

# SEVENTY FIVE NOT OUT!



## THE HISTORY OF THE LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE

1926-2001

Written by A.J. Harris

**FOREWORD by League Life  
Member and England  
International Mr P.U.Rumjahn**

This history of the Liverpool and District Table Tennis league has been written by Tony Harris who is a very enthusiastic and competent player, playing in the Police teams in the Liverpool and District League and the Liverpool Business Houses League.

In his position as League Secretary from 1995 to 1999 he received minutes, notes, cuttings and memorabilia from previous Secretaries going back to our original Secretary, Mr. L.E. Forrest.

To make sense of, and compile a record of those years has meant a lot of hard work reading through old handbooks, magazines and tournament results, visiting the City Library and going through old editions at the local Daily Post & Echo and Express offices, as well as spending hours looking for table tennis news from other sources.

Tony's dedication and enthusiasm brings us a fascinating history of the League. For some it will awaken old memories and for the newer player, provide valuable background information as to what it was like all those years ago.

The League's attempts to develop table tennis in the city are commendable. In particular, bringing schools and youngsters into coaching schemes, is worthwhile especially when playing numbers are diminishing and the existing players are getting older.

Tony - you are wished every success with this venture. Good luck!

P.U. RUMJAHN  
Liverpool 29th January, 1999.

## INTRODUCTION

When I took over from the late John McKim as Honorary Organising Secretary of the Liverpool & District Table Tennis League in 1995 I was totally unaware of the history and wealth of tradition associated with table tennis in Liverpool.

Upon taking receipt of the League records I discovered the personal journal of Mr L.E. Forrest, the League's founder and first Secretary, which dates back to the 1920's. As you will read in later pages, Les Forrest was the driving force in forming the

League and he kept press cuttings, score sheets and photographs covering the period from 1925 to 1936, when the League was in it's infancy.

Reading through this old and musty journal, pages yellow with age, I became totally preoccupied with its historical content and found it easy to imagine being amongst the early pioneers of our sport as they 'spread the gospel' of table tennis throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Further information came my way in the form of an audio cassette entitled, 'Fifty Years of Table Tennis' by Peter Rumjahn. Peter is currently a Vice President of the League and is still playing table tennis. Amazingly, Peter was also playing table tennis in the 1930's at the highest level and the account of his fifty years of table tennis (it's over 60 years now) contains many interesting stories, and gives an insight into what it takes to reach the top in one's sport.

After consuming all of this information I began writing an article for the League 'Digest' magazine. Before I knew it, I had written over ten thousand words, and I then decided to write, to the best of my ability, a history of the Liverpool & District Table Tennis league, and in particular the birth of the sport in Liverpool.

I do not claim that this is a complete record having had to make use of the sometimes limited information available to me in the form of press cuttings, minutes of Committee meetings, match programmes and 'old' Digest publications. The additional factor of cost has also restricted the number of photographs for example. If, therefore, I have omitted certain historical items, or failed to mention the contribution of an individual, I apologise.

My thanks are due to the many individuals who have helped me in compiling this book, with particular thanks to my wife, Pat, who has had to put up with over three years of me being a table tennis 'anorak'.

I hope you enjoy the book and that it reminds us all of the efforts and dedication of the small group of people who introduced table tennis not only to Liverpool and England, but to the world. Without their foresight and enthusiasm, we wouldn't be enjoying our sport now.

This book is dedicated to the memory of those 'early pioneers' to whom I would like to offer, in words of that era, a 'Hearty Vote of Thanks'.

Tony Harris  
8/03/2001

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Information for and extracts of this book have been taken from :

Table Tennis and Pastimes Pioneer' published in 1902.

Table Tennis' written by Mr I. Montague.

The personal journal of Mr L.E. Forrest, 1925 - 1936.

'Fifty Years of Table Tennis', an audio cassette composed by Mr P.U. Rumjahn.

Press cuttings from various newspapers.

Various Editors and contributors to the Liverpool and District Table Tennis.

League 'Digest' magazine, dating back to it's first issue in 1951.

Liverpool and District Table Tennis League Handbooks, 1926 - 1997.

Liverpool and District Table Tennis League Committee meeting minutes, 1926 - 1998.

'Liverpool Closed Tournament' programmes written by Mr D.W. Davies.  
'Merseyside Open Tournament' programmes written by various authors over the years.

"Table Tennis, The Early Years' written by Mr G. Gurney.

Publications of 'Table Tennis Review'.

A collection of articles and press cuttings compiled and collected by Mr J. Green and Mr K.A. Armson MBE.

Written information provided by Mr P.U. Rumjahn and Mr E. Cameron

Acknowledgements of service written by Mr A.E. Upton and Mr S. Clarke.

Microfilm records at Liverpool Central Library, William Brown Street, of  
The Liverpool Echo  
The Liverpool Weekly Mercury  
The Liverpool Weekly Courier

Private Table Tennis memorabilia collections of Messrs J.K. Hyde, E.J. Rumjahn, P.U. Rumjahn, and S. Jackson.

## ORIGINS OF TABLE TENNIS

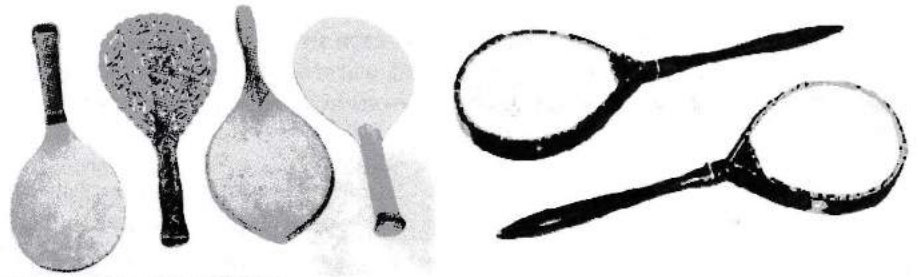
Table tennis burst explosively onto the sports scene towards the end of the nineteenth century and is commonly believed to be a miniature version of lawn tennis. Formerly known as Flim-Flam and Whif-Whaf, its origins however are shrouded in mystery. Theories that the game was first played by the Syrians, Japanese, French and North American Red Indians seem unlikely and the hard evidence points to the English as the inventors of the game.

Arthur Parker, author of 'Ping Pong and How to Play it', 1902, refers to rumours that the game was played as early as 1881 with cigar box lids for bats, champagne corks for balls and a row of books for a net, but this has not been authenticated.

The first catalogue which advertised the game as 'Miniature Indoor Lawn Tennis' was published by F.H. Ayres in 1884 and in 1889, Mr Charles Barter of Gloucestershire patented the game as played with cork balls, clamp posts and rectangular wooden bats covered with bookbinders' cloth to give a 'twist to the ball'.

The first celluloid ball was introduced about 1890 when a Mr James Gibb returned from a business trip to the United States with a supply of toy balls he had spotted there.

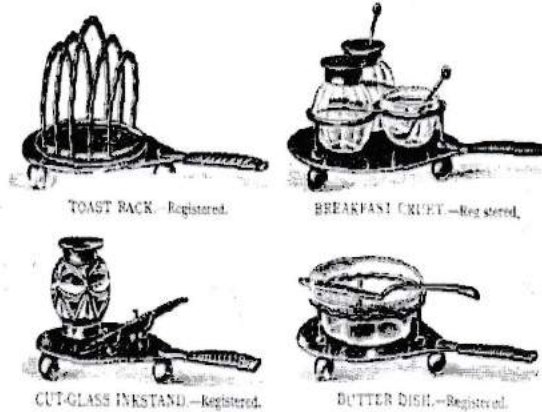
Mr Gibb is also credited with coining the name 'Ping Pong' which he used



A selection of wooden bats showing the various designs at the turn of the century (left), and a pair of Jaques' Vellum battledores. (The Gurney Collection)

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THE TABLE TENNIS AND PASTIMES PIONEER.



UP-TO-DATE NOVELTIES, Registered Designs in the BEST ELECTRO PLATE suitable for

Ping Pong Prizes  
... or for ...  
Tennis Tournaments

The handle of each article is covered with wicker-work in black and yellow, making a striking contrast with the plain electro, or silver tucket-shaped base as shown in the illustrations. Can be had from all silversmiths in London, and wholesale only from

K. G. HOBDAY, 9 Gracechurch Street, London, E.C.

A collection of novelties advertised in the 'Pioneer' in 1902

mockingly when watching a couple of 'stonewallers' at play, and repeated the sound the ball made on the bat and table. He persuaded his neighbour, sports manufacturer, John Jaques to register the game, which he did in 1891, using the title 'Ping Pong or Gossima'.

Further confirmation of the English theory is the well documented story of Mr Goode who lived in Putney.

In 1902 Mr Goode was a contestant in the Great Ping Pong tournament in what was then the Royal Aquarium at Westminster.

On the Saturday before the tournament he left his office with a nasty headache and called into the local chemist. At the counter his eyes fixed on the chemist's rubber cash mat and he went home with the cash mat as part of his purchase. Then he cut down the uneven rubber spikes and pasted the rubber mat onto his bat, and he practised over the weekend until he had developed a capable back hand flick stroke.

His subsequent top spin progress through the tournament was amazing as none of the record 300 competitors could match him. In the final Mr Goode thrashed the then English Ping Pong champion, Mr A. C. Parker by 50 points to 3.

Until the very end of the nineteenth century, table tennis was very much a



Ping-Pong or Gossima, registered by J. Jacques & Son (The Gurney Collection).

parlour game, played in the home on large dining tables. The equipment in those days was very primitive, with the balls being made of cork or India rubber and the bats being little more than stiff cardboard.

Ping Pong enjoyed a period of spectacular popularity in the early years of the twentieth century. At this time a cheap version of the game, placed on the market under the trade name, 'Ping Pong' made its way into virtually every home, and became the craze of the day.

Ping Pong leagues were formed at local level and in the season 1901/1902 frequent tournaments were played all over Great Britain, attracting up to 300 competitors, with regular prizes of up to £100.00 available.

One of the main manufacturers of table tennis equipment at the time, the Table Tennis Supply Association were forced to move to larger premises, due to the demand for equipment and were honoured with an order from HRH Princess Victoria.

Many Ping Pong Halls were established and even set up in public houses, hotels and working men's clubs, leading a reporter in the Sussex Daily Post to write,

'It seems extraordinary that grown up persons should forsake the billiard table, as many have, and devote their attentions to what seems to me to be the effeminate game of ping pong. The game is simplicity itself and almost savours juvenility'.

### PING PONG V TABLE TENNIS

There were two groups of players at the time, the Ping Pong players and the Table Tennis players.

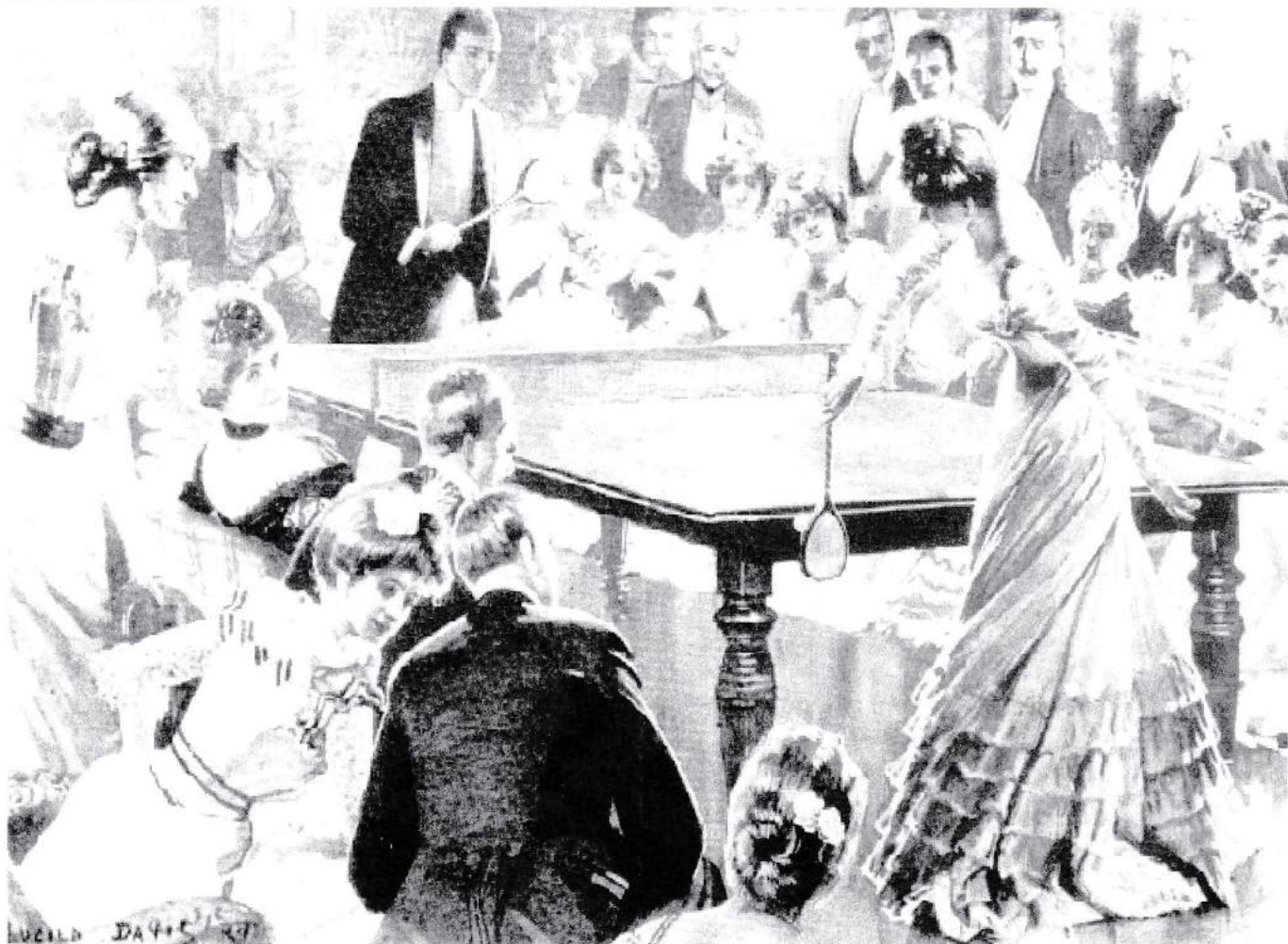
A weekly journal for table tennis and ping pong players, 'The Table Tennis and Pastimes Pioneer', was in existence at the time and contained articles on the merits of ping pong as opposed to table tennis.

Such was the rivalry between the 'Ping Pongists' and the Table Tennis players that two independent associations were formed. The Table Tennis Association was set up on 12th December, 1901, and the Ping Pong Association just four days later, the latter adopting a double bounce service, the former allowing players to serve over the net without a bounce.

There were many pleas for unity, with many of the view that it was a great mistake in allowing two associations to be formed to govern two games that were so similar.

Although there was a fanatical following of the new sport, there were many who opposed it, and anti ping pong groups were formed. The 'Pioneer', of Saturday 18th January, 1902, contains a rather prophetic article from the Daily Mail.

'For the sake of the unenthusiastic and the people with nerves, let us have some rest or ping pong will follow its victims into an early grave'.



Ping Pong as seen by Lucien Davies, 1901. Illustrated London News

## THE LIVERPOOL SCENE

Liverpool had not escaped the table tennis fever, but again the game had opposition. The following article, again prophetic, is from the Liverpool Weekly Mercury in January, 1902.

'A game becomes popular, Society takes it up and while it remains a game pure and simple, it really constitutes a pleasant enough amusement. But people get too clever at it and what was originally play becomes hard work, because the whole thing is reduced to little more than a scientific rule of thumb. So the game dies a natural death while its place is taken by another'.

The playing of table tennis in the city of Liverpool was formalised at a meeting on Tuesday 21st January, 1902, when local enthusiasts decided to form a club

under the title of, 'The Liverpool Table Tennis Club', the words 'table tennis' being used owing to the fact that ping pong was registered by a London firm of manufacturers.

Mr Frank Sugg, a noted cricketer was elected Chairman of the club, Mr D. Connor, Treasurer; and Mr W.J. Pearson, of whom it was reported, 'to whose foresight and energy the club owes its initiation', Secretary, and on 3rd February, the club opened their new clubhouse at the New Cafe, Moorfields, in the city centre.

The first major table tennis tournament in Liverpool, took place between 4th - 8th February, 1902 at the splendid St George's Hall.

As well as including the North of England Mixed Open Championship, the

tournament included Gentlemen's and Ladies Open Championship, and a competition for Gentlemen and Ladies who resided within a ten mile radius.

For any of the three events, a payment of ten shillings was due, which included a season ticket to the Cycle and Motor Show, which was being staged in the Hall at the same time.

There was a large attendance in the small concert room, St. Georges Hall, on Saturday afternoon and evening when the semi-final and final stages took place.

Unfortunately, due to the lateness of the hour, it being after 11.00 p.m. it was not possible to complete the finals of the event and they were postponed.

## PING-PONG TOURNAMENT AT ST. GEORGE'S HALL.



Photographs were not very common in newspapers at the turn of the century. This sketch, however, appeared in the Liverpool Echo on 8th February, 1902, and shows the players in action at the St Georges Hall Tournament.



St. Georges Hall, circa 1900, scene of the first major Table Tennis Tournament in Liverpool

The finals were completed the following Wednesday at Picton Lecture Hall, the results being as follows:

The North of England Open Championships - Mixed.

Winner - Dr. Blair Bell  
prize £7.10s

R/Up - Mr. H. Harte  
prize £2.2s



Dr Blair Bell

Gentlemen's Open

Winner - Mr. B. Woodhouse  
prize £4.4s

R/Up - Mr Leventon  
prize £1.1s

Gentlemen's Local

Winner - Mr. J.A. Smith  
prize £3.3s

R/Up - Mr. F. Parkinson  
prize £1.1s

So, the first recorded champion of Liverpool was Mr. J.Arthur Smith and the first champion of Merseyside was Mr. B. Woodhouse.

Among the officials for this first tournament in Liverpool was Mr. T. G. Brandreth, an obvious enthusiast as he was to become Chairman of the Liverpool & District Table Tennis league over thirty years later.

Liverpool, and Lancashire certainly appeared to be a bedrock for the game, and North - South rivalry was strong, as witnessed by an article in issue number 3 of the 'Pioneer'. The article reported that the formation of a North of England Ping Pong Association was imminent and quoted 'one of our Northern contemporaries', who stated, 'it seems in ping pong, as in everything else, that what Lancashire thinks today, the rest of the world will think tomorrow'.

Despite boasting a readership of 20,000 the 'Pioneer' came to a sudden and unannounced end in March, 1902, having survived for only nine issues.

After many arguments and much debate the two rival associations announced an amalgamation for the 1st May, 1903, but

# F. H. AYRES,

Manufacturer of all Indoor and Outdoor Games and Sports,  
111, ALDERSGATE ST., LONDON, E.C.

## TABLE TENNIS.



The New FISH-TAIL BATTLEDORES. Leather Bound Handle.



The Regulation SEAMLESS BALLS Best Make Stamped F. H. AYRES

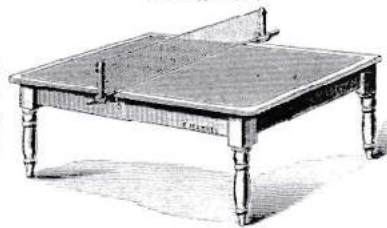


The F. H. A. BAT. Plain or Covered Face, Wood or Cork Handle.

## PORTABLE TABLES.

(Patent applied for.)

This Table is specially made for playing Table Tennis at Clubs, Institutes and Private Rooms, and also for Outdoor use.



It is strongly constructed, has dull green painted top, with white border: is easily folded, and when set for play is perfectly firm and rigid.

**Bats, Battledores, Rackets, Balls, Posts, Nets, Scorers, Ball Holders, Collectors, and every Requisite for the game, of the very latest patterns.**

TO BE OBTAINED FROM ALL DEALERS. CATALOGUES ON APPLICATION.

An example of the equipment available from manufacturer, F.H. Ayres, 1902.

this appears to have come too late to safeguard the game, as only 41 clubs affiliated to the new association, which was titled, 'The Table Tennis Association'.

From being the absolute craze of the day, it appears that both associations ceased to exist sometime after, as there was little table tennis activity reported after 1904.

How did this come about? The rivalry and arguments between the two associations couldn't have helped, but other factors came into play. There had been increasing reports of the boring tactics of 'stonewalling', which the Pioneer reported, 'produced absolute dreariness for the spectators and disgust on the part of the ordinary brilliant player'. A report of a tournament in Oxford stated that it took Mr N.P. Batten two hours to defeat Mr J.R. Turner by 20 points to 13, one rally consisting of 715 strokes. The game had become serious business, especially when the cash prize money to be won was taken into

consideration, and as a spectator sport it appears to have been losing its attraction. So the game died out. No doubt it was still played, out of the public eye, but it was soon forgotten by the masses. Table tennis did continue to be played in the Liverpool area. Prior to 1920, a Church Table Tennis League existed in Wallasey and Mrs Ivy Crafter, a Liverpool league player in the 1960's, recalled in an article in the Liverpool league Digest Magazine in 1960.

'Each team had eight players and our team was made up of the Crafter family, father, mother, brother, three sisters and two brothers in law'.

## REBIRTH

Unusually, for a sport that died such a sudden death, the game again came to prominence in the 1920's, and the Ping Pong Association was reformed in 1922.

However, there were problems with sports manufacturer, Jaques, and the fact

*League Match*  
**GRAND EXHIBITION OF TABLE TENNIS.**  
 =====

**HATTON T.T.C. v NORTH LIVERPOOL Y.M.C.A.**

*Nov 19th 1926*  
 Friday, ~~November 5th~~ at 7-0 p.m. at the  
 Y.M.C.A. Foley Street, Liverpool.

Played under the rules of the English Table Tennis Association (London). Each player of the team shall play each player of the opposing team one game of 21 points.

Y.M.C.A.

HATTON T.T. CLUB.

	J. BATHER.	W. EDWARDS.	W. MILLER.	<del>H. DICROFT.</del>	W. SMITH.	H. TURNER.
T. STONE.	8. 21.	<del>21. 18.</del> 21. 18.	16. 21		19. 21	18. 21
H. PIPER.	11. 21.	11. 21	10. 21		18. 21	12. 21
F. JONES					7. 21	6. 21
<del>G. GULLY.</del>	4. 21.	13. 21	10. 21			
W. MALLEY.	4. 21.	2. 21.	7. 21		14. 21	15. 21
<del>S. JACKSON.</del>						
L. FORREST.	13. 21.	12. 21	22. 20.		21. 19.	14. 21

**RESULTS.**      40. 105. 59. 102. 65. 104.      77. 103. 65. 105

*Totals. Hatton T.T.C. 519.*  
*N. Liverpool Y.M.C.A. 308*  
*Hatton won by 211*

*L. Forrest*  
*L. Forrest*

Score sheet of the first league match played under the auspices of the Liverpool and District Table Tennis League, 19th November, 1926

that 'Ping Pong' was still a registered trade name. Jacques had produced the new Handbook and was demanding use only of equipment sanctioned by him. Under the Chairmanship of Mr. Ivor Montague, the Committee dissolved the Ping Pong Association, moved into the next room and reformed as the Table Tennis Association.

Leagues again sprang up all over the country as these early pioneers re-introduced the game to the nation.

**BIRTH OF THE LIVERPOOL & DISTRICT TABLE TENNIS LEAGUE**

In 1925 a young man named Leslie Emberry Forrest arrived in Liverpool from South Wales and his tremendous enthusiasm for table tennis coupled with his organising ability was to bring about the birth of the Liverpool and District Table Tennis League.

No stranger to work of this kind Mr.

Leslie Forrest, had left behind him in Barry, a thriving League which he had played a big part in starting and it was not long before he began searching for similar opportunities in the city of Liverpool.

At the North Liverpool Y.M.C.A. in Foley Street, where his father was Secretary, a table tennis table was unearthed in the cellar. It was soon cleaned up and put to good use, the table taking up residence in the corner of a



large billiard room.

At that time, billiard matches against Birkenhead Y.M.C.A. were regular events and table tennis matches were soon introduced into the evening's programme.

Les Forrest searched Liverpool and surrounding areas looking for clubs or locations where table tennis was played. He discovered a side called Hatton, known as 'The Tramwaymen' who had been in existence for quite a while and they too began to play the North Liverpool Y.M.C.A. in friendly matches. When Chester Y.M.C.A. made approaches and promised 6 teams the time had come for organised competition.

Aided by W. Miller of the Hatton Club, Les Forrest got things on a working basis and on November 19th, 1926, the very first league match took place between North Liverpool Y.M.C.A. and Hatton, won by the latter by 211 points.

Matches were 5 a-side affairs, with every player meeting each of the five opponents in one game of 21 up. At the end of the match the total points scored were totalled up, the winner, being the side with the most points were awarded two league points.

The final constitution of the League was one division of eight teams, two being 'A' teams. The founder clubs were :

Birkenhead Y.M.C.A., Florence Institute, Hatton, North Liverpool Y.M.C.A., Liscard Congregational, and Thingwall Tennis Club.

Chester Y.M.C.A. and its six teams dropped out at the last moment and another famous name, the Gordon Institute, also defaulted, losing their claim to be one of the founder clubs.

It soon became obvious that the Hatton Club were out on their own and they finished as Champions winning all of their fourteen games, followed by Birkenhead Y.M.C.A. and North Liverpool Y.M.C.A. with ten wins each.

The Hatton side were described as having, 'unique grips and playing with wooden bats', and such was their dominance that they proved too strong for a Rest of the League team, beating them by 65 points. Hatton's dominance of the early years was to continue as they remained champions for the first four seasons.



J.R. Bather, Champion of Liverpool  
1926/27

### THE FIRST LIVERPOOL 'CLOSED'

At the end of the season the first 'Closed' Tournament was held at the Y.M.C.A. Foley Street. There was just one event, the Men's Singles that attracted just 31 entrants. The first champion was J.R. Bather of Hatton, who defeated his club mate H. Turner in the final.

Photographs show how different was the concept of the game as an energetic sport. It seemed common practice to keep your coat on, to wear collar and tie and to wear your normal walking shoes. To round the picture off the wearing of spats seemed definitely the thing to do.

Bather belonged to the wooden bat brigade and was attired in typical manner with spats and ordinary shoes, and except for really difficult matches he played with his coat on. He was described as 'a steady player who played a game much more closely allied to ping pong than the 'modern game', one who kept the ball low and whose great speciality was angled shots which won him countless points'.

### FIRST LEAGUE PLAYING HONOURS

The first League playing honours went to H. Turner (Hatton) and L.E. Forrest (North Liverpool YMCA) who along with H.C. Cooke, S. Proffitt and L. Pittila (Manchester) played in a Lancashire Representative Match against Yorkshire at Bradford.

### FIRST INTER CITY MATCH

Liverpool's reputation was growing and at this late stage of the inaugural season came a welcome request from Carlisle

for an inter city match with Liverpool. This was the first Inter City match for both Leagues and it took place, again in Foley Street, on Saturday April 23rd 1927, with Liverpool triumphing by 110 points, (9 sets to 2). The system of scoring was even more bizarre than for local league matches, eleven-a-side, each player having one match of 50 up.

The eleven players who represented Liverpool on that historic occasion were:

W. Edwards, W. Smith and W. Miller (Hatton), L. Forrest, T. Stone and H. Piper (North Liverpool Y.M.C.A.), E. Woodward, S. Bardgelt and A. Davies (Birkenhead Y.M.C.A.), H. Kesler and A. Pickston (Florence Institute). Liverpool were without the services of the champion J.R. Bather who was engaged in the English National Championships in London.

So ended the first season, rounded off by a dance at which the Champions received their trophy, The Jaque Challenge Cup donated by Mr W.T. Lancashire, President of the League.

Firm foundations had been laid and remarkably, in the space of five short years, Liverpool was to become the centre of table tennis in the North of England and second only to London nationally.

### MR. L.E. FORREST

There is no doubt that the Liverpool and District League as well as other Leagues in the country are indebted to the pioneering work of Les Forrest whose enthusiasm and development of the sport was second to none. Such was his nature, that he went out onto the highways and byways to further the cause of the game and was responsible for setting up other Leagues in the Region.



Mr. L.E. Forrest

Mr. H.M. Bunbury (later Chairman of the E.T.T.A.) wrote to Les Forrest telling of the signs of interest in his Area, Manchester, and appealed to him to come and give a small band of would be

organisers the benefit of his advice and guidance. The benefit of the advice and guidance was seen the next year when the Manchester and District Table Tennis League was formed.

Following a visit of the North Liverpool Y.M.C.A. team to St Helens where Forrest, T. Stone and Syd Jackson entertained large crowds to marvellous exhibition matches a League was started in St Helens.

These are just two examples. In the course of his work Les used to travel all over the country and by keeping in touch with another great pioneer, Bill Pope (later to become Secretary of the E.T.T.A.) he was able to explore various localities with the aim of getting more leagues started. This work went on continually all over Lancashire and Cheshire and further afield as far away as Sheerness and Hereford. In North Wales, such was the gratefulness of the local leagues that they wanted to affiliate to Liverpool and there was some trouble at the time with the Welsh Table Tennis Association.

A small band was gathered together by Les to spread the 'T.T. gospel' and if it was not off to Hereford to give an exhibition, then it was away to some tiny Open Tournament to give it a much needed boost. It is important to remember that this work was going on initially, prior to the formation of the E.T.T.A. and later while it was still finding it's feet.



W. Pope

### THE HUNGARIAN VISIT

The game at this time was dominated by the Hungarians and on 16th April, 1928, at the Y.M.C.A., Foley Street, a team from Budapest, consisting of world champion Zoltan Mechlovits, S Glanz, L. Bellac and Dr D. Pesci, thrilled a large audience during an exhibition match against a Liverpool team. The evening was reported in the Daily Post.

'Under a green shaded billiard lamp the ball bounced from racquet to table and

from table to opposing racquet with such speed that it was difficult for even the practised eye to follow'.

The Hungarians proved far too strong for the Liverpool team of W.T. Edwards, H. Turner, L.E. Forrest, and captain J.R. Bather, winning 8-0.

The Hungarians spent the following day visiting the City. They were received at the Town Hall, shown around the Cathedral by the Ven. Archdeacon of Warrington, visited the Royal Liver Buildings and the 'Lacunia' berthed at Huskisson Dock.

The visit was deemed a tremendous success. The Hungarians made many friends and increased interest in the sport.

Committee minutes of the time include the comment that 'the Hungarian visit will go down as a major event in the annals of the game locally'.



Zoltan Mechlovits (Hungary). World Champion 1927-28

### THE MONTAGUE BURTON CHALLENGE CUP

The E.T.T.A. were keen to promote the sport and to further increase interest in the game in the North West of England, on 22nd February, 1929, at the Strand Cafe, Wellington Buildings, Water Street, the All England Team played an exhibition match against a Liverpool team.

The All England team included :-

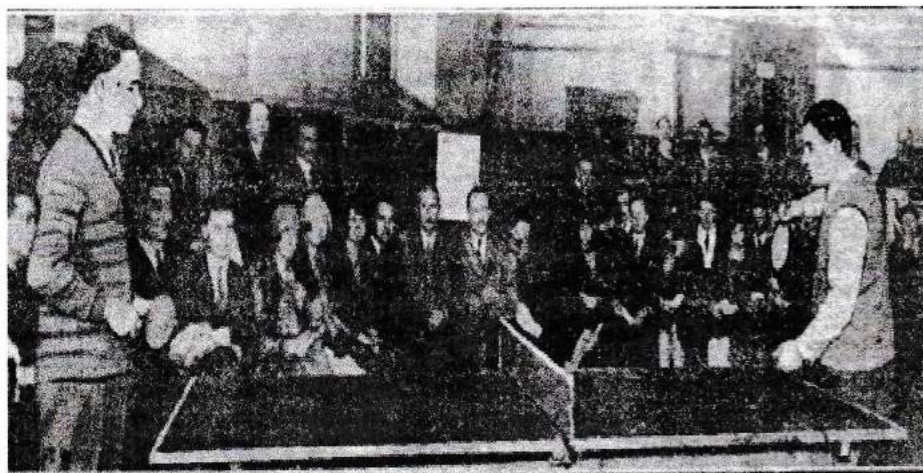
The captain, the Hon. Ivor Montague, brother of Lord Swaythling, President of the E.T.T.A. and Chairman of the I.T.T.F.,

C.H. Bull, who was also a professional cricketer with Kent, C.G. Mase, who was deaf and dumb, and A.A. Hayden, a schoolboy, who had the previous year won the Championship of London without losing a game.

The All England Team proved far too strong for the Liverpool team winning by 12 - 0, but the match did much to foster interest in the game.

The local 'Daily Courier', reporting on the match stated that 'Mr. Montague Burton has presented a handsome silver challenge cup to the League to be competed for each year and would have handed it over personally had he not been abroad.

Mr H.G. Ralf did so on his behalf. He added that the olive branch trade mark was a symbol of Mr Burton's attitude towards the workers and referred to the comprehensive welfare work at Mr Burton's Mill and Works'.



Liverpool V Budapest, 16th April, 1928. Zoltan Mechlovits (on right) is captain of the Hungarian Table Tennis Team, touring England. He is playing Mr J.R. Bather, the Liverpool and District Champion.



The Hon. Ivor Montague (left) President of the E.T.T.A. and the Liverpool champion, Mr J.R. Bather (right) at the start of the game in the All-England v Liverpool match at the Strand Cafe, Liverpool on Friday 22nd February, 1929.



Competitors admiring the Montague Burton Challenge Cup at the end of the All England v Liverpool match. The Cup continues to be presented to the Men's Singles Champion at the League's Closed Tournament

## LIVERPOOL V MANCHESTER

There was a large attendance at the first Inter City table tennis match with Manchester which was played on 24th March, 1928.

The Walton Times reported that, 'the rubber bats of the Manchester players slowed down the game and local players, accustomed to the bright attacking game, found themselves in the most part defending.'

The outstanding game between J.R. Bather and H.C. Cooke (Manchester) produced some 'exhilarating rallies'. Bather was inevitably attacking and often had Cooke in difficulties, but the latter extricated himself from some particularly bad situations by the sheer brilliance of his defensive tactics.

Don Foulis, the rising star of the Thingwall Club, shared the honour with Les Forrest, of reaching Liverpool's top score, but the Manchester side were too strong winning by 80 points.

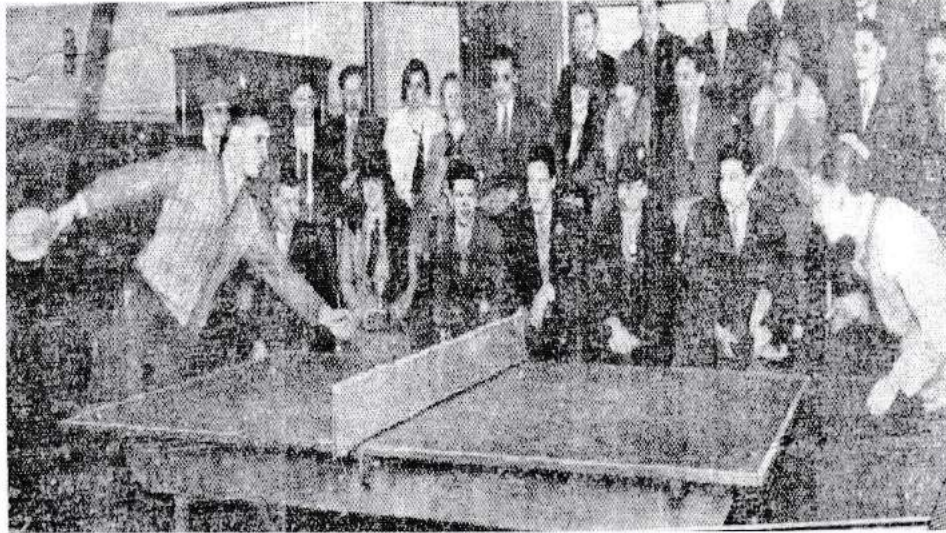
The only Liverpool player that night with a rubber bat was F. Jones, but by the date of the next match with Manchester the following year, most of the Liverpool players had made the transition to rubber. Despite the change the Manchester side were again victorious, and it was to be a further 4 years before Liverpool recorded their first win over their great North West of England rivals.

### THE MERSEYSIDE OPEN KNOCKOUT TEAM COMPETITION

Another important event was added to the calendar in 1928, when with a view to fostering table tennis in Lancashire and Cheshire, the Liverpool League arranged an Open Team Knockout competition.

The inaugural competition took place on Saturday March 10th at the YMCA, Foley Street and attracted 34 teams, including entries from Scarborough, Pontefract, Whitby, Manchester, St Helens, Chester and Runcorn.

The feature of the first competition was the splendid exhibition given by the Manchester clubs, who had three representatives in the semi finals, the other semi finalist being the local club



J. Livingstone, Manchester, Grove House 'A' team, one of the semi finalists (left) in action during the heats at the Liverpool and District Table Tennis League's Open Team knock out competition at the Liverpool Y.M.C.A. headquarters.

side, Domestic Mission.

The winners of the first competition were Manchester YMCA 'A' who defeated Manchester Grove House 'B' in the final

The second competition, in 1929, was described in the local press as, 'the largest table tennis tournament held in England', and saw another Manchester side victorious, Manchester Grove House 'B' beating Birmingham City in the final.

A Daily Post reporter was told, in between games, by an enthusiast who had his coat off, ready for the fray, that table tennis had achieved tremendous popularity in recent years. "And no wonder", he added. "You talk about golf. Why, table tennis needs at least 50 per cent more skill than that game. Even football has nothing on our game".

At the end of the evening, the medals were presented by Mr Jack Sharp, and distributed by the League President, Mr Lancashire.

### THE FIRST MERSEYSIDE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP

The first Merseyside Open Championship was held in 1929, at Picton Hall and was dominated by L.D. Todd, a London international player and Kent County cricketer. Todd's lightning drives and remarkable spin serves enabled him to reach the final of three events, the Men's Singles, the Mixed Doubles and the Men's Doubles.

In fact Todd was victorious in only the

Men's Doubles, as after a gruelling semi final against Liverpool's Don Foulis in the Men's Singles, when he played the final against Stan Proffitt of Manchester, he was reported to be exhausted.

The greatest surprise of the first Merseyside Open was the victory of Liverpool's Annie Pollitt over Marjory Hayden, the England International from Birmingham, in the Ladies Singles final.

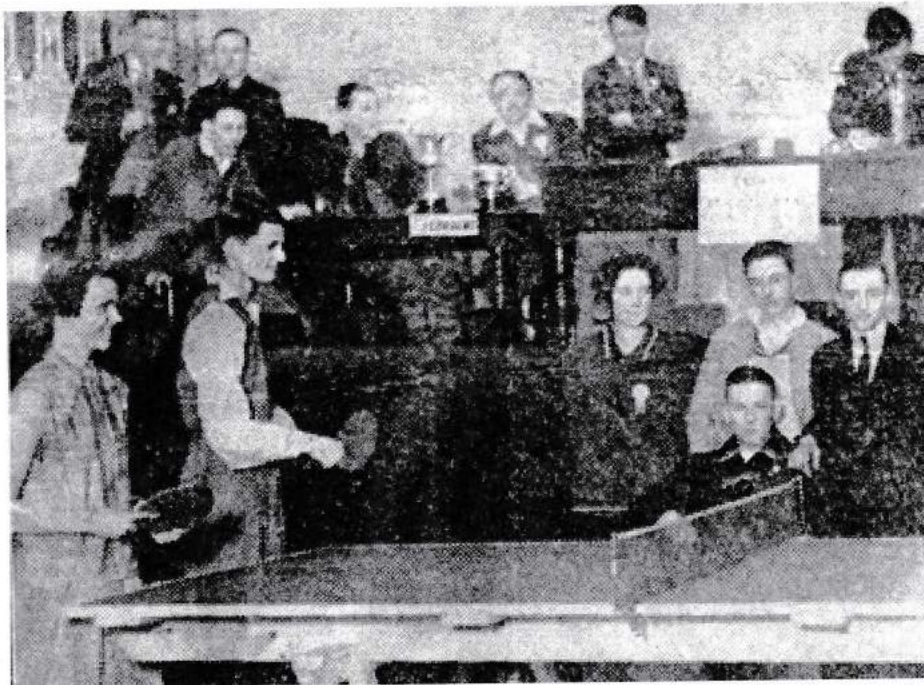
The Mixed Doubles final between Todd and Miss Hayden and Foulis and Joyce Bartholomew, was another sternly contested match, the Liverpool pair winning 21 - 19 in the third.

H.C. Cooke and Todd won the Men's Doubles title in confident manner, defeating Foulis and Forrest in two straight games.

A notable inclusion in the two hundred entrants was that of 15 year old Andrew Grant Millar, a member of Manchester Junior YMCA, who had only been playing table tennis for one year and was in his first tournament. This young man delighted the crowd with his 'lightning hits in the best style of a master', but he fell just short of the semi final, beaten by J. Pitilla, another young man with a reputation.



A.G. Millar



D. Foulis and Miss J. Bartholomew, winners of the Mixed Doubles title at the first Merseyside Open Tournament, 1929.

### ENGLISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS - MANCHESTER

There was a feeling among North West officials that the Region had been looked on as a 'black spot' by the English Association but that was to

change in 1930 when the National championships were held in Manchester, the first time it had been held in the provinces.

The Championships were held in the Lewis's Concert Hall, and it was reported that every session was watched by a capacity 1,000 spectators.

Liverpool was well represented in the shape of, Don Foulis, Harry Turner, Les Forrest, Miss Annie Pollitt and Miss Joyce Bartholomew, who was in her first year at table tennis.

Unfortunately Liverpool players were unlucky in the draw, coming up against the powerful Hungarians early on. Forrest was the most successful man, losing in round 3 to Sandor Glanez, the eventual winner, who beat his countryman, Keller in an exciting final.

At two games all the deciding point saw Glanez driving the ball from 30 feet from the table, past Keller to win by three games to two.

### ENGLISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS - LIVERPOOL

The region was rewarded by the E.T.T.A. again the following year, 1931, when the English Open Championships were held in Liverpool for the one and only time.

The championships took place on the 4th floor of the 'new' Lewis's store in Renshaw Street.

A strong entry, including 39 Internationals assembled, with the



Competitors in the English Open Table Tennis Championships in Manchester, 1930. Liverpool players included, L.E. Forrest (1st on the left), D. Foulis (5th from left) and H. Turner (3rd from right).

powerful Hungarians again expected to dominate.

Sandor Glanez was defending his Men's title but expected stern opposition from M. Szabados (World Champion), G.V. Barna (ex World Champion) and the losing finalist from 1930, I. Keller.

England's strongest players, were C.D.

Bull, R.D. Jones and T. Sears from London, A.A. Hayden, Birmingham and Stan Proffitt, Manchester.

Miss D. Gubbons, Wales, reported to be one of the quickest and most skilled players the game had seen, was defending her Ladies title.

A staggering crowd of 5,000 saw

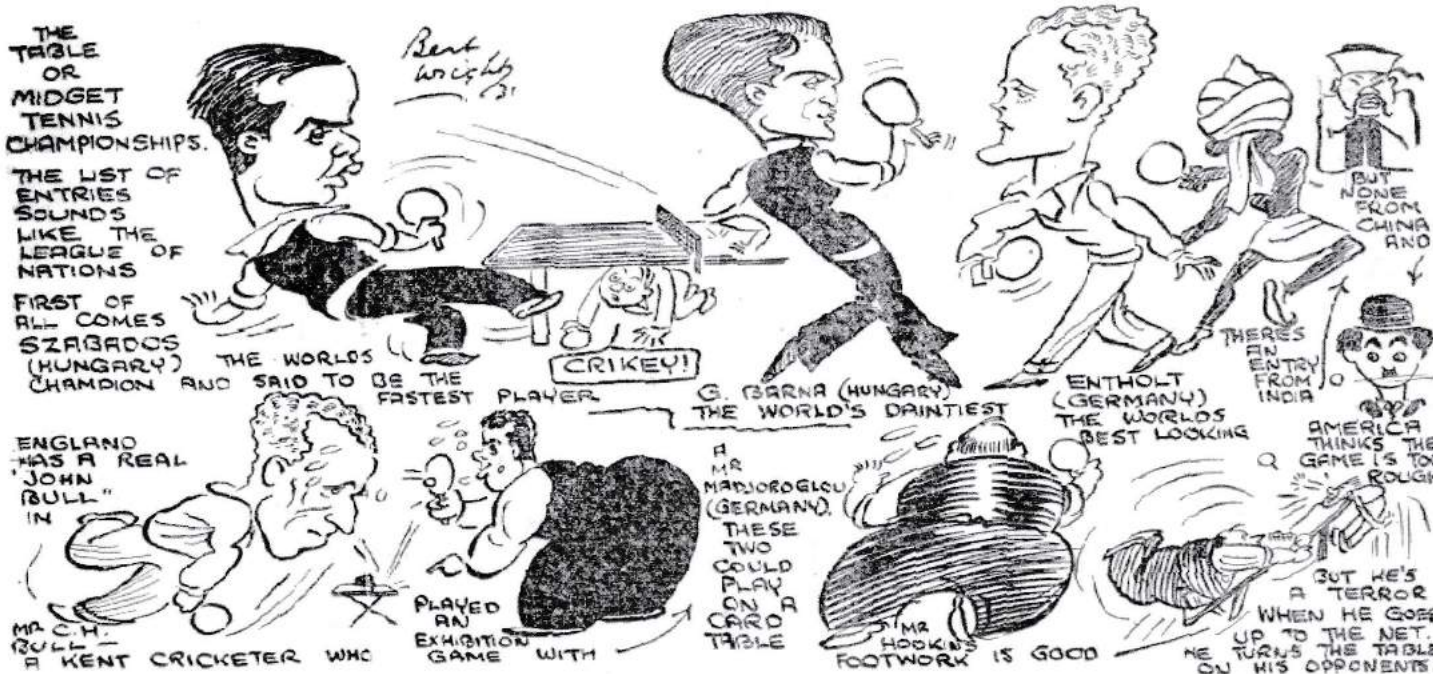
Szabados beat his countryman, Barna, in an awesome display of power, in three straight games.

The Ladies title moved from Wales to England, when Miss P. Bromfield, London, prevented Miss D. Gubbons from taking the title for the successive year.



International players arriving in Liverpool for the Table Tennis Championships. Szabados (Hungary) is 4th from right, Glanez (Hungary), the English Champion 6th from right

TABLE TENNIS STARS IN LIVERPOOL.



This cartoon, portraying the English Open, held in Liverpool in 1931, appeared in the local Football Evening Express

## STARS OF THE 30's

London, Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham were the main centres of Table Tennis in the country, each city able to produce a string of international players. Birmingham included Adrian Hayden (Anne Hayden's father), Sandy Lyle and Sadler, a Welsh International.

Liverpool's Internationals at this time (1933) included Don Foulis, Eric Hyde and Ken Hyde who was in 1937 to become England's number one Swathing Cup player, sharing it equally with Hamie Laurie of Manchester. Lady internationals included, Miss Joyce Bartholomew, Annie Pollitt, Norrah Norrish, Rita Doolan and Edie Malley.

Manchester's internationals included Andy Millar, Harry Cooke, Stan Proffitt, Fred Cromwell, with emerging players, Hamie Laurie, Les Cohen, C.W. 'Dibbs' Davies, Benny Casofsky and Ken Stanley also beginning to make an impact.

In 1937 and 1938, the Liverpool Champions and Readman Cup winners were Clubmoor, managed by Dr Rumjahn and their first team was full of internationals: Ken Hyde, Eric Hyde, Fred Bamford (Welsh international), Peter Rumjahn, Cecil Hyde, Dave Class

and Ted Rumjahn later joining from the City Club.

The Ladies 1st team also consisted of internationals: Joyce Bartholomew, Rita Doolan, Edie Malley and Nora Norrish.

## THE THREE MUSKATEERS

The game continued to be dominated by the Hungarians. The 'Three Muskateers' as they were known, Barna, Bellak and Szabados, played marvellous exhibition games throughout the world, bringing the 'modern' game to the eyes of the public. Szabados was reported to 'hit the ball so hard, its flight could scarcely be followed by the eye', while countryman, Barna, relied on his 'super backhand flip'.

### THE THREE MUSKATEERS



The popular Hungarian players,  
M. SZABADOS, G. V. BARNA and  
L. BELLAK

Bellak, as well as being a world class table tennis player, was a world class juggler with a bat and table tennis ball, capable of holding the attention of an audience on his own for many minutes.

The advent of these great players produced a game of flowing forehand and backhand strokes similar to lawn tennis except that with the net being 6 3/4 inches high, the drives on both wings had to be top spun to enable the ball to drop quickly. Consequently, defending players replied with the ball being chopped or underspun so as to float back over the high net. The other shot extraordinary to table tennis at the time was the 'backhand flick', made famous by the 'wizard of the flick', Victor Barna.

Throughout the 1930's these great players entertained large crowds at venues such as the Picton Hall, Bellak enthralling the audience with his great juggling act as well as playing matches against himself from each side of the table.

Liverpool, along with other towns, were witness to exhibition matches from the top players in England, Europe and the world, that were to influence the youngsters of the day, and produce many top class local players.

The great halls would see the attacking power of the Hungarians, as well as world



Grove House Table Tennis Club.  
Winners of the League Championship and 1st Division Cup, season 1930/31

THE LIVERPOOL CONTINGENT TO THE FLINTSHIRE OPEN, RHYLL, CIRCA 1936



Back Row - Les Forrest, Eric Hyde, Don Foulis, Syd Jackson, Ken Hyde, Mossop, Fred Bamford.  
Middle Row - Hughes, Harry Nicholls, Nora Foulis, Buntly Corbina, Harry Davies, Ted Rumjahn, 'Pop' Hyde,  
Front Row - Mrs Nicholls, Joyce Bartholomew, Norrah Norrish and Pat Moss



class defensive players, who with wonderful patience, athleticism and the occasional backhand flick, would return the ball for minutes on end from the back wall of the arena, waiting for the inevitable loose return to kill.

These great players were a credit to the game. Their sportsmanship was unquestionable, and whenever they appeared in public, they were immaculately kitted out, with spotless footwear and well pressed clothing. To

make the evening more of a spectacle, the officials also wore evening dress to perform their duties.

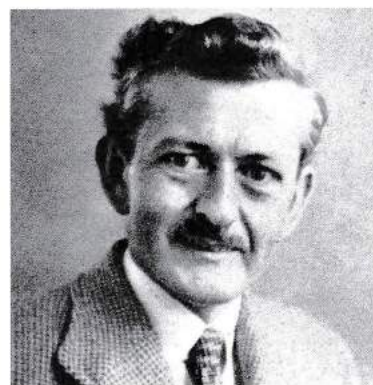
### GOOD BYE MR. FORREST

The game in Liverpool continued to go from strength to strength, when as suddenly as he had arrived on the scene, Les Forrest left, to take up the full time post of Assistant Secretary to the E.T.T.A. in their new High Holborn Office, London.

His departure is recorded in the Liverpool League Committee minutes of 15th July, 1936, where the President, Mr. C.E. Bartholomew, expressed a 'hearty vote of thanks to the finest worker and sportsman in the League'.



International Tournament 1937. From left to right - Barna, Szabados, Liebster (Austria), Bellak, and our own Ken and Eric Hyde.



A rather older looking Les Forrest, circa 1948



Ken Hyde of Liverpool and England

After a number of years in London Les moved to Bradford where he became Tournament Secretary of the Yorkshire Table Tennis Association and in 1947 he took over as the General Secretary.

As well as being a Life Membership of the Liverpool League, his contribution to table tennis was acknowledged in 1937 when he was awarded Life Membership of the E.T.T.A.

In 1949 he married Miss Aranka Wilcsek, a cousin of the great Victor Barna. Les remained active in the administration of the sport and was the Yorkshire Table Tennis Association representative on the E.T.T.A. National Executive Committee for many years.

He died in 1961 after a lifetime's dedication to table tennis and the E.T.T.A. honoured his memory with the naming of a trophy, The Leslie Forrest Memorial Trophy which is still presented today.

**TABLE TENNIS.**

MANCHESTER	10
LIVERPOOL	9
MAJ.	1

NO CHANGE  
YOU SEE  
MANCHESTER  
ALWAYS  
BEATS  
L'POOL  
AT  
TABLE  
TENNIS

THERE WAS A  
TABLE D'HOTE  
MATCH  
BETWEEN  
S. PROFFITT  
M/C AND  
DON  
FOULIS (L'POOL)

MANCHESTERS  
PROFFITT  
WAS L'POOLS  
LOSS.

NOTE, HOW  
DON COVERS  
UP WITH  
HIS LEFT

DON  
WORE  
HIS PARTY  
COLOURS  
OR INTERNATIONAL  
BADGE.

MR  
READMAN  
THE  
GROVE  
HOUSE  
CRACK.

HE NEARLY  
SETS THE  
CELLULOID  
BALL ON  
FIRE WHEN  
HE HITS IT.

A. CROMWELL (M/C)  
BEAT H. KNIBBS  
IN THE LAST  
GAME

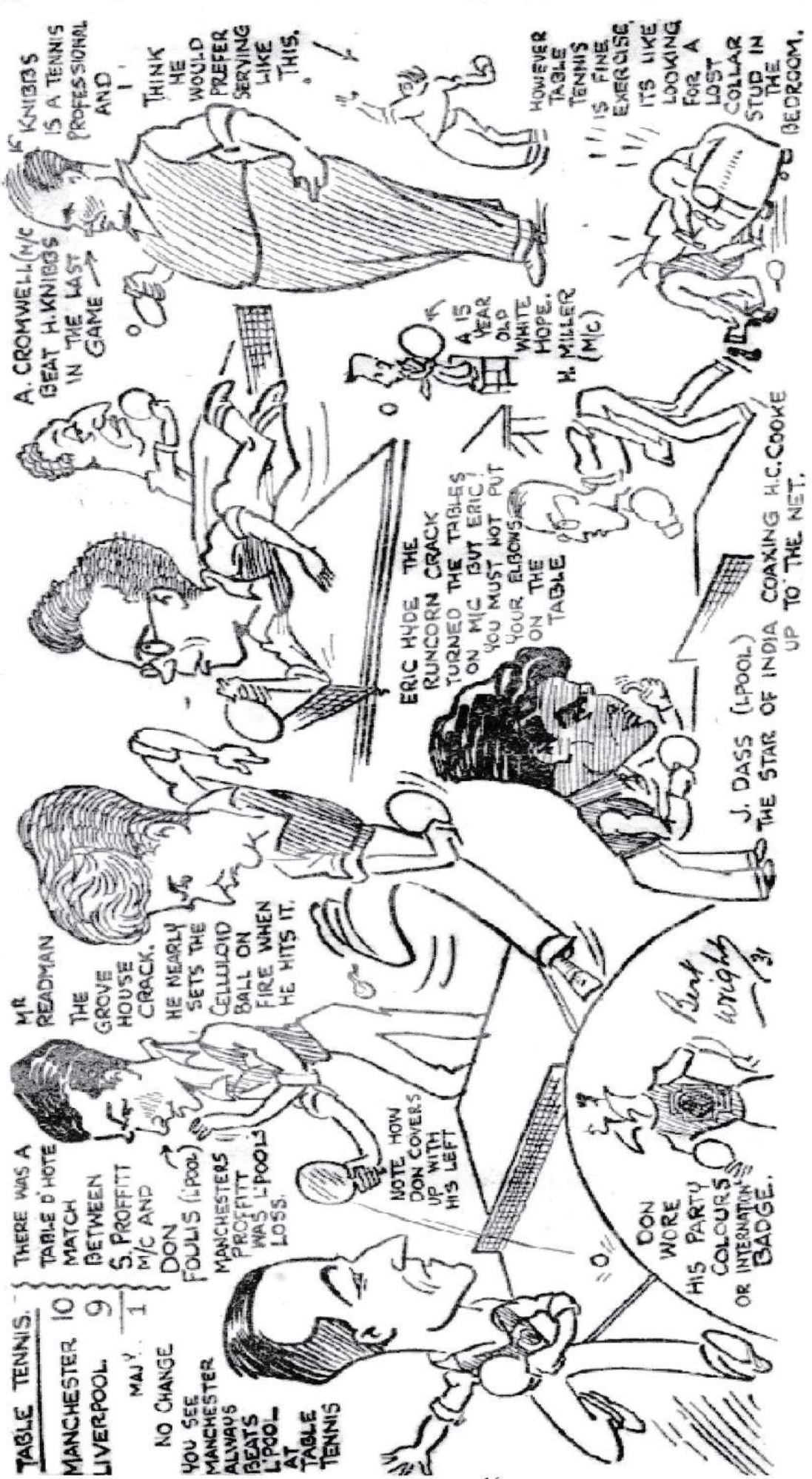
THINK  
HE  
WOULD  
PREFER  
SERVING  
LIKE  
THIS.

ERIC HYDE THE  
RUNCORN CRACK  
TURNED THE TABLES  
ON MIC BUT ERIC!  
YOU MUST NOT PUT  
YOUR ELBOWS  
ON THE  
TABLE

HOWEVER  
TABLE  
TENNIS  
IT'S FINE  
EXERCISE,  
IT'S LIKE  
LOOKING  
FOR A  
LOST  
COLLAR  
STUP IN  
THE  
BEDROOM.

J. DASS (L'POOL)  
THE STAR OF INDIA  
COAXING H.C. COOKE  
UP TO THE NET.

A 15  
YEAR  
OLD  
WHITE  
HOPE.  
H. MILLER  
(M/C)



Bert Wright's impression of the Inter-City table tennis match, played at the New Carlton Ballroom, on Saturday, October 24th, 1931. Manchester won 10 sets to 9, with events level 4-all. The Liverpool players had every reason to be satisfied with the result, for in previous years they had fallen much easier prey to their inter-city rivals. Liverpool, captained by D. Foulis, included J. Dass in their team, a Swaythling Cup and Indian International player, making his first appearance for the League team. Other members included L. Dodd, T. Rotherham, G.R. Readman, E. Hyde, J. Bennett, and H. Knibbs.

## BILL STAMP

The new Secretary of the League, following Les Forrest's departure, was Mr. W. Stamp, who was to remain in office for the next twenty years. While Les Forrest was the founder of the League, Bill Stamp could be described as the builder, as he took the League through the difficult war period and his enthusiasm and tremendous organising ability built the League once again into a major force after the war.



Bill Stamp (seated with glasses on the left) with fellow Committee members (circa 1938)

Prior to the war Bill Stamp organised coaches, full of players and supporters, to travel to the various Northern and North Wales tournaments. Liverpool League player, Peter Rumjahn recalls one such visit to the North Wales Open when he won 6 jars of pickled onions for taking a Doubles title. Having an aversion to pickles, Peter duly shared them out amongst the coach party on the journey home.

For the Pre-war World Championships at Wembley, Bill Stamp managed to fill a special train, consisting of 13 coaches with table tennis enthusiasts from Merseyside, Chester, Southport and the surrounding areas.

Bill was responsible for the running of the Merseyside Open Tournaments after the war, and used to invite the world's top players to take part. Many of them did so, being put up in league members' households for the weekend.

These tournaments were also great social

occasions. The Rumjahn household appeared to be the place to be as apart from having a table tennis table they boasted a piano, and the gatherings after the final would go on till the small hours.

The game continued to grow in Liverpool, with the number of players and clubs increasing each year. Teams in the Liverpool and Wirral areas played together and the League was divided into regions at this time.

Many Inter City matches and exhibition

of 600 were common.

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

In the years prior to the war, 1936 to 1938, there existed an unofficial League Headquarters at the City Club, on the 1st floor of the T.J. Hughes Store in Stafford Street.

There were three Villa practice tables and in a special area, a club table for members of top first Division team, City.

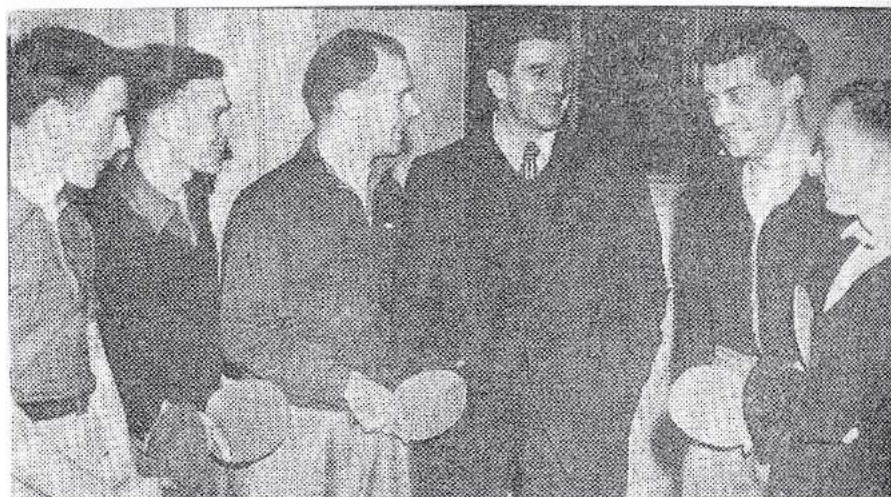
This was a private venture, although any league member could practise for 3 1/2 shillings per season, with an additional sixpence for half an hour on the table.

The practise sessions were supervised by Norman Kay, who placed players on a table according to their ability, progressing with improvement, if good enough to the top table, eventually joining the City players on the City Club table.

All promising players in Liverpool attended for concentrated practice and coaching and of course the standard of play in the city improved.

A brilliant junior hitting the headlines at the time was Sonny Berman, a member of the Young Israel Club, and an all out penholder attacker, with amazing speed of movement. With the net still high at 6 3/4 inches, this player, along with many others, just missed out on the big time.

On the Wirral, emerging players were Bobby Roberts, Vic Chesham, and later Bill Pierce and Bernard Hand, all of whom went on to win honours.



Liverpool table tennis players chatting with Cyril Done, of Liverpool F.C. at the Merseyside Championships at the Gordon Institute, circa 1952. Left to right - W. Pierce, B. Hand, R.E. Roberts, Cyril Done, R.M. Rumjahn and E.J. Rumjahn

## CREST OF A WAVE

Table Tennis at this time was on the crest of a wave, putting the Yo-Yo enthusiasts into a poor second place, even though all the stores were giving exhibitions of Yo-Yo in their Toy Depts.

Inter City matches in Lancashire and Yorkshire would fill Town Halls to capacity. In Huddersfield, Sheffield, Stockport, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool the doors for such matches would be closed well before the start time as sell out crowds were thrilled by table tennis stars from around the world.

## LEAGUE HEADQUARTERS

Table Tennis was booming and it was decided to look for an official League Headquarters, where practise, coaching, tournaments and meetings could take place. So in 1939 a Headquarters Fund was set up, to which it is recorded that Mr Vernon Sangster donated 100 guineas.

Various premises were looked at, until it was finally agreed to lease premises at 23 Great George Street for £150 per year, with £10 monthly rent.

The League was due to take possession of the premises in August of that year but the German invasion of Poland and subsequent declaration of war put a halt to the scheme. Luckily, the lease had not been signed!



Bill Pierce

## WAR YEARS

Unfortunately, the war put a halt to the advancing standards of table tennis in Liverpool as most of the players were called up for military service.

To the credit of Bill Stamp and League Chairman, Mr Brandreth, the Liverpool League continued its activities during the war years, although obviously on a restricted scale.

Emergency War Rules were introduced by the League for the teams that made



Liverpool team v Belfast, December, 1938. From left to right :  
A. Hutchinson, N. Norrish, W. Stamp, E. Malley, J.K. Hyde and P.U. Rumjahn



Undefeated Champions 1935/36 - Lucem beat Grove House 13-12 in the deciding game for the Liverpool Table Tennis Championships. The picture shows the two captains, Don Foulis (Lucem), on the right, and Eric Hyde tossing for choice of ends. Also shown are K. Huddleston (Lucem), first on left and N. Watson (Grove House).

up the two divisions of the League. Teams consisted of three players who played each player of the opposing team. Nine games constituted a match and the team who won the majority of games were awarded two points.

All matches were played on Saturday or Sunday afternoons and in the event of an air raid, causing the match to be abandoned or preventing teams from turning up, teams were allowed to arrange a new date without penalties.

Liverpool City matches continued against Sheffield, St Helens and Widnes. Liverpool were represented at this time by Eric Caird, D Crawford, S. Ladd, W.J. Povall, Ron Rumjahn, A. Simpson and E. Wall.

Those who remained continued to play exhibition games for the services, or for the 'save the soldier' funds, in many city centres in the region.

Play during the war was only occasional, however, as balls were difficult to obtain, their primary use being as ballast in the wings of our bombers, for flotation purposes.

Two stars emerged during the war, Jack Carrington and Johnny Leach, who would travel around the country giving table tennis exhibition matches to the troops. Johnny Leach became England's best player after the war and won the World Championship in 1949 and 1951.



A rather young Ron Rumjahn, pictured at the presentation ceremony for the 1937 Closed Tournament

At this time Ron Rumjahn who had started playing in the league at the age of nine, was emerging as a good player. He won the depleted Liverpool Closed Championship four times, and after the war continued his dominance, winning



The Liverpool team versus Dublin, 1946. Back row from left to right - Peter Rumjahn, Ted Rumjahn and Jack Mc Caig. Front row - Audrey Kenny, Bill Stamp and Eileen Mansell



Area trials, 1946. From left to right : E. Mansell, B. Marshall (MCR), R.M. Rumjahn and Mrs Speakman (MCR)

the Men's Singles Title a further six times.

### BRIGHT FUTURE

The ending of the War brought increased optimism and the Liverpool League began to grow once again. Top club before the war, Clubmoor had been bombed out of existence as had the Lucem club. Those returning from the war were looking for new clubs to join.

Top Liverpool Clubs at this time were:

Bootle Y.M.C.A., with Gordon Brownley and the promising junior Ralph Gunnion; Great Crosby, with Bill Pierce, Bernard Hand, Chris Cougan and Joe Watts; Balfour, with Les Davies, Reg Hetherington, Norman Jones and Les Mullholland.

A new club founded by Albert Montgomery, Rafters, included the three Rumjahn brothers, Ted, Peter and Ron, along with Jack McCaig and Eric Caird.

The nucleus of a good league existed and with a number of promising youngsters, such as Bernard Hand and Bill Pierce, it looked like Liverpool resuming as a major force in English Table Tennis. By the start of the 1947 season, the League had grown to 10 Divisions, including two women's Divisions.

After the war, however, Liverpool was no longer the force it had been in table tennis. Ken Hyde did not take up the bat again and although Don Foulis and the Rumjahn brothers remained there was a lack of strength in depth.

Liverpool ladies were dominated by Eileen Mansell, the May twins, Pinky and Bluey, and later Moya Jones and Andree Jones.

In 1949, the Ladies team of Kay and Lillian May and Eileen Mansell reached the final of the National 'Rose Bowl' competition, losing 8-1 to a strong West London team, which included the World famous Rowe twins.

Not only was it the first time a Liverpool team had reached the final, it was the first time that twins were members of the opposing teams.



From left, Diana and Rosaline Rowe (West London) and Liverpool's Pinky and Bluey May

Pimpled bats and orthodox play were still the vogue, and as the net had now been dropped to 6 inches, more attacking players were produced.

The new service rule was causing problems as the 'finger spin' service was now illegal. To make sure that the only spin imparted on the ball was from the bat, the ball had to rest on the palm of a flat open hand, with fingers straight and together. There was no requirement to throw the ball upwards though, the ball could be released by raising the hand or dropping away.

In 1947, the question of a League headquarters was again raised, with premises in Smithfield Street, capable of holding ten tables, identified. The annual expenditure was £600 per year and the Committee asked each member to pay six 2/- payments a year for membership. This worked out at just 3 pennies a week.

The matter was discussed at the AGM and voted upon. 40 For, 37 Against, and as two thirds majority was required, the

Headquarters scheme was defeated.

This, in the opinion of many, is the main factor why Liverpool has never reached the heights it did before the war, when the City boasted 10 Internationals. With no centre of excellence, where the best players could play and practice, the standard of play was never going to progress, and in fact Liverpool has only produced one full International since the war, Ralph Gunnion along with Bill Pierce who was an England Junior International.

### STARS OF THE 50'S

In 1950, the league had grown to 1258 members, 76 clubs, over 160 teams, including womens and youth divisions.

An unofficial ranking list, in the League Digest Magazine, at this time was based on the previous seasons play and listed the top men and women players.

Men

1. E.J. Rumjahn (Rafters)
2. R.M. Rumjahn (Rafters)

3. R. Hetherington (Balfour)
4. P.U. Rumjahn (Rafters)
5. R. Jones (Homecroft)

Ladies

1. A. Jones (Wallasey Y.M.C.A. Jnrs)
2. E. Mansell (Balfour)
3. K. May (Rafters)
4. L. May (Rafters)
5. O. Dickenson (Balfour)

A name missing from the men's list was Arthur Taylor who entered the League in 1951 playing for Litherland Boys Club, and so impressive was his debut that he played in the Liverpool 1st team in his first season. For nearly three years and almost 100 League matches Arthur remained unbeaten.



Arthur Taylor



Liverpool V Manchester, 1952. Standing - Bill Stamp, Ms Lindner, Chairman Don Foulis, Front row - K. May, E. Mansell and Andree Jones

Top lady, Andree Jones, was coached by Bobby Roberts and in her first serious season she won the Girls Singles at the Irish Open and the following year, 1951, won the Irish Open Ladies Singles title.

In her last season as a Junior she reached the final of the National Daily Mirror Tournament where she came up against a girl destined to go far, Diane Rowe.

The 1950's were dominated by the Balfour Club, who had an amazing run of success, winning the 1st Division Championship on nine consecutive occasions between 1950 and 1958. Team members, Reg Hetherington, Norman Jones, W. Wong, Les Davies and Harold Wilcock proved by far too strong for the rest of the 1st division.

In 1956, halfway through the season, the Rumjahns were still top of the tree, with Ted and Peter topping the divisional averages with 100%. Bill Pierce (Linnets) came next with 94.44 %, followed closely by Arthur Taylor and Reg Hetherington.

## 25TH ANNIVERSARY

In 1951 the League celebrated its 25th birthday with an anniversary dance which coincided with an England v Ireland match held in Liverpool. The League were the first private party to charter the 'new' Royal Iris, the only boat

of its kind in the world and one especially constructed for river cruising.

Mr Ivor Montague, E.T.T.A. Chairman, was a guest of the league at the dance and he paid the following tribute in his speech, 'For 25 years Liverpool has been a centre without which table tennis would not have developed in this part of the world'.

In 1952, the clubs on the Wirral were allowed to join together and form the Wirral League.

Table tennis had grown so rapidly in Wirral that it seemed a natural step to segregate the two sections with the River Mersey forming a natural boundary.

The new League came into being in June, 1952, and with 60 teams was the largest League in Cheshire in its first year.

## TABLE TENNIS DIGEST

The idea for a magazine, devoted to the activities of the Liverpool League was conceived during a discussion one evening in the home of Frank and Edna Moore, former stalwarts of the old Oakhill Club.

With them were Doctor Des Loughrey and Jack Pattison and the conversation turned to the lack of publicity for Liverpool in the national magazine. It was Dr Loughrey who suggested that the

league should have its own magazine and he and Jack Pattison approached League Secretary, Bill Stamp, who took matters further.

Although Mr Stamp got the agreement of the Management Committee readily enough, there was plenty of opposition at the Annual General Meeting when he insisted that every member of the league must be a subscriber.

To cater for the expense, players registration fees were raised to four shillings and sixpence, which would entitle them to a league handbook and six copies of the league magazine, post free.

Des Loughrey and Jack Pattison were invited to be the Co-editors, an invitation they accepted on being given an understanding that while it would be the official magazine of the league, it would also be a forum through which every member of the league could have his or her say.

A competition was launched to choose the name of the magazine, and from the names sent in the title 'Table Tennis Digest' was selected by the Committee from the names sent in.

Despite suffering a loss of twenty two pounds in its first year the Digest was considered a huge success and at the 1951 A.G.M. a presentation was made to joint Editors, J.D.Loughrey and J.D.Pattison, in appreciation of their services.

The magazine was quickly established among league members and won praise from many parts of the country.

In 1973 the E.T.T.A. held a national competition for the best table tennis magazine produced by a league, and the high standard of the Digest was recognised when it won first prize.

The fact that the Digest magazine is still being published today is a credit to the various editors and correspondents over the years.

The league has been fortunate to have had the services of such people as Des Loughrey, Jack Pattison, Eric Caird, Albert Montgomery, Jim Green, Jack Lambert, Ken Armson, John Wren and Roly Wright who have all done a tremendous job as Editor.

**JAQUES**



Illustrating Jaques' Tournament Table Tennis Table as used for  
**WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**JAQUES CLUB TOURNAMENT TABLES  
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# TABLE TENNIS DIGEST

Official Magazine of the Liverpool & District Table Tennis League.  
No. 1. OCTOBER. PRICE 6d.

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Front cover of the very first Table Tennis Digest Magazine, October, 1951. The back page shows Hyde bats available for sale priced 8/3.

## COACHING SCHEMES

Efforts were made by the Management Committee to improve the standard of play in the Liverpool League, with emphasis being placed on the coaching of the most promising juniors.

A Youth Division was started in the League in 1947 consisting of two divisions. It was abandoned in 1950. During those four years the whole of it's membership was drawn from the Wirral and not one single team from Liverpool ever competed in it.

In 1952 Ted Rumjahn was appointed as League Coach and several coaching sessions were held in the closed season.

A youth team was introduced to the 1st Division. Under the name of 'Nomads', these promising juniors were coached by Peter Rumjahn who was assisted by Gus Read and Des Loughrey. Selected juniors were sent to the Ken Stanley Table Tennis School in Burnley for extensive coaching and received extra tuition weekly at Rafters and Oakhill Clubs.

Several of these youngsters developed to play in City teams, e.g. Gordon Brownley, Ian Rogerson, Mike Trueman, Ralph Gunnion and Trevor Owen.

Despite these efforts, further promising youngsters failed to materialise, and the 1956 season was the last one for the Nomads youth team.

Table tennis was still a popular sport played by many youngsters in the city, and was especially popular in the Liverpool Boys' Association clubs.

In 1958, the League introduced a scheme which encouraged clubs to adopt a Liverpool Boys' Association club (L.B.A.), with a view to signing the players on as members once they had reached aged 18 and they lost membership of the Association.

In 1959 there were 50 L.B.A. teams playing organised table tennis under E.T.T.A. rules and this continued into the 1960's with L.B.A. teams going on continental tours.

## THE STAMP AWARD OF MERIT

In 1957 the League was rocked by the sudden death of Secretary and Treasurer, Bill Stamp, who had been such a huge part of the league for so long. Young John McKim, from the Beauclair club stepped into the fray and took over as Secretary.

It is recorded in the minutes, 'that it was due to Bill Stamp's determination and energy that a strong organisation rose on the foundations laid by Les Forrest and especially that the Liverpool league remained in operation during the difficult war years'.

It was decided to perpetuate the name of Bill Stamp within table tennis and in the community as a whole.

A memorial fund was set up and it was decided to create The Stamp Award of Merit, a plaque, which would be awarded by the Management Committee for outstanding service by either a player or club. The Stamp Award of Merit continues to be presented today.

To commemorate Bill Stamp in the Community the League donated a bench inscribed with Bill's name to Sefton Hospital for placing in the grounds.

The first Stamp Award of Merit was awarded in 1958 to League Chairman, Mr J.H.C. Hughes, in recognition of his outstanding service to the league, who, sadly was to die within two months of receiving the award.



## STARS OF THE 60'S

Rafters knocked Balfour off top spot in 1960, winning the championship in two successive seasons. The squad of Dave Ferguson, Ray Harrison, Arthur Jones and Ron and Peter Rumjahn were strengthened by the return of Ted Rumjahn and in 1961 by the acquisition of Arthur Taylor.

The Liverpool Y.M.C.A. team of Roy Jones, Ted Manduluf, Ken Roberts, Dave Butterworth, Dennis O'Hara and Peter Taylor dominated the rest of the decade, champions on six occasions and winning the Readman Cup four times.

Wavertree Labour, strengthened by the acquisition of Tony Rigby, from Preston were the only real threat to Y.M.C.A. and the club won the title for the first time in 1967/68, adding the Readman Cup in the same season.

The leading averages for the 1960/61 season were :

### Men

1. R.E. Gunnion (Bootle Y.M.) 91.93%
2. A.C. Taylor (Bath Street) 89.58%
3. V. Chesham (Bohemians) 87.93%
4. N. Roy Jones (Linnets) 84.61%
5. R. Harrison (Rafters) 78.57%

### Ladies

1. M. Jones (Bohemians) 100%
2. M. Willcox (Bohemians) 95.14%
3. M. Francis (Oakhill) 88.46%
4. R. Royal (Bibbys) 84.78%
5. I.A. Crafter (Cadwa) 82.69%

Ralph Gunnion had been one of the junior players to receive the benefit of the junior coaching programme and he was now reaching his full potential.

In 1962, he became the first Liverpool player to win a National title in 12 years, winning the Scottish Open. He also reached the final of the Irish Open and won the Midland Open. Unfortunately, although he came through the ranks of the Liverpool League, Ralph had moved from Liverpool the previous season and was now playing in Birmingham.

In 1962 an exciting junior was making the news. Gordon Birch, one of the League's youngest members made history when he became the first boy from Liverpool ever to play in the Lancashire Junior team. Gordon started as a very small 11 year old at Bootle YMCA, then



Gordon Birch in action at the Liverpool Closed Tournament, 1965

at the height of their success. From the first he showed a rare talent for the game and for four seasons he progressed higher and higher. Due to internal troubles at Bootle Y.M.C.A. Gordon went on to C.A.D.W.A. and in his first season assisted them to win the second division championship.

Two years later, he joined Bohemians. Along with Peter D'Arcy, Gordon topped the 1st Division averages in 1967 and he won the Men's title at the Liverpool Closed in seasons 1967 and 1968.

A player missing from the 1960 averages was Judy Crafter, who came to prominence in 1962 when she won the first of her four Ladies Singles titles in the Closed tournament.



Judy Crafter

In the second half of the decade, Barbara Cain came to prominence and won three Singles titles in the Closed.



Barbara Cain

## AWARD FOR SECRETARY

In November, 1961, the Stamp Award of Merit was presented to John McKim, 'in recognition of the meritorious service which he has rendered and continues to render to table tennis in Liverpool'.

In presenting the award, the new Chairman Arthur Upton paid tribute to the manner in which John, after Bill Stamp's death, had undertaken the major task of administering the League's affairs with a quiet efficiency and obliging manner which had earned him the respect and confidence of both players and officials alike. Mr Upton went on to recognise the time and energy which John had expended in the League's interest and paid tribute to his selfless endeavours during periods of ill health.

John received a canteen of cutlery, suitably inscribed with a framed certificate, recording the 'League's appreciation of the services of a valued servant'.

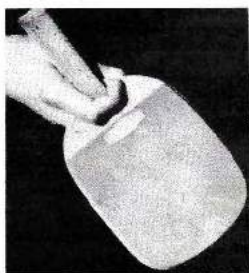
Despite his enthusiasm, I'm sure that John didn't envisage that he would continue to serve the League as Secretary for a further 34 years.

## SPONGE BATS

In the late 1950's there was an outcry over the introduction of sponge and sandwich bats which caused the ball to do the weirdest things and which changed the game of table tennis once again.

Sponge rubber had been tried before, well before the war and whilst one or two players had been successful, they were by no means widespread. In 1952, a player named Satoh won the World Championship in Bombay, using a

sponge bat and using a penholder grip. Incidentally he became only the second penholder to do so at the time, the previous world champion penholder being Zoltan Mechlovits in 1928.



Satoh's sponge bat, 1952

The Liverpool public had their first sight of sponge in the 1955 Closed Tournament where both finalists in the Men's Singles played with sponge bats. The following report on this encounter is taken from the 'Digest' magazine,

'the audience at first hardly knew what to make of it but before the end had made up their minds that it was very funny indeed. One was reminded of two inebriates trying to play the game for the first time with a ball that had seen better days'

Sponge rubber, which could be completely negative, was seen as a menace by many and was replaced by sandwich rubber. Sandwich bats were here to stay and soon caught on, despite the critics. One correspondent in the



Womens Divisional Champions 1953 - Lofters Ladies.

'Digest' in 1960 complained of 'freakish shots which do not stem from natural talent' and concluded by stating that 'as table tennis equipment sandwich bats would make good firefighters'.

Many players were of the opinion that sponge bats had ruined the game of table tennis as players were relying too much on what the bat could do, neglecting all the best stroke production and correct footwork and movement.

The game had changed completely to a hit and counter hit game with many mistakes on both sides and shorter rallies.

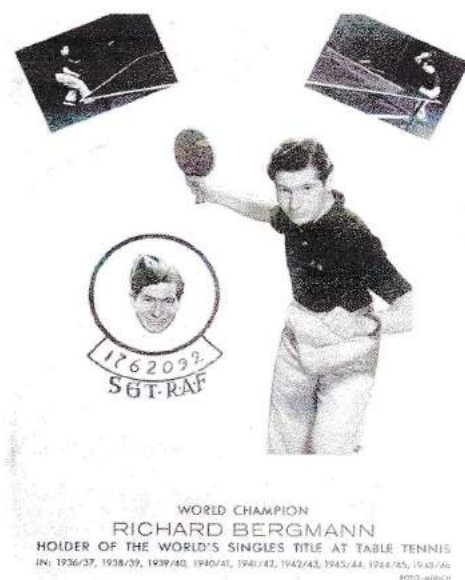
The 'old' game of defence and attack was out of date and the 'old' traditional players had to decide whether to change with the times or to remain with pimples and accept the challenge.



**F.J. Perry, England** - Men's Singles Champion of the World, 1928-29, entertained the Liverpool public at the England versus The Rest match at Picton Hall, circa 1930



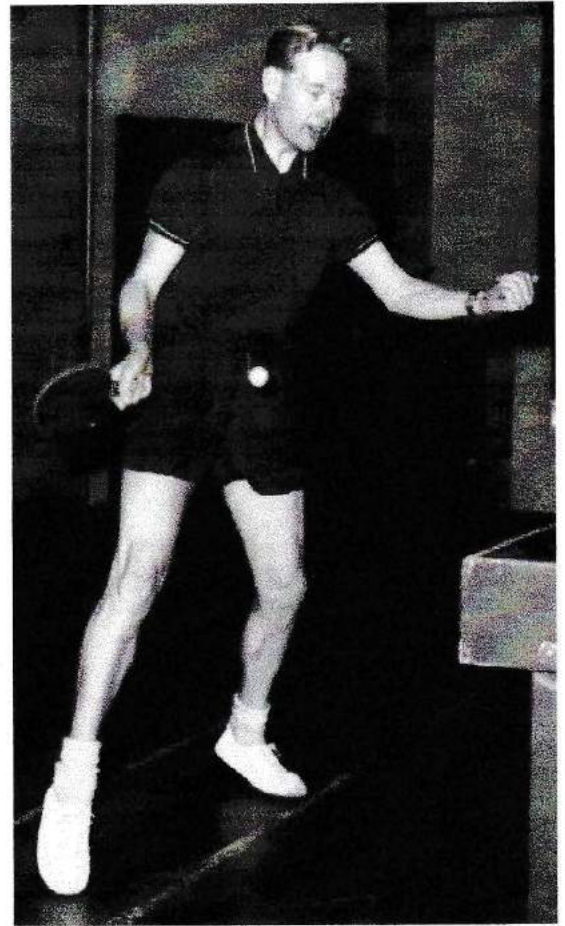
Liverpool Men's team, circa 1965 - Peter Rumjahn, Arthur Taylor, Norman Jones and non playing captain, Ted Rumjahn.



Richard Bergman promotional postcard, circa 1950



Judy Crafter, in action in the Liverpool Closed Tournament, 1966. Judy won the Ladies Singles in 1962, 1964, 1966 and 1967.



Peter D'Arcy, English Electric player, topped the 1st division averages in 1967 and won the Men's Singles title in the Closed in 1969



Mabel Neary in action, circa 1966. Mabel won the Ladies Closed title in 1970 and 1987.



Ted Rumjahn - Action shot

## STARS OF THE 70'S

The 1970's saw the continuance of the dominance of the English Electric Club, in Liverpool table tennis. The team of Tony Clayton, Peter D'Arcy and Wally Allanson won the 1st Division Championship and the Readman Cup in the first three years of the decade.

Tony Clayton, as well as being the Liverpool number one in 1971, was ranked number three in England and was at the peak of his playing days. In one season, he won the Meadowbank (Edinburgh) Open, the Cumberland Open, and was runner up in the Merseyside Open, the Scottish Open, the English Closed and the Birmingham Open. This was topped off when he was selected to represent England in the World Championships held in Tokyo.

This team were therefore a formidable trio and they did themselves and the League proud in 1971 when they reached the semi final of the All England Club Championships. They had previously accounted for Blackburn, Bolton, Manchester and Boston

On 26th May, a crowd of 250 spectators crammed into the Concert Room at the English Electric Club to see the home team take on the holders of the trophy, Ormesby. Ormesby's team consisted of Nicky Jarvis, English number one junior, Alan Ransome and Dennis Neale.



The Holly Lodge High School team of Gill Rowbottom, Brenda Williams (Buoey), Pauline Lane, Suzanne Manning (Burgess) and Ellie Astle, all Colonsay players, winners of the All England U13 Schools title in 1972

In a keenly contested match, in which our boys pulled out all the stops, Ormesby proved too strong, winning 5-2. The match received full radio and media coverage and was reported by English Electric Secretary, Jack Lambert, as 'undoubtedly the outstanding game in the Club's 24 year history'.

## RISING STARS

The beginning of the seventies saw a golden period for table tennis in Liverpool with a relative return to the halcyon pre-war years although not on the international field. Many exciting youngsters were coming through the Liverpool League ranks, benefiting from

the coaching scheme run by Les French and later, John O'Sullivan at De La Salle Grammar School, home of the Colonsay Club.

In 1971, Sue Manning won the U17 Girls Singles title at the Lancashire Junior Tournament and with partner Brenda Williams also took the U17's Girls Doubles title. In 1972, the Liverpool Junior Girls team of Brenda Williams, (England no 3 Junior) Sue Manning and Barbara Kirkman (Lancashire no 2 and 3 Junior) reached the final of the National Team Championships, the Bromfield Trophy. In the same year Williams won the Girls title at the Lancashire Junior Tournament and the U17 Girls' West



English Electric v Ormesby. Wally Allanson, Peter D'Arcy, Tony Clayton, Dennis Neale, Alan Ransome and Nicky Jarvis

Midland Title.

The Junior girls from Liverpool were particularly strong at this time and Holly Lodge High School, made up of Colonsay players won the All England U13 Girls' School title.

A thriving Schools' competition existed in Liverpool at the time and in 1972 Julie Black, a Ladies 'A' team member won the Girls' U15 title at the Lancashire Schools Competition, while P. Rutherford, a Colonsay member, won the Boys' U13 title.

In 1974, the same competition was dominated by Liverpool Junior players :  
U 13 Boys - Tony O'Connor (Colonsay) beat Graeme Black (English Electric)  
U16 Boys - won by Keith Williams (Rafters)  
U13 Girls - Stephanie Laws beat Julie O'Malley (both Colonsay)  
U16 Girls - Julie Black (English Electric) beat Sue Smith (Rafters)  
U19 Girls - Cathie Gore beat Julie Turner (both Colonsay)

The boys were not far behind the girls and were improving rapidly. In 1974, the Lancashire ranking list for juniors saw Keith Williams, no 3, Clive Strettle, no 6 and Tony O'Connor, no 7.

A player rapidly making a name for himself in 1971, was junior, John McNee. It was reported in the Digest magazine that 'in successive weeks he has beaten three Liverpool City players, Trevor Owens, George Smith and Ted Manduluf.' By 1974, John had become the leading Liverpool player and his club, Rafters, were beginning to make a showing in the first division.

In 1975, John McNee, along with John Marshall, Keith Williams, Brian Davey (all Rafters), Neil Roberts (Wavertree Labour) and Eric Hardman (Trinity), won all of their games in the Youth division and were Lancashire and Cheshire champions.

Promising youngsters, Keith Williams and Graeme Black were continuing to improve, and they both represented England Schools' Juniors against Scotland, winning all their matches.

In the same year, after a wait of 26 years, the Liverpool Ladies team of Williams, Kirkman, Manning, with reserves Janet Rumjahn and Julie Black, finally became Lancashire Champions.

In 1975, city rankings for County matches were:

Men -	1.	J. McNee
	2.	J. Marshall
	3.	P. Tsang
	4.	K. Williams
Ladies -	1.	B. Williams
	2.	B. Kirkman
	3.	J. Black
	4.	J. Turner
Junior Boys -	1.	C. Strettle
	2.	A. O'Connor
	3.	G. Black

1975 saw the dominance of the English Electric club come to an end, with the Liverpool Y.M.C.A. team of Paul Tsang, George Smith, Peter Turtle, and Ted Manduluf, winning the championship. Y.M.'s strength was confirmed the next season when they were club champions of divisions 1, 2 and 3B, Readman and Hyde Cup winners and runners up in the Rumjahn Cup. They were further strengthened by the transfer of Marshall and McNee from Rafters.

had an average of 85.49%, and Clive Strettle, English Electric, 85.4%.

In 1976 Tony O'Connor won the Lancashire and Cheshire Closed Junior Singles title and the Cheshire Junior Open title, while Sue Alexander was the Lancashire & Cheshire Ladies champion.

In 1977, brilliant 15 year old, Mark Thomas, the Welsh number one, was joined by country man Greg Powell in the Wavertree Labour 1st team. Powell left after a short spell, being replaced by Dave Roberts, who with team-mates, Wayne Percival, Mark Thomas, Roy Smith and Mike Tierney, established themselves at the top of Division one for the last three seasons of the decade. In 1979, this team achieved the League and Cup double averaging 8 1/2 sets per match.

### STARS OF THE 80'S

Liverpool Y.M.C.A. were pressing hard on their heels, however and the following



Bootle Sports Centre - Readman Cup winners, 1981. Left to right - Tony O'Connor, Ricky Brown, Paul Hutchings and Lawrence Kenright

The season 1976 / 77 saw the best 1st division averages as :

1. J. Marshall	100%
2. J. McNee	89.6%
3. P. Turtle	85.4%
4. G. Smith	86.3%
5. P. Lee	81.8%

all members of Liverpool Y.M.C.A.

Roy Smith, in his 20th season in the league, and described as the mainstay of the Wavertree Labour team, with 'consistent flat hitting from defence',

season, the team of John Marshall, Malcolm Pu, Peter Turtle and Peter Lee, regained the title, John Marshall topping the averages with 97.5 %.

Liverpool Men's 1st team of Marshall, Keith Williams, Wayne Percival, Pu and Thomson were battling at the time in the Lancashire and Cheshire League, as were Ladies, S. Alexander, L. Fennah, B. Kirkman, L. Hardman with 16 year old H. Stirrup making her debut.

A team making a name for itself in the

1981/82 season were Bootle, recently promoted from Div. 2 and comprising of up and coming players, Paul Hutchings John Rankin, Ricky Brown, Tony O'Connor and Lawrence Kenright. Although not doing enough to win the title, the Bootle side made a real impact and caused a major shock when they defeated reigning champions, Liverpool Y.M.C.A. 10 - 0.

It was the resurgent Rafter's side that won the title that year with Trevor Manning, Eric Hardman, Alan Timewell, P. Ashcroft and M. Mercer proving too strong for the rest.

Unlike the two previous decades, no one player or club dominated proceedings in the 80's. Seven different players won the Men's Singles Closed title, eight different Ladies won the Ladies title and six different clubs won the 1st division title.

Despite the best efforts of League Coaching Secretary, Bill Harris along with John O'Sullivan and Chris Ford, who continued the junior coaching at the Colonsay club, only Andrew Eden was making an impact, ranked number 10 England junior.

The exciting juniors from the 1970's were now reaching their full potential and towards the end of the decade Liverpool City teams finally hit the honours trail. In 1987 and 1989 the Ladies team became Champions of Lancashire and Cheshire. 1988 / 89 was the most successful season ever for the league with the Men and Ladies becoming Champions of Lancashire and Cheshire, and the league also winning the Norman Cooke Memorial Trophy.

### STARS OF THE 90'S

1990 saw Keith Williams take the fifth of his seven Men's Singles 'Closed' titles, becoming the only player in League history to claim title wins in three different decades. The same year saw Welsh number one, Justine Thomas, winning the third of her Ladies titles.

Kevin Dolder was making a name for himself in 1992, winning the Restricted Singles title, and in 1992 and 1993, while ranked number 10 English Junior, taking the Junior crown. Kevin's early promise came to fruition in 1994, when aged 15 years, he won the first of his three Men's Singles titles.

Wavertree Labour had resumed their dominance, winning the 1st Division for



Tony O'Connor, top Junior of the 1970's with Keith Williams, circa 1985.

In the season 1993/94, C.A.D.W.A. Sports and Social Club was celebrating its 50th birthday and Kevin Dolder, Natasha Williams and Phil Musgrove, with a good sense of timing won the club's first championship. Colonsay and C.A.D.W.A. then shared the Readman Cup and the League Championship for the next three seasons.

Liverpool City teams continued their latter day success story, the Ladies claiming their fourth successive championship in 1992, and the Norman Cooke Trophy coming to Liverpool in 1990 for the second time.

The trophy came to Liverpool on three more occasions, in successive seasons, 1994, 1995, with Keith Williams, Kevin



Bernie Wentworth and Rob Bevan, the mainstay of Wavertree Labour's / Wavertree St. Mary's first team in the 1990's.

three years in succession, 1990-1992. The team had been strengthened by Bernie Wentworth.

A strong Electric Supply squad of Peter Flint, Terry Turner, Rob Bevan, Lawrence Kenwright, Les Molyneux, Ken Connor and Malcolm McEvoy, couldn't match Wavertree in the league but took the Readman Cup in 1991 and 1992.

Dolder, Stuart Richards and Paula French starring, and in 1996 with the only change being that Brenda Buoey replaced Paula.

Keith Williams and Stuart Richards have five Norman Cooke winners medals to their name, Kevin Dolder has three, Justine Thomas has two, and Lawrence Kenwright, Chris Ford, Natasha Williams, Paula French and Brenda Buoey have one each.



John Rankin and Paul Hutchings, circa, 1986

Liverpool continued their dominance in Lancashire and Cheshire between 1995 and 1998. Ladies, Brenda Buoey, Justine Thomas, Paula French and Kathy Hayden were champions on three occasions. Brenda has 10 Championship medals, the latest 22 years after her first, which coincided with Don Davies first season as League Match Secretary.

Liverpool Men's team were not to be outdone and they also made it 'three in a row' taking the 1st Division title in 1996/97/98. Liverpool continued their latter day success story in 1996/97, once again taking the treble of Mens 1st division and Ladies division in the Lancashire and Cheshire League and retaining the Norman Cooke Memorial Trophy. In 1997 both Mens and Ladies retained the divisional titles notching up an amazing treble of consecutive titles.

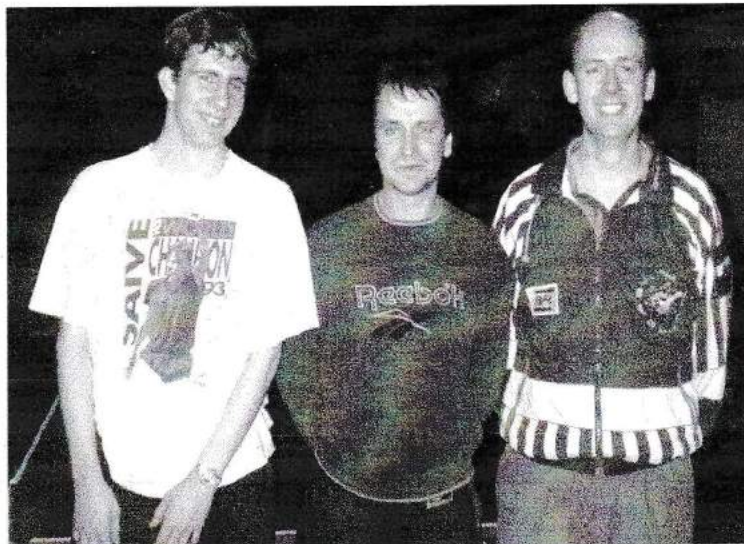
The ladies achievements have been remarkable with nine championships in twelve years while the Men have five 1st Division titles to their credit since 1988.

The Men's team were strengthened by 12 year old, Adam Robertson, a Welsh International. Playing in his first season Adam created quite a storm, with many excellent victories. He became the youngest ever player to be selected for a World Championships, when he competed in Manchester in 1997.

Adam continued to improve and in December, 1998, aged 14 years, he became the youngest player to win a senior Grand prix Open tournament when he won the Men's Singles title at the Western Open at Bath.



Adam in action at the Eastern Open.



Liverpool Men's Team, Lancashire & Cheshire League Champions, 1996/97.  
Kevin Dolder, Keith Williams and Stuart Richards



Adam Robertson, aged 13 yrs with mum and dad, Barry and Gaynor.



Adam Robertson, non playing captain, Don Davies and Kevin Dolder, who along with Keith Williams were Lancashire & Cheshire Champions, 1998



Liverpool Men's Team, Lancashire and Cheshire Champions, 1989.  
Left to right - Keith Williams, Malcolm McEvoy and Stuart Richards



Norman Cook Memorial Trophy Winners, 1996/97, Keith Williams, Brenda Buoe, non playing captain, Don Davies, Stuart Richards and Kevin Dolder, pictured after the 5 sets to 0 defeat of Wirral, bringing the trophy to Liverpool for a fifth time.



## THE LIVERPOOL CLOSED CHAMPIONSHIPS.

The first Liverpool Closed Championships were held at the conclusion of the very first season at the Y.M.C.A., Foley Street. There was just one event, the Men's Singles which attracted just 31 entrants.

The first Champion was J.R. Bather, who beat his clubmate, H. Turner in the final. Bather belonged to the wooden bat brigade and was attired in typical manner with spats, ordinary shoes and except for really difficult matches he played with his coat on. He was described as 'a steady player who played a game much more closely allied to 'ping pong' than the modern game. One who kept the ball low and whose great speciality was angled shots which won him countless points'.

There is no evidence of the tournament being held in 1928 but in 1929, the Men's title, along with the recently presented 'Montague Burton Challenge Cup', became the property of Don Foulis, who held on to the crown for the next four years.

England Swaythling cup player, Don, then gave way to another English international, Ken Hyde, but he bounced back in 1934 to claim his fifth and last Men's crown.

Freddy Bamford, a Welsh International and a respected Lawn Tennis coach, triumphed in 1935 and 1936 before the Hyde Brothers, Eric and Ken, took over in 1937 and 1938 respectively.

Amazingly, only J.R. Bather wasn't an international and the Rumjahn brothers Ted and Ronnie kept up the international tradition after the war.



1956/57 Men's Singles winner at the 'Closed', Ted Rumjahn, being presented with the Montague Burton Cup by his son, Leslie.

The pair enjoyed a remarkable run of success, winning the title from 1945 to 1952, with Ted winning his third and last in 1957, while Ron amassed a total of seven and also won it twice during a depleted war time competition.

Other post war winners includes, Arthur Taylor in 1956, 58, 59, 60, England international Ralph Gunnion with three, and Gordon Birch in 1967 and 68. John McNee, a Swaythling cup player for Scotland won in 1974 and 75, Wayne Percival with three, and Keith Williams, the only player to claim the title in three different decades, with six.

Miss Annie Pollitt, in 1930 and 31, was the first name on the Ladies cup, followed by Joyce Bartholomew in 1932. England's Norah Norrish then won four in a row.

Eileen Mansell's six titles may never be equalled. Moya Jones was the holder in 1958, 60 and 61, and Judy Crafter won it on four occasions, in 1962, 64, 66 and 67.

Other winners were, Barbara Cain in 1965, 68 and 69, Barbara Kirkman in 1975 and 76, Sue Alexander in 1977 and 78, L. Fennah in 1979 and 81 and Brenda Buoey on four occasions, including a hat-trick between 1972-74.

Paula French won her first title in 1985, waiting a long ten years before taking the title for a second time. Welsh internationals, Justine Thomas had a hat trick of victories in 1988, 89 and 91, and Natasha Williams in 1994.

The very early closed championships were played at venues such as Picton Hall with the finals at The Philharmonic Hall, and were well supported with huge crowds paying to watch the wealth of local talent. In 1934, for example, there was a record 310 entries for the 9th Annual Closed Championships that were played at Harold House in Chatam Street.

From 1968 to 1977 New Heys School had played hosts to the Closed, during the time that Organiser Brian Leeson was a



Keith Williams pictured with the Montague Burton Challenge Cup after his first Singles title at the 'Closed' in 1977

teacher there. The next eighteen years saw the competition being held at Kirkby Sports Centre, before returning to Everton Park Sports Centre in 1995.

The first winner at Kirkby was Keith Williams, who beat Roy Smith, the runner up in the 1963 final, against Wally Allanson. Sue Alexander won the second of her three ladies titles, beating Julie Black in the final.

In 1985, an improved atmosphere was created in the Police Club Finals. The first Men's winner at Fairfield was Keith Williams, who beat Paul Hutchings, after they had both disposed of the previous two finalists in the semis.



Gordon Birch being presented with the Montague Burton Challenge Cup, by League Chairman Arthur Upton, after his victory in 1967



Ron Jones being presented with the Montague Burton Challenge Cup, by League Chairman Arthur Upton, after his victory in 1966



Bernard Hand, being presented with the Montague Burton Cup by League President, Mr Bartholomew, after his Men's Singles victory in 1953. League Secretary, Billie Stamp is also pictured



Arthur Taylor, receiving the Montague Burton Cup from League President, Mr Bartholomew, 1956, the first of four Men's Singles titles at the Closed.

Paula French was the first Lady winner, defeating Colonsay clubmate, Barbara Kirkman. Two years later, in an amazing upset, Mabel Neary beat the favourite and top seed, Brenda Buoe, in the final. Brenda also lost the next two finals, both to Welsh number one, Justine Thomas.

In 1990, after a gap of 14 years, Barbara Kirkman returned to beat Julie Prince, while in 1993 Natasha Williams defeated Paula French. The 1994 Ladies Event was abandoned due to insufficient entries, but in 1995, Paula French won her second title, defeating Mabel Neary, the winner in 1970, with Paula achieving a treble of titles in 1997.

A sensational Men's competition in 1994, saw 15 year old Kevin Dolder, become the youngest Men's winner since, 14 year old, Mark Thomas's triumph in 1978, defeating Malcolm McEvoy in the final. Kevin continued his early promise, taking the title in 1995, 1997 and 1998. Separating those two victories, however, was Keith Williams, who in 1996 took the Singles Crown for a record seventh time, those titles being spread over twenty years and spanning three decades.



Ken Hyde and Norrah Norrish, pictured with the Montague Burton Cup and the S.W. Richardson Cup after their victories in the Liverpool Closed Tournament, in 1932.



Kevin Dolder being presented with the Montague Burton Cup by sponsor Bill Fawley, 1998

Brian Leeson first took charge of the Closed in April 1962, at Dingle Vale School, when among those in the draw were Roy Smith, Jack Davidson, John Higham, Eric Wood, Jim Clewett and Mabel Neary, all of whom are still playing today.

The referee for the 1961 Closed was Ray Hebson, and Ray was still performing duties at the 1998 tournament.

In 1998, Brian Leeson retired as Tournament Secretary after refereeing the Closed for a staggering 36 years.



Chairman, Arthur Upton, presents Judy Crafter with her prize after her third Ladies Singles title in the 'Closed', 1966.



This must be one for the scrapbook! Taken at the 1996 Closed Finals' night, pictured are six Liverpool Ladies Champions, spanning over five decades. From left to right : Mabel Neary, Barbara Kirkman, Brenda Buoey, Justine Thomas, Paula French and Eileen Mansell.

Eileen won her first title in 1946, and followed this up with with five more successes, the last being in 1955. Barbara was champion in successive years in 1975 and 76 and in 1990, while Brenda was four times winner in 1972, 73, 74 and 83. Mabel won twice in 1970 and 1987. Welsh international Justine won the title three times in 1988, 89 and 91, while Paula won it in 1985, 1995 and 1997.



Welsh international, Fred Bamford, receiving the Montague Burton Challenge Cup, from League President, Mr C.E. Bartholomew, after his victory over Don Foulis (middle), in season 1934 / 35.



George Smith and Roy Jones, runners up in the 'Closed' Men's doubles on four occasions although George did eventually win the title with partner, B. Parkinson, in 1970 . Chairman, Arthur Upton is presenting the prizes.

PAST AND PRESENT STARS OF THE  
LIVERPOOL CLOSED TOURNAMENT



Joyce Bartholomew



Fred Bamford



Ted Rumjahn



Peter Rumjahn



Norrah Norrish



Bernard Hand



Eileen Mansell



Barbara Cain



Judy Crafter



Gordon Birch, (with Arthur  
Upton in the background)



Arthur Taylor



Ron Jones



Peter D'Arcy



Wally Allanson



Paula French



Barbara Kirkman



Brenda Buocy



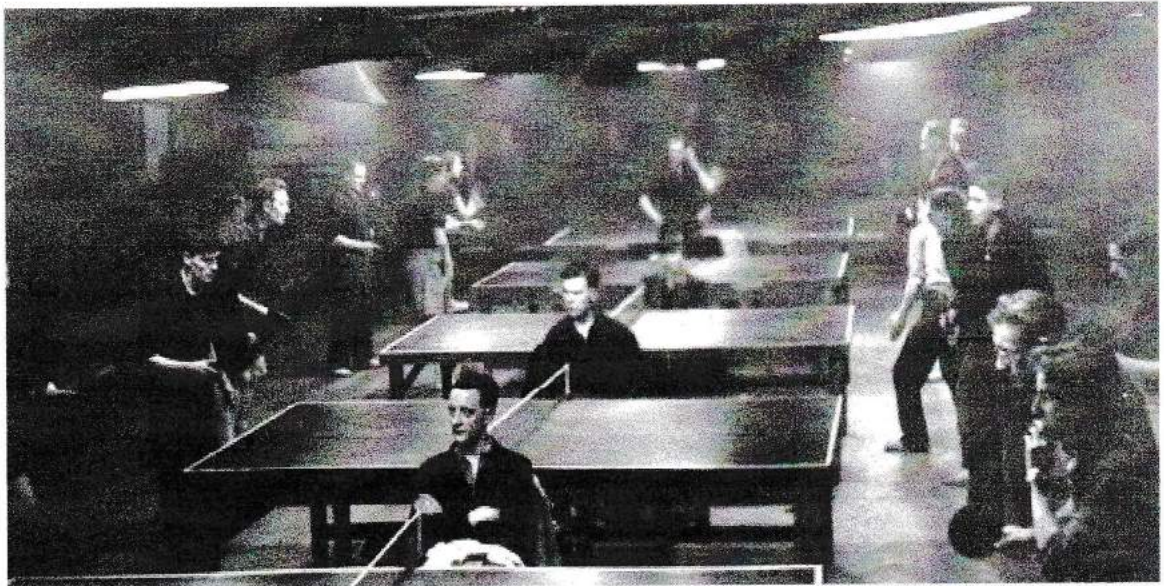
Justine Thomas



Keith Williams



Kevin Dolder



Dingle Vale School, scene of the 1954 Liverpool Closed Tournament preliminary rounds.



Vic Chesham, four times winner of the Veterans' title at the 'Closed' in the 1960's.



Barabar Cain, Ladies Singles winner in 1965, 1968 and 1969.



The Referee's table at the Liverpool Closed Tournament, Kirkby Sports Centre, circa 1981 - Arthur Upton, Ken Black, Ken Armson and Brian Leeson.