

On Wednesday 16th April 1924 at the Leeds Young Peoples Institute a meeting was held to form the Yorkshire Table Tennis Association.

In attendance were Captain TP Marshall (Hull), A James (Grimsby), BL (Bernard) Hookins (Pontefract) and JH (Herbert) Johnson (Whitby).

Three weeks later a 2nd meeting, with representatives from Bradford, Leeds and Ossett also attending, the name was changed to the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Counties Table Tennis Association; the first officials were President: Captain TP Marshall, Secretary: CG Craven, Treasurer and Assistant Secretary: BL Hookins, and committee members: M Barker, W Hewitt, A James, JH Johnson.

In 1928 the name reverted to the Yorkshire Table Tennis Association.

Bernard Hookins was a bank manager at Pontefract with the Yorkshire Penny Bank, moving to Whitby with the bank in 1931 and making a major contribution to Whitby as a leading centre of table tennis during the 1930s. He captained the England men's team in the Swaythling Cup competition at the 1930 World Championships in Berlin.

JH Johnson was a successful player winning the Yorkshire Closed men's singles title, leading the Whitby TT Club to the national team final v London at Holborn in 1925 (London won 17-8) and representing Yorkshire v Hungary at Pontefract in 1928 (Hungary won 16-0).

William (Bill) Hewitt from Bradford was Yorkshire's most successful pre-war player and represented England in 1926 and 1928.

Yorkshire was the first county association to be formed, held the first county closed tournament, staged the first county match and produced the first printed county magazine.

The first ever county match was played at Bradford in January 1929. Yorkshire beat Lancashire 15-10 (five a side) and among the players in opposition were Bernard Hookins and LE (Leslie) Forrest – two men who stand among the giants in Yorkshire table tennis history.

From 1947 to 1967 county 1st team matches were staged at Bradford Mechanics Institute, probably the most well-known of table tennis venues outside London and Brighton.

HN Smith (the nephew of the founder of the famous Smith & Nephew company which began in Hull) was president and later patron of the association, financially supporting Kathleen Best when she was selected for the 1952 World Championships in Bombay (Mumbai); MD (Maurice) Shaffner OBE was our president for 52 years and also had a prominent legal career as a prosecuting solicitor; Austin Harrison, a native of Leeds, was a Scarborough hotelier, league player, proposer for introducing junior and other age groups for competitions, who became the English Table Tennis Association president in 1967; Baroness Susan Masham, the longest serving female member of the House of Lords, a disability campaigner and medal winning Paralympian in 1960, 1964 and 1968, was our association patron from 1976 to her death in 2023.

Yorkshire were founder members of the present national county championships in 1947 and won the premier division in 1967, 1973, 1974, on each occasion led by our number 1 player Denis Neale, with further successes in 1981, 1998, 2001 and 2002. Our young players have won the junior premier division title on 16 occasions, a record, since its inception in 1972.

In 1973 our 4 county teams won their divisional titles and president Maurice Shaffner challenged our players to repeat this feat in our Golden Jubilee year which they duly did.

From Greta Vasey in 1926 followed by Brian Kennedy, Kathleen Best, Denis Neale (our most decorated of champions), Alan Hydes, Melody Ludi, Katherine Goodall, Mary Fuller to Shayan Siraj in 2022 and Jasmin Wong in 2023 our players have won English national titles and many other junior, cadet and veteran national titles have been secured by Yorkshire players.