



DERBYSHIRE COUNTY CROWN GREEN BOWLING ASSOCIATION



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2023 Secretary's Report

At the beginning of the 2023 bowls season, I wasn't aware that the task of writing a Derbyshire County Secretary's report would fall to me. I apologise here, right at the beginning, if my first attempt doesn't live up to last year, the 38th and final one written by my dearest friend, Glynn Holmes.



I promised Glynn, a few days before he passed away, that Derbyshire would be in safe hands until the next AGM, when it could re-organise itself with a group of people to do what Glynn had spent a lifetime doing. As we approach that AGM, I'd like to think I have honoured that commitment.

Glynn was a man who ran the game on behalf of the bowlers of Derbyshire, with little fuss or need for praise and with an unparalleled generosity. And when he got applause, which he quite rightly did at a national level by BCGBA and by sections of Derbyshire, he always was humble and overwhelmed by the high regard that others held him in.

But bless him, he was no saint. He was a Manchester United fan for starters...He couldn't use a spreadsheet, his punctuation was awful, he hoarded every piece of paper the county had right back to its inception in 1911 and never bought a file to sort them all out. He left that for 'muggins' here to do...and he'd got every excuse on the planet for hitting a golf ball in the wrong direction, something he took some ribbing about every time we played. His 'wrong socks' excuse will always be my favourite.

But his legacy is long. Our Secretary and Treasurer for nearly 40 years. The organiser of both Senior and Junior County Teams, our delegate at the BCGBA. The man who was instrumental in writing the county's disciplinary code which to this day is still a leading document that BCGBA are about to adopt for the whole of the game and he was the British Crown Green CEO's helper and confidant as they tackled the Covid crisis.

I could go on, but I have made a personal committed to myself to ensure this report is shorter than the 'war and peace' ones he wrote, and I'm almost at a full page and have still said nothing about bowls in 2023.

My final thought is that it's imperative that the name of Glynn Holmes remains in Derbyshire bowls forever, and to that end, I recommend that something fitting is done to preserve his memory at the beginning of the 2024 season. My final commitment to Glynn and his family, is that I will table that motion in a few day's time. Love you Biggles...

The year got off to a sticky start as early as January 2023 at the BCGBA AGM. Like the last three years BCGBA tried to get passed a new £1.00 per player fee to bolster their ever-depleting funds, and like the last three years the floor that consists of all the counties rejected the proposal.

‘Why, oh why’ do BCGBA insist on making the same proposal year on year, and expect to get a different outcome from the voters? Have they addressed the issues the counties had last time? No such common sense.

With the bleak picture of the finances then re-emphasized by finance officer, Graeme Underhill, in the afternoon, after the vote....? It was obvious that special measures were going to be required before the season started. March arrived with a new set of dictatorial charges for all counties from BCGBA, the ‘footer fee’ and competition fees all increased for the men’s and ladies’ game. With DCGBA fees set at our AGM, it was agreed that the county should take a hit on footer fees and not pass them onto bowlers in the Individual Merit and County Teams. Fortunately, the extra £1.00 Derbyshire player fee planned to improve our financial position allowed us to make that call.

Perhaps the greatest issue is the BCGBA precedent that’s been set and with moves afoot for each counties delegate at BCGBA to sit on an ‘advisory panel’ rather than the decision making ‘board’, this could happen again and at any point.

I’m going to limit the bowls commentary to County teams, County individual competitions, and the performance of Derbyshire bowlers in BCGBA national competitions. I will also have to apologise to those where the notes are brief, because I didn’t attend the events.

But beyond this, I would like to congratulate and thank all the people who run clubs, open competitions, and leagues within the umbrella of the Derbyshire Crown Green Bowling Association. We have many people who dedicate their time with little reward, all for the love of our game.

The **Senior County Championship** had some incredibly highs and lows in 2023. A group including Wales, Merseyside and North Lancs & Fylde looked winnable, perhaps with the Merseyside game on paper being the key fixture.

We started against North Lancs & Fylde on 7th May and chose Alvaston & Boulton in Derby as our first home green, as it served us well the year before against Staffordshire in the first fixture of the season. North Lancs chose Bamber Bridge Catholics. A strong start at both venues with six from the first eight players winning gave us a lead of 30 chinks. The middle four at both venues were dominated by the home teams with Dale Spragg, making a welcome return to a county shirt, being the only away squad winner from the eight games, and Derbyshire stretched their lead by a further 19 chinks. The final games saw a small fight back by North Lancs with 13 points being pulled back, but we never looked in danger. A comfortable win to start the campaign by 36 shots. A debut for Luke Guess and a man of the match performance from Dave May who beat Owen Jackson 21-9 after being ill on his way to North Lancs.

Merseyside beat Wales in their first tie, so the expected crunch game on June 4th against Merseyside was planned for Barton in Burton on Trent, arguably our best green in the south of the county, and Merseyside chose Eccleston BC.

A tight affair in the first 4 at both venues, a deficit of 3 chinks at home and a plus of 3 chinks away thanks to a strong performance by Adam Hartley winning 21-12 on a green getting quicker and quicker as the sun shined, which wasn’t helping Merseyside capitalise on their home advantage. It remained tight in the middle four with good wins on both sides. Dan Hartley and Matt Kelly-Walley on Barton and Phil Clapham at Eccleston won well and gave us a slim 6 chink lead going into a nervous back eight. Unlike North Lancs, the tail wagged and a strong finish at Barton with John Dewey and Adam Stubbs impressing in a 28 shot plus on Barton, while away Ed Furniss hit a match winning 21-9 to keep it tight again at Eccleston.

A great win by a total of 20 points, and a strong performance from Brian Barrass on debut in Merseyside.

A win for Wales against North Lancs in the other group game meant any win against Wales would see us through, while a loss could see either Wales or Merseyside squeeze past us on aggregate.

In a game not to take risks Stretton No.2, was chosen for Wales on July 2nd, despite the green not being in perfect condition. Wales chose one of their best performing greens Esclusham BC in the knowledge that they needed a big win.

A fabulous start at Stretton with Conor Chamberlain, Darren Carter and Richard Gill all winning to single figures gave us a 50 chalk lead, while Wales's Matt Worden was superb against Gareth Nash as they rushed to a 40 point lead despite an excellent debut performance by Josh Furniss winning 21-20. Tight cards in the middle at Stretton reduced the home lead to 48, and a five chalk gain by Wales meant they led by 45 in Wales. Just three chinks up.

More tight games at both venues meant that the 21-10 win by Wales's John Short on Stretton was enough for Wales to get home by 8 chinks overall. A disappointing tight loss, but fortunately just enough so Wales didn't pass us on aggregate.

But the door had been opened for Merseyside playing against winless North Lancs & Fylde. So everyone dived towards the internet and the expected sad news. Elation North Lancs have thumped Merseyside. We were going through to the Semi-Final despite a loss.

The might of current champions and multiple Crosfield Cup Winners Yorkshire awaited us in the semi-final, where we were huge outsider. While Shropshire were favourites in the other semi against Staffordshire.

Sunday 6th August, already condemned by the pundits, not only because its Yorkshire, but because we had many regulars away on holiday, we had nothing to lose and decided to switch the teams around, play on Stretton Anglesey, a quirky home venue that we haven't tried for many years. Yorkshire took us to Ossett Cricket & Athletic Club. By this time of the year Glynn was unfortunately too ill to host the home venue, which made the day feel very strange.

The first four at both venues started well. Richard Gill was excellent on the Anglesey giving his opponent a tour of the green and winning 21-6, as we got to a 26 chinks lead. Conor Chamberlain and Brian Barrass both won in Yorkshire, holding the favourites to a 9 shot lead at Ossett.

A six-shot gain at home and a ten-shot loss away in the middle didn't do any huge damage and included a win in Yorkshire by returning Luke Guess after a dislocated foot after the first game of the season. It also included a 21-20 win by Tom Brown on Anglesey against Yorkshire captain Jack Dyson, Tom ran out from deep while Jack was stuck on twenty.

The final eight did enough to bring home the miracle. Dave Allsop and Steve Barber both in form after a while not playing for the county and Gary Clapham on debut after a year on the sub bench, either won or kept scores tight. Derbyshire won by thirteen shots. A day to be very very proud.

Staffs did Shropshire in a day of shocks to set up a Derbyshire v Staffordshire final on Sunday 6th September and the whole bowling community couldn't really believe who'd made it to the Crosfield Cup Final in 2023.

We'd beat Staffs in the group stages in 2022, so we went into the game probably as slight favourites. We still had Stretton No.1. to pick, which historically has seen many Derbyshire strong home performances, while Staffs went somewhere they'd never tried before, Stafford Bowls Club.

A day to cherish and a day to put a performance in for our dying Secretary & Treasurer...let's do it for Glynn!

And here's the low, it just didn't happen...right from bowl no.1. Staffordshire were just fabulous on Stafford Bowls Club and dominated the whole match, winning by a huge 82 points, and despite a valiant 45 point win on Stretton, we never looked or were ever in contention.

Despite the huge disappointment there were still some excellent performances, with John Dewey and Darren Carter winning to single figures on Stretton and Jack Brooks, Ed Furniss and Steve Barber winning the last three games at Stafford after a mauling in the first nine cards.



Left: County Away Team :
Crosfield Cup Final 2023

While we fell short, there was still so many positives to take from the County Championship in 2023 - Debutants all doing well and players coming back to the side and performing well suggests that the squad of county bowlers is as strong as I can remember. There's also a group of quality young bowlers pushing hard to come into the side, which is now a very difficult team to get into.

I would like to thank all clubs that hosted a senior county match in 2023 and especially their members who worked hard to prepare the greens, for not only the day, but the week before that allows our county players to practise the green in conditions that best replicate the match day. Thank you all.

The **Junior County Championship** and junior bowls in general in the county, in contrast to the senior equivalent is in a difficult period. We're not alone in this regard, with only four counties now managing to field a full county team of 24. Other initiatives from BCGBA for counties struggling for suitable numbers to run a team in the County Championship were all cancelled in 2023 for various reasons. This meant that the county's junior team activity was limited to the two British Parks events playing as the East Midlands Parks 'Guessers' in the Parks Junior '10 a side competition' on April 23rd and the '5 a side competition' on September 17th.

The 10 a side event was hosted at Stretton Bowls Club and the 'Guessers' beat Yorkshire in the final by 4 shots, with Max Pearson, Owen Sherriff, Phoebe Harrison and Ashley Walton from Bolsover Colliery winning well in the final. The 5 a side team was pipped in the final of that event by North Shropshire. So, the few juniors we have are of excellent quality. Our challenge is to find the next generation of juniors to complement and replace the current group as they fall out of the required age bracket. Let's hope BCGBA get their act together for 2024.

The **Veterans County Championship**, now split into regional qualifying events, was hosted in Derbyshire on 13th July at Matlock Golf Club for counties South Yorkshire, South Yorkshire Parks, Yorkshire and Derbyshire.

Playing South Yorkshire in the first match, Derbyshire started well, with wins for Stuart Smith 21-19 and Geoff Smith 21-17, while John Colebourne and Paul Stretton narrowly lost out, both losing 19-21. Ian Widdowson had a good win against Steve Marshall 21-18 giving Derbyshire a 5pt lead. But from there on, defeats for Gary Smith, Ian Eaton and Ian Johnson gave South Yorkshire a 23pts win, which set them on the road to winning the group and a place in the BCGBA Team Final.

Derbyshire lost their second game against Yorkshire by 9 shots, despite good wins from Paul Stretton 21-14 and Ian Widdowson 21-8. In their final match Derbyshire defeated South Yorkshire Parks by 17 shots, with wins from Kev Kelly-Walley 21-15, John Colebourne 21-14, Ian Widdowson 21-19, Paul Stretton 21-08 and Paul Walton 21-17.

Ian Widdowson was Derbyshire's best player winning all three of his games and finishing with an average of +18. Paul Stretton was second, winning two games and finishing with an average of +8.

South Yorkshire went on to win the BCGBA Veterans Team Championship Final at Monk Sports in Warrington, just pipping Warwick & Worcester on aggregate.

The **Senior Individual Merit** entry across the 7 county regions increased by six bowlers to 123, compared to 117 in 2022.

Congratulations to the area individual merit winners, Callum Briddon, Steve Barber, Adam Hartley, Ian Brown, James Dennis and Adam Hawker. It would be nice for the Chesterfield region to play to a winner in their area so we could complete the list of seven champions each year.

The final of the Individual Merit was held at Kings Newton in South Derbyshire on 25th June, with six previous winners in the field that included defending champion, Richard Gill, playing in his own region this year. He was joined by six times winner Andrew 'King' Spragg, Ed Furniss and Darren Carter both with two wins and Ian Brown and Steve Barber with a single win each.

Other bookie's choices in addition to the area and past winners included Dale Spragg, Conor Chamberlain, Jon Guess and good outside bets included Richard Stretton and James Southern who both have past form on Kings Newton in area merit competitions in recent years.

Notable first round results included Josh Broom ending 'kings' chance of making it seven wins, Darren Carter ending the Mid Derbyshire champion, James Dennis's competition and James Southern beat Buxton champion Callum Briddon. But the match of the round was the between Adam Hawker and Richard Gill, which went to a 19-20 card with Richard holding two for game and a last gasp fire from Adam that managed to dislodge both of Gilly's bowls despite them being quite a distance apart and leave himself with the decisive final chalk. The reigning champ was out in the round of 32.

The last 16 saw a couple of heavyweight games, one in each half, with Steve Barber taking on Conor Chamberlain and Ed Furniss up against Dale Spragg. It would be a brave man to pick a double out of these two games. Both ex-winners came out on top in tight cards. Stretton Anglesey's ex-winning duo Ian Brown and Darren Carter both got through to set up an all Anglesey quarter final. Both the Adam's, Hartley & Hawker, got through and the last eight was completed by Burton's Alan Slater & Richard Worthington both winning tight games.

The top half quarters were Carter v Brown & Furniss v Slater, the bottom was Worthington v Hartley & Barber v Hawker. Not many people would want to pick a winner between Carter & Brown and it lived up to its tight expectation with Carter getting over the line 21-18. Ed Furniss's experience swept Alan Slater aside and the Hartley Worthington tie was expected to go the same way in favour of the Alvaston county player, but that's bowls for you...Rich Worthington pulling out a superb performance, and probably the performance of the day to put last year's losing finalist Adam Hartley out in the quarters. That left Steve Barber beating Adam Hawker to complete the semi-final line up of Carter v Furniss & Worthington v Barber, and these four would represent the county at the BCGBA Individual Merit in Greater Manchester at Heaton Park on Sat. 29th July.



Both semi-finals were a one-sided affair, with Ed beating Darren 21-10 and Rich Worthington not being able to repeat his quarter final form losing to Steve 21-13.

So, we had a South Derbyshire v Longdendale final, and a guaranteed repeat winner in 2023.

It was Ed Furniss who made it three titles in five years, adding the 2023 title to his wins in 2017 & 2018 (no competition in 2020 & 2021).

Ed, as an Egstow BC player in Chesterfield dedicated his win to his club mate and our county secretary, Glynn Holmes, going straight to him and explaining that the win was for him.

A special thank you to Kings Newton BC, who did an amazing job all day.

Ed went the furthest in the BCGBA Individual Merit getting to the last 16 at Heaton Park in a day overshadowed by the question of why the BCGBA continue to take events to this venue. While it's facilities are poor, it is Greater Manchester's only two green venue.

The **Junior Individual Merit** was a one-day event at Eastwood Park in Chesterfield held on Sunday May 21st, with 11 entries taken on the day. As usual with the juniors, there was a wide variety of player experience on show, with some that play in their area's top leagues, while others were just starting out. A supplementary competition was held alongside the main competition to ensure all our juniors got two matches on the day, and prizes were arranged by Glynn for all our junior players. As usual the condition of the green at Eastwood was exemplary.

The serious part of the competition started at the semi-final stage, with Louie Furniss of Rykneld BC was joined by three bowlers from Bolsover Colliery, Sam Davies, Ashley Walton and Harvey Shaw.

These four would grace any bowling green and the standard was incredibly high on the very difficult Eastwood.

Sam managed to beat Ashley 21-13, while Louie Furniss beat Harvey Shaw 21-11.

The final was a great game with Sam beating Louie 21-17 in a tight match, Sam slightly better green knowledge just gave him the edge.

Right: Sam Davies DCGBA Junior Merit winner with Glynn Holmes.



Ashley, Louie and Sam all qualified for the BCGBA Junior Individual Merit at Essington in Wolverhampton on 19th August. While Ashley went out early and Sam was knocked out in the last 16, Louie had a great day.

With his only scare being against Staffordshire's Mia Benton in the Quarter Final where he came from a 17-4 down to win 21-19, he showed all the traits of the families bowling expertise by taking the title against another home bowler, Owen Evans in the final 21-14.

Louie joins quite a list of Derbyshire bowlers who have won this event, current county player Dave May being our last winner in 1998, while Dougan Tubey, Andy Spragg and Rob Towle have all lifted the Junior Individual Merit title. He also joins the current elite of Callum Wraight & Greg Smith with his name on this cup. Well done Louie....



The **Veterans Individual Merit** was held as a one-day competition at Matlock Golf Club on Tuesday 23rd May. Entries were up to 34 bowlers compared to 27 the previous year. The quality of the field was

also extremely high with several ex-county players including Ian Johnson, Stuart Smith and Paul Stretton.

It was Paul Stretton who triumphed on the day beating Arkwright's, Geoff Smith in the final 21-15. Paul beat Ady Howard, Steve Adkin, Stephen Dann and Gary Smith on his way to the final, while Geoff beat Paul Walton, Peter Wheeldon and John Colebourne.

They were joined by Matlock Parks, John Colebourne who beat Gary Smith in the final qualifier, to be the three that would represent Derbyshire in the BCGBA Jack & Jean Isherwood Veterans Individual Merit final on July 5th at Prees Cricket & Recreational Club in Shropshire.

At Prees, Geoff went out in the first round to Brian Mallon of Greater Manchester while John and Paul both went out in the second round to Shropshire local bowlers Mark Thomas and Tony Roche respectively. Potteries & District's Martin Simcock won on the day.

The **County Cup** needs change. With only 16 entries in the competition, the carrot for lesser sides to enter being the automatic entry into the County Cup Repechage is clearly no incentive at all for a county with over 100 clubs. Do clubs simply not enter due to the might of a couple of our clubs? One of the things I found in Glynn's possessions was a scruffy little notebook with lots of statistics in it. The depressing fact that 30 years ago, in 1993 (when I could play this game a bit), the County Cup had 87 team entries in it. That's quite a demise. But it was the same in those days, an era dominated by the might of Chesterfield club Sheepbridge, there was only a handful of clubs that could win the competition. So what's changed....maybe too much bowls in the domestic club calendar and the emergence of the Parks & Federation fixtures that fill every weekend for many bowlers? Who knows, but we need to put our thinking caps on.

However, that shouldn't mean we overlook the competition in 2023, and we should also understand that for a few clubs, the County Cup is a very prestigious competition that they all want to win. It should also be a honour to win this event and represent the county at the World Club Championship.

The initial rounds in 2023 were still held in the home/away 'Covid legacy' format, that while necessary at the time, has certainly made the matches feel less like an event.

The county cup always throws up interesting ties with clubs who don't normally play each other being paired together. Chesterfield's Bolsover v Mid Derbyshire's Marehay in the first round was that kind of match with Bolsover's group of ever improving young bowlers staying on their own wicket, while the experience of the likes of Brian Hill and Stuart Smith taking the trip to Marehay. Both these home greens are difficult, but Marehay coped with the conditions at Bolsover well and managed to draw the game at the Chesterfield venue taking four of the five winners. At Marehay two big home wins for Gareth Nash and Gayle Riley put Marehay through to the next round.

Chesterfield Cylinders v Burton's Henhurst was a one-sided affair with the Chesterfield team winning at both venues as was Stretton Anglesey v Chapel Park with the Burton club only losing one card in the whole match. Burton's Belmont beat the second Bolsover team in the tie of contrasting greens and Mid Derbyshire side Horsley beat Chesterfields Arkwright. That left two 'same area clashes' to complete the first round. The Chesterfield form book would always see Eastwood beating Hollingwood and big cards from Andy Elliott and Keith 'Knocker' Parkes on Eastwood meant there was no shock on the cards. That left the 2022 winners, South Derbyshire's Littleover playing their old rival Alvaston & Boulton in what is always a tense affair. A&B dominated on their own green with all five winners and Josh Furniss (not another Furniss) winning 21-3, while at Littleover three winners for A&B saw the champions knocked out early.

Quarter finals were all one-sided affairs, Stretton Anglesey breezed past Marehay winning every game in the match. A&B won both home and away against Horsley while the other two ties were dominated by huge home performances, Winshill winning by 60 chalks at their home venue against Chesterfield Cylinders and Eastwood winning by 54 chalks against Belmont in Chesterfield.

With the semi-final and final reverting back to the traditional neutral venue South Derbyshire's Alvaston & Boulton, Chesterfield's Eastwood Park and Burton's Winshill and Stretton Anglesey all headed up to the north of the county to Whalley Bridge on 27th August to play to a winner.

The draw had Eastwood against Stretton Anglesey and Winshill against Alvaston & Boulton. Whalley Bridge on a wettish day looked and bowled immaculately.

An understrength Eastwood side with the likes of Shaun Ashley, Bradley Massey, Grant Herrington and Ross Meese all missing were never going to challenge the might of Anglesey who had all their county players on show. Anglesey romped home by 90 shots.

Alvaston & Boulton v Winshill was a tighter game, but conditions more suited to Alvaston saw them get through despite an excellent win in the match for Tom Brown who gave a superb display of how to bowl corners on a large heavy green. Alvaston won by 40 shots.

On paper a County Cup final, Stretton Anglesey v Alvaston & Boulton, with no fewer than 12 county players, six on both sides is what you would have expected at the beginning of the competition, and with both being old rivals and friends in the southern leagues, this one could go either way. It produced a match where banter was high and gave no hiding place for someone struggling in a game.

It was A&B who started best. Big county player match ups Adam Hartley v John Dewey and Ben Ryder v Darren Carter, both went to the Derby team 21-13 and 21-10 respectively. While Anglesey's Adam Stubbs and Richard Worthington both managed narrow wins against ever improving Alex Baines and 'definitely getting no better', Calvin Jackson. A&B lead by 12 after the first four. Two big cards in the middle would probably decide the matches fate, Anglesey's Conor Chamberlain pulled much of the deficit back winning 21-13 against Jack Desmond, but Ed Furniss won 21-5 against Chris Wheeldon which extended A&B's lead to 20 after 6.



A tight match between county pair Ian Brown & Dan Hartley finished 21-20 to the Anglesey man, but Josh Furniss won to 11 against Neil Brown taking the lead to 29 and surely no way back for the Burton side.

Our favourite county joker, Brian Smith, rolled back the years against Louie Furniss to win 21-14, to show Louie bowls wasn't invented by his generation. But being 22 behind, Matt Kelly Walley had nothing to play for against Dave May. Dave won 21-14 and the match and title was Alvaston & Boulton's.

Left: Alvaston & Boulton County Cup Champions 2023.

The **County Cup Repechage**, for all County Cup first round losers resulted in a Bolsover A v Littleover final on the huge wicket at Wirksworth on 24th September. I'm led to believe that on the day the green, while in good condition was extremely slippery and was in fact quite dangerous. Despite good wins for both Tom and Jack Shaw, last year's winners of the main competition, Littleover, took the match with 7 out of 10 winners and an aggregate win of 33 shots.

As I mentioned earlier, the County Cup is our qualifying event for the **World Club Championship**. We have two entries each year, the county cup winner and the winner of one of our sections top league. This is picked on a cycle system. In 2023 it was Chesterfield's turn which meant our two qualifiers were Alvaston & Boulton and Bolsover Colliery. The BCGBA fee was increased in 2023 from £70 per team to £100 per team, and this fee is passed onto the clubs in question. £100 was enough for Bolsover

Colliery and Eastwood Park to decline the invitation this season. The runners up in the County Cup, Stretton Anglesey filled our second spot. On that basis, and with county funds improving in 2023 I believe we should not pass this charge onto the clubs in question, but instead absorb it as a charge to the county.

Both our teams came through the regional qualifying matches to get to the final at Heaton Park on 15th October where the competition was won by Pudsey BC.

Towards the end of the season there's the **Midland Masters** heats that were held in the Buxton, Burton & Chesterfield regions all with the aim to get to the final at Ye Old Knowle in Warwick & Worcester on Sunday 10th September. Of our nine qualifiers, Chesterfield's Tom Boyd fared the best getting to the last eight on finals day. As this was the competition that Glynn ran for the BCGBA, along with Mark Bircumshaw and representatives from the host county I helped run the competition. I believe this will need to be a continued commitment from our officials.

The **Centenary Pairs** was held at Hazelwood in Mid Derbyshire on 30th July 2023. Entries were low at 10 pairs, but incredibly up on 2022 where only 8 entered. Considering we have two ladies county teams embedded into the Derbyshire area, and many leagues where mixed doubles pairs are common practise, I have to say, I think this is an appalling return. A close look at dates and advertising this event should be addressed in 2024.

On the day Tori Hartshorn and Ben Stone-Payne beat Andy Spragg and Tracy Hill to reach the BCGBA national final on 7th October.

From an administration point of view, the county held an EGM on the 8th August 2023 to share the responsibility of life without Glynn. During this period, I'd like to offer huge thanks to Neil Pickering and Dave Parkin for running the Centenary Pairs and County Cup Repechage. To Malc Cheese for ensuring all referees and measurers were catered for at all the necessary competitions and obviously to the referees themselves. To Paul Chamberlain who, as home team manager, helped me ensure that the last two county matches went without a hitch. Thereafter to all at the BCGBA who have helped me get up to speed with the responsibilities of a county secretary and treasurer.

I'd also like to congratulate the team of people in the Chesterfield area of the county, who have been working hard to amalgamate the Chesterfield Welfare league and the Chesterfield & District leagues into one organising body for the area. Having been through area changes myself in South Derbyshire, I know just how hard it is to get all clubs on side when they've been used to a certain way for decades. I'm sure if approved at our AGM the new Chesterfield Crown Green Bowls Association will be a great step forward.

I'd like to finish (thank god, I here you say) by sharing my experience at the last BCGBA Management meeting that took place in November. Unfortunately, the words aren't complimentary. I sat in a room with fourteen other county secretaries, BCGBA officers, ladies, parks and federation representatives and just listened to a group that simply bitched about each other's shortcomings. It was an incredibly toxic environment. People were more interested in petty procedural issues rather than coming together for the good of the game.

The meeting saw the BCGBA CEO, Mark Bircumshaw, resign and leave his post in May 2024. A conversation with Mark days after the meeting confirmed that the resignation will come into effect at the end of 2023 rather than the date highlighted in the meeting itself.

I believe the game has difficult times ahead.

So much for keeping this report short.

Calvin Jackson 7/12/2023