was not held until 18th December 1945.