



DERBYSHIRE COUNTY CROWN GREEN BOWLING ASSOCIATION



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2024 Secretary's Report

I think with most reports of this nature, you start by looking at what you wrote in the previous year and use it as a template for the following year. As the last Annual General meeting agreed to add a new Competitions Officer to the county officials, this year I'm going to leave the commentary of the county competitions to Neil Pickering, who took that role.

Instead, I will concentrate more on the administration tasks of the year, the goings on at the BCGBA (which are always good for a laugh) and the County Championship campaigns in 2024.

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 annual general meeting held on Sunday 17th December 2023 at the Bentley Brook hotel, tabled several motions for the 2024 Season.

Perhaps the most poignant one of these was to ensure the legacy of Glynn Holmes was not forgotten in Derbyshire bowls, and the unanimous decision to name the Senior County Individual Merit trophy after Glynn came with much appreciation from his family.



A new base to the trophy with winners engraving going back to 1969 and room for another 120 years of winners, despite the trophy's history going back as far as 1910, was felt to be a good place to marry up old with new. Thankfully I'll never need to worry about a new base again in my lifetime.

Thanks should go to Rayal Trophies and Neil Hines whose carpentry skills married two bases and produced a sound fixing for the cup.

I'd like to think Glynn would have approved of the craftsmanship and the new look.

Other motions included the approval of the new Chesterfield Crown Green Bowling Association that replaces the two Chesterfield Leagues that have ran for many years, the subsidising of Referees fees, the payment of the entry to the World Club championship for the counties two representative teams, and a full return to the old County Cup format of 10 per side on neutral venues. It was also agreed to not hold the County Cup repechage if there were any less than 32 teams in the main competition.

A couple of procedural changes were also agreed. Leagues with no affiliation to a county section to receive a single vote at future AGM's to improve inclusion and a two tier method of collecting player fees to stop individual £2.50 throughout the season were both adopted.

The early months of the year resulted in plenty of change at the BCGBA. The appointment of Paul Ashmore as their new CEO after several years leading the governing body on Safeguarding felt a little bit like 'Jobs for the Boys', especially when our own President, Paul Chamberlain was overlooked within that process.

Jim McGurk was re-appointed as the National Administrator and Denise Noble, from Cumbria, took the place of Paul Ashmore as the National Safeguarding Officer.

Thereafter the BCGBA continued their plan to move towards to a Sport England - Tier 3 Compliant Board by the advertising of five regional representatives and two independent representatives to join them.

Derbyshire falls into Region.4. which also includes Staffordshire and the Potteries. As Glynn Holmes always took an active role at the BCGBA to ensure Derbyshire knows what's happening at the governing body, I decided to apply and was unopposed in the area.

Having now sat through plenty of petty and unimportant debates at the BCGBA, I'm still not sure if this was a mistake?

However, I'm pleased to report that some things at the BCGBA feel like they are improving since the appointment of the regional and independent directors. The BCGBA old guard has accepted that much of what they did was unfit for purpose. Particularly their inability to communicate with modern methods and to continue to rely on messages passed to a county secretary to communicate on their behalf. A new more proactive approach with social media and the investment in a fit for purpose website for the 2025 season feel like good first steps.

Also, my complaint within last year's secretary's report that the BCGBA asked for money from bowlers (£1.00 per player) without an open and transparent plan for how the money will be used or collected seems to have been addressed with a 50-60 Page 'National Development Strategy', with the cash ringfenced specifically for this task.

Hopefully these 'green shoots' of growth are the beginning of a more proactive strategic approach from the BCGBA.

My joining of the BCGBA Board did have a specific implication for Derbyshire, in that a Regional Board Director cannot represent his/her county on the National Advisory Council (previous name – the BCGBA Management Council). Paul Chamberlain agreed to fill this role for Derbyshire once this was explained. Paul did attend the last council meeting, along with representatives from Burton & District Ladies & North Derbyshire Ladies counties.

The other key task for the county and its clubs, due to more discussions on a National Player Fee at the BCGBA, is the necessity to cleanse its player lists on the BCGBA database 'Just Go'. This was identified as an issue at the close of 2023, and thanks go to Kady Stretton who approached some clubs at the beginning of the season with a view to cleansing player lists.

I don't think anyone truly understood the severity of the issue at that point.

To try and keep this report in some kind of chronological order, I'll address this in detail later in the report, as much of this work happened as the bowls season ended.

The **Senior County Championship** was always going to be a tight affair in 2024. The group included Greater Manchester, Cumbria and Lancashire and looked winnable. But as the runner-up in 2023 other teams were not going to take us lightly and were probably going to use their best home greens against us. It was not going to be easy.

We started against Greater Manchester on 5th May which on paper would probably be the key fixture. Good wins at Alvaston & Boulton in Derby in the last two years in the May fixture against Staffordshire and North Lancs meant there seemed no reason to look for an alternative approach, while Greater Manchester chose Ashton Cricket Club.

A dreadful start at Alvaston with all first four home players losing and incurring a 24-shot deficit was counteracted by a good start in Manchester with Adam Hartley, Dave May and Gary Clapham all winning gave us a 15 shot lead away. So only behind by 9.

Home debutants Harry Chapman and George Hines were among a middle four who all won and pulled the home deficit back and went in front by 1 shot, while away the good start was maintained by a good win by Josh Furniss and narrow defeats in the other three meant we only lost 4 chalks.

Noses in front at both venues, 11 up at Ashton and 1 up at Alvaston...

Games 9 & 10 added a few more chalks, Richard Stretton and Rikki Higgs on Alvaston winning to 12 & 13 respectively, while Ed Furniss & Paul Hawker losing to 12 and 17. 16 up with 2 two games at each venue, we should get home.

But no.....Greater Manchester maintained their form at Ashton with a 14 and 13 win taking the Derbyshire lead down to 1 point, and Nick Turrell and Tom Eccles brought it home for Manchester with a 21-19 and a 21-12 win in Derby. Derbyshire lose by 10.

An insufficient win at home by 7 and a very credible loss away by 17.

The day was overshadowed at Ashton Cricket Club by an incident between the Greater Manchester team captain and one of the Derbyshire reserves. Apologies from Greater Manchester were eventually begrudgingly received.

Elsewhere Lancashire beat Cumbria by 42 points, which meant that Cumbria, our next opponent, would need to use their one and only 'killer green' against us if they were to stand a chance of qualifying. We'd need to do the same. Stretton v Lindal anyone?

Before I move to the game against Cumbria in the first week of June, I need to highlight a disappointment regarding team selection for the second game. Derbyshire has 7 principal sections who all should be represented when a county team selection meeting occurs. The one in late May for this fixture only had 3 of the 7 represented. Those three would have been well within their rights to only select players from their regions. That action was decided against by the three.

Sections of the county need to understand their commitment to county selection. If this trend continues, fines or losing of section status must be tabled to go into county rules.

The inevitable green venues were exchanged for 2nd June.

With away winners going to be an unlikely premium in this fixture, the key to winning was going to be the avoidance of multiple single figure cards. More away players getting double figure scores would undoubtedly win the day.

Stretton No.2. first four ran out to a 31 lead with Rikki Higgs being the best card with a 21-9 win, while at Lindal, Cumbria went 41 up with 21-3 win by Martin Barrow against Gary Clapham. I'm sure Gary won't mind me saying he struggled with the green. He wasn't alone.

Having been the Junior All England winner in 2023 and reserve in the first match against Greater Manchester, at the age of 16, Louie Furniss made his full senior county debut in the first four of the Lindal fixture, scoring an excellent 15 against quick green specialist Darren Naylor. I'm sure Louie will grace a county shirt for many years to come, and his inclusion, along with his father Ed and brother Josh, all in the same away team did make me wonder if this has happened before. Has the county ever seen father & two sons in the same county side? Did Roy play with Andy & Dale in the 1990's? Struggling to think of anyone else...Answers on a postcard for all the Bowls Geeks out there.....

The Derbyshire middle four at Lindal bucked the trend and were excellent. Josh Furniss, Dale Spragg and man of the match Harry Chapman all won for Derbyshire and with a decent 14 from Nigel Iliff, they pulled the deficit back to 21. At Stretton 18 points was extended to 49 by the middle four with another good win from George Hines, winning 21-10. An overall commanding combined 28 chalk lead. The final four at Stretton all won, which left a total card of 11 from 12 winners, but with three 20's and a 17 from the Cumbria back four, the overall win was only increased to 56 chalks.

So, we have 35 chinks to defend on Lindal to squeeze the win. Single figures of 5, 7 and a 14 from three of the back four wiped that out very quickly and left us two behind with Steve Barber and Adam Miller having an epic battle to win the match.

Steve wins to take our winners to 4 on Lindal, to Cumbria's 1 on Stretton, was it enough?

No, a 21-20 win means Cumbria take it by 1 chalk, and the three single figure winners turned out to make the difference for Cumbria.

In the other tie Greater Manchester cruised past Lancashire by 47 chinks.

Two loses and the potential to finish bottom of the group was staring us in the face and realistically a match against Lancashire with no chance to qualify meant the only motivation was to qualify for the County Supplementary and trial a green / players for the future.

Marehay in Mid Derbyshire, a green often mentioned in county discussions and normally discarded due to supposedly better options elsewhere, was picked for Lancashire and Jack Desmond and Adam Dickerson were young men given debuts. It also saw returns for Ben Ryder and Craig Shore. In truth, if a couple hadn't turned down the chance to represent their county as a reserve earlier in the year, something that most must do prior to getting the nod, I'm sure this fixture would have seen a couple more debuts from players under 30. I could say more, instead I'll simply say it's a shame.

However, the county side on July 7th had at least half the side below 35, and with the eldest trio being the 'relatively young' Darren Carter, Ed Furniss & Steve Barber, it shows that the future is bright for the senior men's side.

The away team took a trip to Wigan Subscription, that can only be described as a 'hurl'. Marehay in contrast ran quickly and probably better than all year, to the amusing annoyance of the locals, who'd been crying for a bit of pace all season.

At home I have to say it was a bit of a non-event. Lancashire looked unorganised and were incredibly poor. Probably the worst away team performance I've ever seen. A win of exactly 100 chinks is the largest in Derbyshire's history, and some may say that Marehay is a new 'home green banker' due to the result. I'm not so sure we can draw that conclusion.

A dream debut for Jack Desmond, the fourth generation of the Desmond family playing for Derbyshire, behind his great grandfather, Jack, his grandfather, John and dad, Neil. He won 21-4, but would have received a tougher game in the 'South Derbyshire Ladies Veterans League Division 3' on a Wednesday afternoon, as well as a biscuit, a piece of cake and a cup of tea in a China cup.

You can only beat what's put in front of you JD. But it is a reminder of how fortune can be on your side or not within our game. Only a few years ago, Grant Herrington played a certain Greg Smith on debut and was on the receiving end of a similar thrashing and subsequently lost this place after a second similar loss. It was nice to see Grant win a county game in 2024, despite it being for South Yorkshire.

Other single figure wins included John Dewey and George Hines, which left George as top of the county averages, and capped a very impressive season in his full senior county debut year.

Away a loss by 46 gave a comfortable overall win. Highlights included Jack Brooks, new boy Adam Dickerson and Louie Furniss all getting wins in close battles. While the 'old boys', Ed Furniss & Steve Barber both had convincing wins in the last four.

With a few players moving from the home to the away leg and vice-versa, it's always a good reminder for all that county bowls is a very different proposition playing in the other leg.

The result gave Derbyshire its first win of the campaign, and with Greater Manchester beating Cumbria, now they haven't got Lindal to use, the group finished 3 from 3 for Manchester and Derbyshire finishing second with a higher shot average than Cumbria & Lancs, having all won one.

I would like to thank all clubs that hosted a senior county match in 2024 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.

Qualification for the County Supplementary now being assured we needed a team of eight for the 4th August for Florence Private in the Potteries. To the annoyance of this county selector, Alvaston & Boulton BC had arranged an open competition on this day, leaving players to decide if they were going to represent their county or fight for the cash at the 'Phil May' trophy. Thanks to those who had the choice and decided to come to Florence.

The greens at Florence were in very different conditions. Green.1. quick and difficult, as it always is on a good day. Green.2. pushy and bumpy in parts. Fortunately, we were drawn on Green.1. with North Midlands, Isle of Man & Wales.

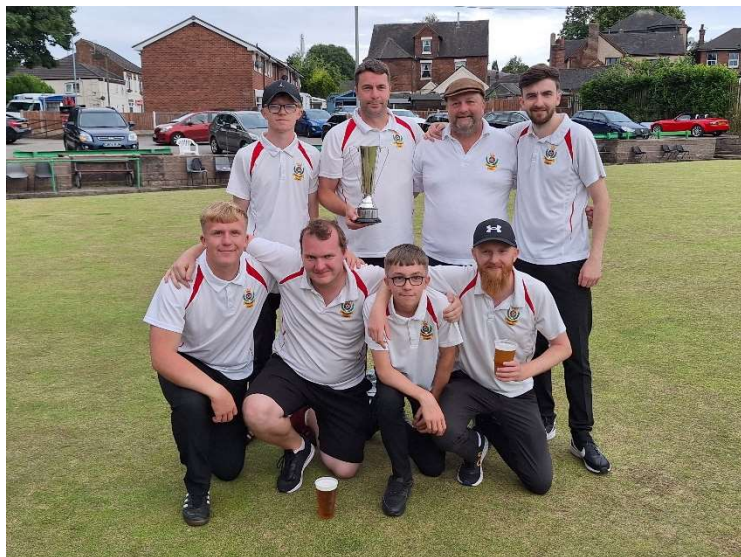
The moans and groans came from the other group - Shropshire, Merseyside, Cheshire and Lancashire.

A blend of newbies & oldies, with everyone contributing saw us pinch every match in the group by a few single shots. Steve Barber getting us over the line against North Mids and Wales with a big card at the end of each match using a mark straight down the middle of the green. A mark I watched Nick Tideswell from the Potteries use to a similar devastating effect as he won the Midland Masters later in the year. Ed Furniss and Harry Chapman came up with big cards against the Isle of Man.

On Green.2. Shropshire cruised past Cheshire and Merseyside and won a close one against Lancashire, who we knew liked a 'chuck' from earlier in the year.

So, a simple plan for the final, our chucker's onto Green.2. with artist's staying on Green.1. and with news that Callum Wraight needed to play and go due to an evening competition somewhere, if we could get our 'Joker' – Harry 'Mr silly hat and odd shoes' Chapman to cause a bit of an exhibition against one of the recent kings of the game, we might just upset the odds.

Onto Green.2. first, and sure enough Chapman v Wraight, for all the crowd to play up to. Harry in his element. With all eyes transfixed on waft's, antics, and how the game should be played in such an entertaining fashion, Harry scrapes a very credible 16-21.



While in the three games that nobody's watching...the Derbyshire chucker's Conor Chamberlain, Jack Desmond & Dan Hartley all win to 9, 12 & 19 respectively, and put us in the driving seat with an 18 chalk lead going onto the green we've played all day.

Barbs & Furniss x 3 brought it home despite a rally from Shropshire, but Ed's 21-10 on Green No.1. was enough for Derbyshire to lift the BCGBA Supplementary Competition for the first time in the 21st Century.

Above : DCGBA Senior County Supplementary Winners 2024. Back Row left to right : Josh Furniss, Ed Furniss, Steve Barber, Dan Hartley. Front Row : Jack Desmond, Harry Chapman, Louie Furniss, Conor Chamberlain.

The **Junior County Championship** as in 2023 was limited to only four sides due to falling numbers of Junior bowlers wanting to play at county level. The survey completed at the beginning of 2024 suggests that Derbyshire does have enough numbers to field a full county side 24, and with a further 20 juniors joining the ranks this year, you'd like to think we could return to the Junior County Championship. However, players eligible within the required age bracket doesn't mean they want to play, and the feedback from clubs/parents suggests we are still quite some way off being able to field a side of 24.

The Junior 6 a side event did run in 2024 on Sunday 12th May at Prees Recreational with qualifying teams going to the final at Windle on Sunday 14th July.

At Prees we played a round robin event with Warwick & Worcester and a big shout out to Derbyshire's Alfie Walton of Bolsover Colliery who joined the Warwick & Worcester third team to ensure we had a full four teams on the green, and so every junior could play three matches. Well done Alfie.



The Derbyshire side won comfortably against W&W second and third team but narrowly lost against W&W first team, 79-85, with good wins for Louie Furniss, Max Pearson and Ashley Walton. The tight loss meant that we qualified for Windle as best runners up. The final at Windle was a similar affair, Derbyshire beating other qualifiers, Cheshire & South Yorkshire, but falling short against the same Warwick & Worcester team, to finish a very credible second.

Left : Derbyshire Junior 6 a side team

Above Left to right: James Causer, Ashley Walton, Louie Furniss, Alfie Walton, Max Pearson, Jack Brown, Jack Norman. Also played – Joshua Leeson

The **Veterans County Championship** Group B match was played at Penistone, Sheffield on 11th July. Derbyshire were drawn against South Yorkshire, Yorkshire and the Isle of Man.

Playing the home side South Yorkshire in the first match proved a disadvantage to Derbyshire, where green knowledge played a significant part in the home side's 163-140 home victory. Never the less There were individual wins for Rob Treece beat Tom Silcock 21-18 and Stuart Smith beat Rob Wiltshire 21-19, while Ian Widdowson narrowly lost 20-21 to Brian Holdsworth.

Next up were Yorkshire who won the game 166-113, with Ian Widdowson Derbyshire's only winner 21-19 against Andrew Sykes. Andy Fearn lost 19-21 to Mark Regan.

In the final match against the Isle of Man Derbyshire won 163-129, with wins for Rob Treece 21-11, Stuart Smith 21-13, Andy Fearn 21-20, Ian Widdowson 21-16, Stephen Dann 21-15 and Paul Stretton 21-12. Ian Widdowson finished top in Derbyshire's averages for the second successive year.

Yorkshire won the qualifying group and went on to win the Veterans County championship, with North Lanc's and Fylde runners up.

In the early season I had several clubs send me their BCGBA CR1/2 form, as they'd sent to Glynn for many seasons at the beginning of the year. Along with the work Kady Stretton had begun with Burton & Derby clubs, it became apparent very quickly that CR1/2's that define a club's players for the season had not been transferred to the BCGBA system for a long time.

CR1/2's at the beginning of the year is not the most reliable method of keeping this data up to date. They do not include new bowlers that join clubs throughout a season, they don't include players who transfer or join extra clubs within a season. With several clubs receiving players specifically for floodlight leagues towards the end of the season, such bowlers never get put in the correct number of multiple clubs.

As the calculation of bowler number fees had been transferred to an August job to prevent single £2.50 payments during the season, with a mandatory 10 bowler payment at the beginning and the residual

calculated with the seasons data captured in full, this does allow better accuracy on actual player record and the correct payment from each club.

A download of the BCGBA player list, the Derbyshire MB Website player list and all Derbyshire league records on results websites for all 135 Derbyshire primary or secondary affiliated clubs resulted in some amazing discoveries:

- Literally hundreds of players who had passed away still being live on BCGBA club records.
- Bowlers playing league bowls with no BCGBA registration
- Bowlers playing with duplicate BCGBA No.s.
- Bowlers playing with the wrong BCGBA No.
- Bowlers with a historic BCGBA No. within Derbyshire records, but no record of them in the BCGBA system.
- A club with no bowlers recorded within the BCGBA system at all.
- Hundreds of bowlers playing for the wrong clubs in all systems.

The resulting cleanse with each club, beginning in early August took me to late October and is the reason why many club invoices were delayed.

A huge thanks to all club secretaries/treasurers/officials that helped within the process of trying to make the BCGBA system, the DCGBA system and a 'player spreadsheet master' per club all match.

While many helped me with this process, it is not complete. While all clubs have paid their county player fees for bowlers who played in 2024, not all primary affiliated clubs came back to address the issues on their player records. The following clubs have NOT completed this process, and should NOT come bleating if they receive a hefty invoice from the BCGBA in 2025 if/when the player fee is introduced and their number of players currently in their BCGBA record is incorrect.

Barton – Burton	Britannia - Chesterfield	Birch Hall – North Derbys
Burton Cons Club - Burton	C'field Cylinders - Chesterfield	High Lane C' – North Derbys
Eureka Park - Burton	Dronfield W' - Chesterfield	Whaley Bridge – North Derbys
Stretton Anglesey - Burton	Matlock Park - Chesterfield	
Tutbury - Burton	Whitworth Park - Chesterfield	

In addition, Stapenhill – Burton, Egstow – Chesterfield & South Normanton – Chesterfield, have some player data that is required to be sent after commitments previously made within the cleanse process.

Perhaps the county should take the Yorkshire CGBA approach and have very significant fines for all clubs who do not keep on top of their player data?

On the assumption that I remain as DCGBA Secretary/Treasurer in 2025, each club will receive a player list at the beginning of the season along with the first county invoice to hopefully capture any immediate player changes. The process in August should hopefully not be as difficult as 2024. I would strongly recommend that the clubs highlighted above engage before the new season begins.

Now the majority are cleansed, extra effort from all needs to keep our player data clean moving forward. This is also emphasized by the final administration point of this report.

In late October, Endsleigh Insurance have been in discussion with the BCGBA regarding insurance legislation changes. The result is a change to the insurance policy and premium all clubs and leagues pay for 2025. We have 75 of our 111 primary affiliated clubs who take the BCGBA Insurance, and all our leagues and county association also take the policies from Endsleigh.

I'm awaiting more detail, but the good news is that the premium is going down and the level of insurance for clubs has increased. The situation is that the BCGBA have now got to take a block insurance policy out that covers all, and as such clubs will need to pay the BCGBA rather than Endsleigh. The last report was that the premium will be £55 and will include 10 million public liability

and officer insurance as standard. As such, all club data in the BCGBA system will also have to cover who your officers and bowlers are moving forward. When I have more detail, I will share it. I hope this is imminent as to meet the end of year deadline when all current Endsleigh policies finish.

Calvin Jackson 02/12/2024