

**BOWLS NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LEAGUE**  
**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**  
**Proprietary BC Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

The Chairman, Peter Slack, opened the meeting at 7:00pm. He thanked everyone for attending, appreciating the attendance of clubs from Mansfield, Newark and Retford and said he would try and keep the meeting as short as possible. Peter then asked for a minute's silence in respect of Derek Laws, who passed away earlier this year. He added that Derek had been one of the founder members, around 1987, of the mixed league which, at that time, had their own committee and meetings. Peter added that at the Men's Section meeting a week ago that the County Association had elected new officers in President David Guthrie, Secretary David King-Taylor and Treasurer Frank Wallis

**Roll call**

A roll call showed those present as: Peter Slack (Chairman), Frank Wallis (Secretary), John Thurman (Treasurer), Denis Kitt (Divisional Secretary, Midweek 4 x 4 & Mixed League), Colin Firbank (Divisional Secretary, Midweek 3 x 4 League) and Keith Williams (Divisional Secretary, Mansfield Midweek & Saturday Leagues) with a total of 36 delegates representing 23 clubs.

**Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting**

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2018 had been circulated to all clubs. It was proposed by Brian Littleton (Notts Constabulary) and seconded by Geoff Wilkinson (Newark Northern) that the minutes be accepted as a true record.

**Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**Secretary's report - Frank Wallis**

There will be a general discussion at the AGM but I have produced my report early to give clubs the opportunity to see how the league structure is crumbling and to have time to think about ways of saving it.

There has been a slow decrease of league teams over recent years. However, during 2019, the loss of teams has stepped up apace with the loss of three clubs and a total of 7 league teams.

The season began with 32 clubs and 56 league teams. The first casualty came at the end of May when Beeston Unity pulled out of the Saturday 3x4 league, having conceded three of their first four matches. In July, Brierley Park withdrew from the Mansfield midweek league, although they may return in 2020, depending on whether there is a change in format. A few clubs experienced player shortages during the season with a number of matches conceded.

Ruddington cited the cost and a growing number of conceded matches. Affiliation fees are currently £0, capitation fees are £4.50 (subsidised by the County Association) and league fees are subsidised by the Bowls League, so current annual costs are £4.50 per member, less than 10p per week. Wilford's clubhouse and green were shut down by the owners. Wilford moved to Clifton where the green was very poor and they found the council costs prohibitive. Proprietary, over the years, have just suffered a decline of membership.

The league at this moment in time has 28 clubs with 48 league teams.

It is difficult to assess the level of decline and whether it just affects BN leagues. It affects so many clubs in different ways. Some clubs have a large membership but many of the members only want casual bowling, as against competitive league bowls. Many of the Mansfield clubs have only one or two BN league teams but they have other teams in Ashfield and Sutton leagues. Hucknall TP and

West Bridgford have three BN teams but have 5 or 6 teams in various other leagues. On the other side, there are clubs who have only one or two BN teams and do not participate in any other leagues.

Since we completed a league survey, a number of emails have done the rounds. The only positive one I have received is from Hucknall Titchfield Park and I have sent out a copy of this in an email, together with the agenda and last years' minutes. All other observations have been very negative, with a number of clubs proposing ever decreasing formats like 3x3 and 4x2 leagues. At the end of this report is a table showing how the number of clubs have decreased since 2008, which is over 50%.

This, I believe, is not arresting the decline but actually bringing it even closer. Clubs are not attempting to get new members but actually doing the opposite. They are saying they have lost 2 or 3 members so let's just drop into a smaller league. Also, some of the clubs who want to join a smaller league would drop out of an existing league, which then affects the 5, 6 or 7 clubs in the existing league and possibly causing the collapse of that existing league.

I conclude my report by thanking my chairman Peter Slack and treasurer John Thurman for their support over the past year. I also thank the divisional secretaries Denis Kitt, Colin Firbank and Keith Williams for their efforts in collecting results and compiling and publishing league tables on a regular basis.

I published my report early so that clubs were aware of the decline prior to the meeting. I also sent out a copy of an email from HTP outlining how they had responded to the situation, which is the only positive response I have heard. A lot of clubs seem to accept the decline by pushing for smaller formats. To me, this is just making the situation worse. I will leave it there because this is covered in item 10 on the agenda.

I conclude my report by thanking my Chairman Peter Slack and Treasurer John Thurman for their support over the past year. I also thank the Divisional Secretaries Denis Kitt, Colin Firbank and Keith Williams for their efforts in collecting results and compiling and publishing league tables on a regular basis.

Frank Wallis said the bulk of his report concerned the decline of the bowls league and that this would be discussed in item 10 on the agenda. Just to summarise, three clubs had withdrawn from the Association at the end of the season. They were Proprietary, Ruddington and Wilford. In addition, Beeston Unity had withdrawn from the Saturday League and Brierley Park from the Mansfield Midweek League. On the plus side, Clipstone had joined the Mansfield Saturday League.

### **Treasurer's report - John Thurman**

John Thurman circulated a copy of the income & expenditure statement, together with a copy of the bank statement. He informed the members that the league commenced the year with £3396.96p. £250 had gone on honoraria, £172.20 on pennants and £26.96 on other items, which left a balance of £2947.80 to be carried forward to next year. There was no income as the league fee of £10 per league team had again been deferred.

Peter Slack added that we will not charge a league fee this year, but we may have to reconsider in a year's time.

### **Auditor's report**

There was no auditors report available.

## **Divisional Secretaries Reports**

### **Mansfield Midweek & Saturday Leagues – Keith Williams**

#### **Mansfield Midweek 3x4 League**

2019 was a bit of a disrupted season. Two clubs had real problems with the condition of their greens so had to try and play early games away from home. When their greens began to improve, any rain made them unplayable again. We certainly had some rain throughout the season and, on three Tuesdays, all of the matches were rained off.

Brierley Park played their first four games and then began to concede games. I believe it was due to lack of support from their players for Tuesday games. After week 12, they withdrew from the league. Consequently, with the problems and the bad weather, we had a good number of matches not played, a total of eight by the end of the season. Eventually, Church Warsop finished as champions ten points ahead of Langwith Junction in runners-up spot.

#### **Mansfield Saturday 3x4 League**

Saturday games fared better weather wise. We only had one Saturday when all the matches were cancelled due to the weather. Most of the games were eventually played, but some took until the third week in September to be completed. Retford struggled at times to raise a team and then had to concede a couple of matches. Huthwaite Park's green problems were still evident. At the end of the season, five matches had not been played. For a big part of the season, Brierley Park, Polly and Church Warsop were fighting it out for honours. After week 10, Brierley Park got into top spot and stayed there. Polly and Church Warsop were still neck and neck for second place with Polly eventually achieving second place by half a point.

That, Gentlemen, are my two reports for 2019. I hope you all winter well and I hope to see you around the greens in 2020.

### **Saturday 3 x 4 League - Frank Wallis**

The season began with nine clubs. Unfortunately, in June, Beeston Unity had to withdraw after conceding three of their four matches. I would like to thank secretary Malcolm Potter for keeping the team going for the past few years. Three clubs were in contention, but it eventually finished as a battle between Arnold Park and Porchester. Arnold Park were eventual winners, for the fifth consecutive year, with 66.5 points. Porchester finished with 56 points and Rolls Royce were third with 54.5 points.

### **Midweek 4 x 4 & Mixed League - Denis Kitt**

#### **4x4 League**

Division 1 - Apart from one week when all matches were cancelled because of the weather this Division's programme was completed satisfactorily. Three matches were conceded. Cavaliers were champions once again with 81.58 pts and the runner-up was East Leake BC

Division 2 - This was a difficult year for the clubs playing in this Division with 9 matches out of a possible 30 being conceded. These difficulties were largely because Proprietary were unable to raise a team and Wilford losing their ground. There were more difficulties created by Wollaton having to rearrange their home matches at the beginning of the season.

The eventual champions were West Bridgford with 71.5 pts, winning all of their played matches and the runner-up was Wilford despite conceding three of their matches.

#### **Mixed League**

The league program was completed satisfactorily despite the disruption caused by the weather. Three matches were conceded out of the 56 scheduled.

The Champions were Cavaliers with 83 pts losing only one match and the runners up were West Bridgford with 60.67 pts.

**General** - The following comments apply to both the Mixed League and the Men's 4x4.

Clubs tend to rearrange postponed matches for the end of the season. This is OK if there is only one match, but if there is more than one and more inclement weather in August, then things get difficult. Contrary to League rules, in order to get matches played, I allowed rearranged dates into the first week of September, but this ought not to happen.

My other gripe is with Clubs not informing me that a match has been postponed because of weather and also not informing me of the rearranged date

### **Midweek 3 x 4 League - Colin Firbank**

In Division 1 games re-arranged because of the weather and two conceded games had an impact on the final table. August 6<sup>th</sup> was meant to be the last day for games and some teams found that players were not available after then. Star had contested the leadership for much of the season and conceded the re-arranged game against Rolls Royce on August 13<sup>th</sup>, which meant that Rolls Royce won the league. Trent Vale conceded the game against Greasley MW on June 18<sup>th</sup>, a day on which the game might have been postponed because of the weather, and there were a few occasions they did not have 12 players available for a game.

Rolls Royce finished with 48.9 points, while Greasley with 39.5 points (helped by the game conceded by Trent Vale) just managed to lead Star on 37.5, with both Bulwell Forest and Attenborough on 37. Beeston Unity competed well in many games but won only 2.

As some games in Division 2 were postponed on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> the season's final game was not played until September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Wollaton had problems raising a team, conceded 5 games (all 3 against Hucknall TP) and played some games with fewer than 12 players. This could have had some impact on deciding the league positions as Notts Constabulary won the league with 56.5 points and Hucknall TP had 54.3, having been awarded just 10.4 points (out of a possible 18) for the 3 conceded games. Porchester and West Bridgford finished close to each other on 47 and 44.5 points, with Wollaton 5<sup>th</sup> as they won 5 of the 10 games played.

Many cards are sent by email and most results had arrived by the weekend which means that tables can soon be updated. One card did have the names of the players under the wrong team name at the top so the result could have been recorded incorrectly if I had not recognised the fact.

### **To discuss the decline in league bowls**

Frank Wallis reported on the results of the survey carried out earlier in the year regarding different formats, days etc. He said that clubs no longer wanted to play in 4x4 leagues. They didn't even want to play in 3x4 leagues. Most clubs wanted to play in 3x3 and 4x2 leagues. On the agenda, the Mansfield league have put forward various different formats. He added that he had sent out a copy of an email from Hucknall Titchfield Park and this had been the only positive sign he had seen from any club. He went on to say that one or two clubs who wanted a 3x3 league would not drop out of their existing league but that many of them would drop out of an existing league, thereby creating one league but causing the collapse of another. He closed by saying that reducing the format of leagues would bring on the decline even quicker.

Mick Leafe (Arnold Park) commented on the declining number of clubs and the declining numbers of playing members and the idea was to try and find new formats that would help these clubs and develop the game. Advocating different formats was all well and good but the reality of this was that clubs would join a new format but drop out of an existing one and we would be no further forward. For those that were present at last weeks meeting, Tony Allcock was discussing the development of the game and was proposing later starting times and shorter games. Mick felt that neither of those ideas would help the development of the game at all.

Brian Littleton said we should be inspired by the approach of HTP and we should take heed from what they have achieved.

Peter Dickens (Hucknall TP) said that the answer lies with the people in this room. You all represent clubs and you need to get stuck into recruitment. There is no other way. It has to be achieved by the members of the club. Every member in this room has a responsibility to recruit. It's

no good talking about formulas like 3x3 and 4x3. You have got to put the effort in. HTP had taken advantage of an offer from the BDA and had recruited seven members each year for the last six years. If a club recruits 7 new members a year, they receive £250 from the BDA. HTP spend this money in advance buying materials, banners, advertising. (I have attached the email from HTP to the end of these minutes).

Further issues involved council greens, the lack of attendants on these greens and the exorbitant green fees charged. Arnold Park and Beeston Unity cited difficulties in actually gaining access to the green and the lack of support from their respective councils.

### **To consider proposals for the Mansfield midweek league**

**From Brierley Park** to change the format from a 3x4 open league to 4 rinks of 2 players (4 woods, 18 ends)

**From Brierley Park** – in the event of 10a being defeated, the format changes to 3 rinks of 3 players (3 woods, 18 ends)

**From Huthwaite Park** to create a format of 1 rink of pairs (3 woods, 18 ends), one rink of triples (2 woods, 18 ends) & 1 rink of fours (2 woods, 18 ends)

**From Teversal Grange** to create a format of 1 singles, 1 pairs, 1 trips and 1 fours, all of 2 woods.

Individuals play to be drawn by captains of the day:

1st our plays singles; 2-3 out plays pairs; 4/5/6 out play trips; remainder play fours

Order of play for pairs/ trips and fours decided by captain.

If all proposals are defeated, the league will remain as a 3x4 league.

Keith Williams (Queensway Park) proposed that the Mansfield League remain as a 3x4 league. The proposal was seconded by Mark Egginton (Langwith Junction) and accepted by a majority with Brierley Park the only club against the proposal.

### **To discuss a proposal to change the Midweek 4x4 league to a 3x4 league**

The reasons for this proposal were outlined by Robert Preston (Keyworth). He stated that Keyworth had two teams in this league requiring 32 players every Tuesday night. Keyworth wanted to play in a men-only league but they were struggling to get 32 players each week, so they wanted to change to a 3x4 league. Frank Wallis said this was the only 4x4 league and men only league in the County. He added that his club had enough players for a 4x4 league, too many for a 3x4 league and not enough for two 3x4 teams. After further discussion, the proposal was put forward but no-one seconded the proposal, which was therefore dismissed.

### **League Structure 2019**

Midweek 4 x 4	The loss of Proprietary, Ruddington and Wilford means there will be one division of 8 teams
Midweek 3 x 4	The same as 2019 with one division of 7 teams and one division of 6 teams
Mansfield Midweek	The loss of Brierley Park leaves one division of 7 teams
Mansfield Sat	The addition of Clipstone gives one division of 8 teams
Saturday 3x4	The loss of Beeston Unity and Proprietary reduces the division to 7 teams
Mixed League	The loss of Ruddington and West Bridgford reduces the division to 6 teams

**The vote of thanks to retiring Officers** was given by Peter Slack (Chairman) who acknowledged the contribution made by all Committee members and Divisional Secretaries and thanked the officers and committee for all their hard work done on behalf of the members.

## **Election of Officers**

The following officers were elected for 2020

Chairman	Peter Slack
Secretary	Frank Wallis
Treasurer	John Thurman

### ***Divisional Secretaries***

Mansfield Saturday 3 x 4	Keith Williams
Saturday 3 x 4 League	Brian Littleton
Midweek 3 x 4 League	Colin Firbank
Midweek 4 x 4 League	Denis Kitt
Mansfield Midweek League	Keith Williams
Mixed League	Frank Wallis

Committee Members	Alan Beaumont
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Association Members	Brian Littleton Mick Leafe
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The chairman thanked the members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 7.56pm.

Following the meeting, Brian Littleton (Notts Constabulary) presented pennants to all of the league winners.

## **A POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM PETER DICKENS, HUCKNALL TITCHFIELD PARK**

To hope or expect that Bowls England, the BDA or any local council will deliver a solution to the diminishing number of bowlers is fanciful. Times are very different now and the fate of the sport in Nottinghamshire is entirely in the hands of each and every club. The limited exposure on TV such as Potters and the Commonwealth Games does stimulate short-lived interest, but clubs must be willing and able to capitalise.

Bowls clubs, whether on private or public greens, must be continually proactive in attracting new people to the sport. It is inevitable that more clubs will fold in the next couple of years because ageing memberships have not addressed declining numbers. Complacency and inaction can only end one way.

Six years ago Hucknall TP recognised this and set about addressing it. Every year the club takes full advantage of the BDA's Play Bowls Package initiative. We hold Open Days at the end of April followed by Play Bowls for Fun sessions. Timing is important as it gives us the whole season to turn novices into competent bowlers. Each year we have been able to claim £250 for recruiting a minimum of 7 new members, offsetting the inevitable loss of players between September and April. In addition to holding separate coaching sessions, we have three afternoon roll-ups every week. Roll-ups are vital to provide new bowlers time on the green to integrate with club members and to develop their love for the sport. They also enable us to continue recruitment throughout the season.

We use every means to publicise the club and the open events and use some of the anticipated £250 each year on professionally produced materials. Banners, posters, articles in newspapers and magazines and local Facebook pages (in addition to our own page) are all influential. The message is also important. It is not 'come and play bowls'. It must address current lifestyle trends, particularly the benefits to health and well being. We have found that posters in doctor's waiting rooms are particularly effective. Attracting young people to the club remains our biggest challenge. We have yet to find a message which resonates with teenagers, but we keep trying. Our major success has been recruiting new members in their 40s and 50s as they will be bowlers for the next 20 or 30 years.

So, come on clubs. Get a few members to form a recruitment team, make a plan, involve the wider membership and put in the hours. It's the only way.

## Table of league teams since 2008

year	mw 4x4	mw 3x4	mixed	sat 3x4	mans mwk	Mans sat	TOTAL
2020	8	13	6	7	7	8	49
2019	11	13	8	9	7	7	55
2018	11	13	8	9	7	8	56
2017	13	14	12	9	6	7	61
2016	13	14	13	8	6	10	64
2015	13	16	14	9	7	11	70
2014	14	16	14	9	7	10	70
2013	14	18	16	10	8	12	78
2012	15	17	16	9	7	12	76
2011	15	17	17	11	8	13	81
2010	16	19	18	9	8	13	83
2009	18	23	21	10	11	12	95
2008	21	23	25	11	10	13	103