



YORKSHIRE BOWLING ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the 14th Annual General Meeting of Yorkshire Bowling Association held at New Earswick Indoor Bowling Club at 10.30am Sunday 19th November 2023

1. Welcome:

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees.

2. Obituaries:

Name

Club

3. Apologies & Registration of Clubs:

Name

Club

John Selley
Cressida Fordy
Graham Stephenson
Lee Coutts
Angela Hollingsworth
Alwyn Baron

Borough Park
Northallerton
Walkington
Harrogate
Harrogate
Driffield Rec

Registration of Clubs:

Name

Club

Pat O'Shea
Pauline Beecroft
Mervyn Beecroft
Tina Robinson
Janet Farnsworth
Stewart Clark
Jon Davies
Dick Osguthorpe
Dave Badby
Steve Wilson
Stephen Atkinson
Brenda Williams
Margaret Redhead
Ann Russell
Barry Wilton-Middlemass
Vivien Wilton-Middlemass
David Masterman
Stuart Forrest
Bill Pearson
Jill Hall

Brotton
Bishop Monkton
Bishop Monkton
Copmanthorpe
Driffield Recreation
Driffield Recreation
Dunnington
Dunnington
Dunnington
Dunnington
Dunnington
Harrogate
Helmsley
Helmsley
Helmsley
Helmsley
Marske
Middlesbrough
Middlesbrough
North Duffield

Bernard Eland	Northallerton
Brian Wilkes	Northallerton
Trevor Downey	Sessay
Pat Bee	Sessay
Lesley Dearlove	Thirsk Athletic
Alan Smith	Thirsk Athletic
Judith Smith	Thirsk Athletic
Malcolm Hartley	Thirsk Athletic
Helen Walker	Thirsk Athletic
David Dearlove	Thirsk Athletic
Marcia Smurthwaite	Thirsk Athletic
Margaret Watson	Swinton
Chris Atkinson	Swinton
Helen Andrews	Tockwith
Andy Humphreys	York RB&SC
Phil Parsons	York RB&SC
Mal Britton	York RB&SC
Lynn Britton	York RB&SC
Mick O'Donnell	York RB&SC

4. Minutes of last meeting held on 27th November 2022:

The minutes, having already been circulated to the clubs, were accepted as accurate following Steve Atkinson's proposal and Alan Smith's seconding with acknowledgement of the accuracy challenges made by Lesley Dearlove. The meeting agreed that should wording be forwarded to the YBA Administrator to amend the 2022 AGM minutes this wording should be included in the adopted minutes.

5. YBA Annual Reports 2023

a. Finance – Stuart Forrest

i. Financial recommendations for 2024

The recent death of the YBA Treasurer had resulted in the financial report for the AGM being unavailable. It was proposed that the financial positions on all YBA financial matters e.g. honorariums, expenses, competition entry fees; all should stay unaltered for 2024. A financial report will be circulated to YBA clubs in due course.

ii. Affiliation fees 2024/25 – YBA to supplement affiliated clubs at £2 per member in 2024 and £1 per member in 2025 to ease the BE affiliation increase of £2 per member to take effect from 1/5/24

b. Patrons – Stewart Clarke

i. Stewart outlined the Patrons' activities since the last meeting offering 'thanks' to all Patrons who helped make the matches such a success. Report attached.

c. Ladies' Sub-Committee - Vivien Wilton-Middlemass Report attached.

d. Men's Sub-Committee – Andy Humphreys

i. This report had been pre circulated to clubs. Andy offered his 'thanks' to all who had contributed to the smooth running of the section during 2023. He also stated that the section had a good level of volunteers to take the Men's Section forward in 2024. Report attached.

e. Youth Development - Phil Parsons/Cressida Fordy

- i. Phil highlighted the importance of the youth development being taken forward on a mixed basis. The YBA youth teams are going through a period of re-building but managed to finish runners up in the Northern Counties championships.
- f. **Administrator's – Andy Humphreys**
 - i. This report had been pre circulated to clubs. Andy emphasised the critical importance of removing barriers to participation so that bowls could grow in Yorkshire. Whilst some of these barriers were local and within the influence of clubs a few important ones were at a County level and were symbolically important to signal change. Unable to deliver the changes Andy saw necessary for the YBA he has decided to step down from the role of YBA Administrator but wished his successor every good fortune. Report attached.

6. YBA Constitution Alterations – Stuart Forrest

- a. **Regulation 14 – 'Qualification for County Badge'**; a proposed alteration to move from a points based system to a "County Playing Appearance Recognition". Historically a points system has been used to qualify county level players to reach a points target which enabled them to be awarded a county badge. This points system awarded points differently depending on which team you played in. This proposal, which affects the Men's Section ONLY, basically says that irrespective of the team you play for, if you represent Yorkshire in the game of bowls then you are of equal value in your journey towards whatever the recognition of the day is. Following some clarification questioning this proposal was formerly supported by Alan Smith and seconded by Phil Parsons and passed by the meeting.
- b. **Regulation 6.4-6.6 - 'Composition of the Men's Sub-Committee'**; following a review of the current Men's Sub-Committee structure, which was discussed and approved at the Men's Sub-Committee in Oct 2023, it is proposed that some re-arranging of roles takes place so that the focus is on managing bowling and the admin is managed within a smaller group to achieve the minimum of bureaucracy. Discussions were had regarding the relationship between the Men's Sub-Committee and Bowls England (BE) and the role of a Safeguarding Officer (SO) in the new structure. The BE relationship with the section was clarified as being no more than a recognition that BE had a wide communications aim and the Men's Section needed to respond where appropriate. The SO issue moved into a wider debate which the meeting agreed should be considered by the new YBA Executive (Action – YBA Administrator to take forward). This proposal was formerly supported by Alan Smith and seconded by Steve Atkinson and passed by the meeting.
- c. **Regulation 5.2 - 'The Executive Officers of the YBA shall be the...Honorary Administrator...who shall be elected at each Annual General Meeting'**; There are three Executive Officer posts appointed annually at the AGM, the Administrator is one of those. The YBA Ladies Sub-Committee have proposed '*To remove the position of Honorary Administrator from the YBA Executive Committee*'. Vivien Wilton-Middlemass introduced this proposition as it had come from the YBA Ladies Sub-Committee. Having outlined just how the Ladies Sub-Committee had seen the role as unnecessary and how the Ladies had been concerned at proposals from the current YBA Administrator to make changes to the Presidential system discussions followed. Trevor Downey raising issues on YBA communications stated that he "...only ever heard from the Administrator". Steve Atkinson stated that clubs would lose a central point of contact within the Association without an Administrator. Stuart Forrest outlined the historical position of this role as one of only three that BE required the County to have upon affiliation 14 years ago. Other contributions were made before the motion was

put to the meeting resulting in 14 votes being cast in favour, falling well short of the two thirds majority required to pass a motion at the AGM (26 votes were required with 39 delegates present). There were suggestions from the meeting during this discussion that there should be greater clarity on the role of the Administrator and that this role should not hold another office within the YBA. These points are to be considered by the new YBA Executive (Action – YBA Administrator)

- d. **Regulation 5.2 - 'The Executive Officers of the YBA shall be the...Chairman...who shall be elected at each Annual General Meeting'**; there are three Executive Officer posts appointed annually at the AGM, the Chair is one of those. Following an internally commissioned working group report, authored by two YBA Executive members, a recommendation to remove the role of Chairman from the YBA Executive Committee was made. The general background to this proposal had been covered during the discussions at 6d above. The authors of the report that gave rise to this proposition, Vivien Wilton-Middlemass and Alan Smith agreed that with the context already set then the motion should be open for the meeting to discuss. After a short discussion the proposition was formerly placed before the meeting by Vivien Wilton-Middlemass and seconded by Alan Smith. There were 3 votes in favour of the motion, falling well short of the two thirds majority required to pass a motion at the AGM (26 votes were required with 39 delegates present).

7. Election of Officers (2023/24) –

a. County Administrator - vacant

- i. No nominations had been received for this role ahead of the AGM. However, at the meeting Lesley Dearlove stated that she would take the role on and was duly appointed.

b. County Treasurer - vacant – this role remains vacant with temporary arrangements in place

- i. **Appointment of accounts verifier** – John Butler has acted as accounts verifier for a number of years and has now decided to stand down. The YBA offered their 'thanks' to John for his service. A new verifier will be required.

c. Hon. Executive Committee Chair - Stuart Forrest (Middlesbrough BC)

- i. Stuart was appointed unopposed

8. Bowls England Council Members -

a. Vivien Wilton-Middlemass (Helmsley BC) – appointed unopposed

b. Stephen Atkinson (Dunnington BC) – nominated at the AGM

9. Presidential Handover – Vivien Wilton-Middlemass – over saw the induction of the Ladies Section President, Pauline Beecroft and the Vice President, Helen Walker for 2024.

10. Meeting close - Meeting closed 12.20pm

PATRONS' REPORT 2023

I would like to start by saying my grateful thanks to all patrons who usually make my life in sorting teams reasonably easy. Most of the time we manage to fulfil the fixtures although three of the outdoor fixtures had to be cancelled, hopefully we will be able to play the fixtures next season.

As far as the season was concerned we played 8 Indoor games including Ryedale who we haven't played against since 2018. As usual we don't always do to well against the indoor teams as their players are so much better used to their own clubs pace and conditions than we are. However we did manage to win 3 of the games losing the remaining 5.

It was a little better Outdoors. Out of the 14 matches we should have played, 3 were cancelled two because of lack of players on the Clubs part and one because of lack of players on Patron's side. Of the remaining 11 we won 4, lost 6 and drew the other one.

One of the games we lost was against Friends of English Bowling who were here in Yorkshire on a mini tour, so it was nice to be able to play against a team like that.

The season has sadly seen us lose some regular players, who are greatly missed, but on the bright side it has also seen us recruit another 8 members

The Indoor season starts again next Sunday with our match against New Earswick, and another 7 Indoor matches arranged.

I have already started on Outdoor fixtures which I hope to publish just after Christmas.

It is now ten years since I first took over the job of County Patrons Secretary from Alan Harrison, my grateful thanks to all Patrons who help to make my job reasonably easy to deal with.

Please continue to support us.

Stewart Clark (Patrons Secretary)

YBA Ladies Section Report to AGM NOV 2023

Our YBA Ladies Section has had a good season in 2023 overall.

The Northern Counties Northern Trophy team came second, beating Durham and Northumbria and losing by just ½ a point to Cumbria, in the final stage. Our Northern Counties Stella team won the trophy this year against Cumbria, Durham and Northumbria. A first for quite some time.

We also had good results in other national competitions with Sue Allen coming second in the senior singles at Leamington. Her award will be presented next week at the BE County Awards night in Coventry where she will be accompanied by a number of her Yorkshire supporters.

The YBA Lady President's 5 day tour to Derbyshire was well attended, with 29 ladies taking part.

Our Yorkshire ladies were well received at all 4 clubs that hosted the games and we were asked to return again, partly because of our bowling prowess and partly I'm sure to repeat our performance in the Karaoke and conga.

A night with the Everly brothers in Nottingham was also a particular highlight of the tour.

The ladies' annual luncheon and Trophy awards afternoon held at the York Pavilion Hotel in October was also a success with around 70 lady bowlers from our county attending.

The season finished much as it started in the pouring rain with a lovely meal hosted by President Margaret's club Helmsley.

We would like to thank Margaret for a wonderful year as our President and hope that she too has found the experience enjoyable.

Draft for approval at AGM

YBA Men's Secretary Report 2023

Inter County

The 2022 Men's Inter County season was always going to be difficult to follow with the title of national Balcomb Trophy Runners Up and Middleton Cup semi finalists to improve upon. However, success is not always best measured by silverware and whilst our Middleton Cup and Balcomb Trophy campaigns both fell short of appearances at the National Finals this year there were some 'good news' stories that promise well for the future.

A key part of the Men's Inter County intent, under the direction of the previous Team Manager Mark Walton, had been to develop youth and those who may have come to the game a little later in life but who have an ambition to compete on the county bowling stage. This season saw a number of players come through from the Alsop squad who then performed well in the Middleton Cup squad. This builds on those who started this journey in previous years and provides the new Team Manager, Sam Winter, with an excellent base from which to drive forward.

Whilst age is not everything in bowls, it was promising to see that almost all of the bowlers in the Middleton and Balcomb squad were of a 'working age'. Many (@ 25%) still qualifying for our youth teams. Our willingness to develop players may have led to a slight imbalance of experience in some of the games, which showed in the results. However, the difference in playing standards was marginal and we will have gained significant experience in the squad this year. Importantly the team selection, being based upon performance and the potential in players, ensured that a route into these teams was visible for those who aspired to pull on that Yorkshire shirt. No 'closed shop' team selection here!!

Sam Winter will have his own style of leadership to bring to the role of Team Manager next season, but I know he shares the same core passion that Mark Walton, as outgoing Team Manager has, which is the desire to see Yorkshire as a winning team, with players who have that passion to play well for themselves, their team mates and for the county.

Bring on next season!!

Mention must also be made of the critical role of the Alsop squad and of Graham Stephenson who leads this team. The Alsop has been a competition which Yorkshire has used for many purposes over the years. It is always good to aim to win the Alsop but its role in developing players for consideration for the Middleton squad has been vital for the Yorkshire Inter County squad as a whole. Often with around 33% of squad players being U25 and many in the early years of their bowling experience the Alsop squad has been a true development environment for aspiring county players. It also allows for what I would call 'late developers'; these players may have been around the game for a few years but then find their desire and competence to compete. Several, no names, have truly enhanced the Middleton squad in recent years and this tangible example of 'selection based on performance' is crucial to creating a healthy selection culture; if you are good enough you will be selected. This dynamic approach to team selection is another reason why in the YBA Men's Inter County approach is that players are not selected until nearer the play date. In that way the Team Manager can see who is in form and what the best mix for any team looks like.

In addition to players developing through the Alsop for the Middleton squad, there are many Alsop 'stalwarts'; that's not a derogatory term but one that should be respected. These bowlers just love playing for their county, they have that Yorkshire pride that actually wins matches!

Our youth team has always been a wonderful environment of fun and development. The spirit of this team owes a huge vote of 'thanks' to the ever present Youth Team Manager, Phil Parsons; the bowler who never grew up!! Phil has been involved in the county youth squad for many years and his enthusiasm for the game

is infectious. Phil works with Cressida Fordy, whose involvement is invaluable, in a combined youth development team environment. Wherever possible our youth players compete together but where gender specific competitions take place sadly there are too few young women to field a team for events such as the BE Amy Rose. Let's hope that changes in the future.

Competitions

Many enjoy the varied nature of bowling within the BE and YBA competitions that take place each season. Organising these competitions doesn't happen on its own and I'd like to thank those zone competition secretaries who collate the entrants, arrange for the draws to take place and keep track of competition results through to the Men's County Finals Day. In addition to the Zone Competition Secretaries there are individuals who run specific competitions and again my thanks goes to them. The future arrangements for administering men's competitions is changing as the administration becomes more centralised. For those Zone Competition Secretaries who are standing down, I would like to thank them for their long service to the county in these roles.

The joy of enjoying a 'good run' in competitions can result in that YBA Finals Day appearance and for some, qualification to the BE National Finals at Leamington. For those who experienced Leamington for the first time this year, I hope you really enjoyed the big stage! For those returning, congratulations; you don't need me to tell you how special that experience is and just how it drives you to 'go again' next season. The number of qualifiers we have at Leamington is directly linked to the number of BE competition entries we put in, so make sure you enter again and encourage others to 'give it a go', who knows you may enjoy a 'good run' next season.

The Marshall Shield returned to our competition schedule in 2023 and that was good to see. Hopefully it will continue to be that 'special club competition' we have come to love over many years. My thanks go to John Selley for organising this competition and to Thirsk for hosting the semi/final.

The new mixed YBA Top Club competition took place this season and whilst it may get mentioned elsewhere my thanks go to Helen Walker for organising this and to Smiths Dock for hosting the semi/final. I'm sure all who took part enjoyed the event.

Players of the Year

Matt Mosley from Middlesbrough was awarded the YBA Men's Young Player of the Year, following some tremendous individual and team performances. A few years his senior, Gary Bunce was awarded the YBA Men's Senior Player of the Year, after a range of outstanding performances capped off through winning the YBA Singles Championship and then the Norther Counties Singles Championship.

Going Forward

The YBA Men's Sub-Committee looks forward to the 2024 season with a strong group of volunteers in place to ensure a successful season. The minor changes to its structure will hopefully ensure we stay focussed on the main event – bowls!!

YBA Men's Sub-Committee post holders:

Men's Secretary – Andy Humphreys

Men's Assistant Secretary – Lee Coutts

Men's Safeguarding Officer - TBA

Men's Competition Secretary – Steve Wilson

Men's Assistant Competition Secretary – TBA

Team Manager – Sam Winter

Assistant Team Manager (Alsop) – Graham Stephenson

Youth Development Officer – Phil Parsons

Patrons Secretary – Stewart Clark

Let's keep in touch, remember to sign up to Bowls Yorkshire (Facebook) and the YBA website.

Andy Humphreys

YBA Men's Secretary

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Draft for approval at AGM

YBA Administrator's Annual Review 2023

One of the key roles of the YBA Administrator is to provide a YBA point of contact with Bowls England (BE). Routinely I attend monthly zoom meetings with other County Administrators, the Chief Executive of BE and his team. These meetings enable us to raise concerns and influence the national bowls agenda.

This past year has seen some key BE working groups looking at issues such as affiliation, competitions and governance.

Another key role for the Administrator is to facilitate the intent made 13 years ago, when the YBA was formed, to bring unification or a single approach to bowling and its administration in Yorkshire, wherever possible. In business the driver here would be cost, profit or service enhancement. The YBA goal for unification is not well defined but one outcome, in support of the BE effort to see more people playing our sport, goes under the heading of participation.

So doing things to increase participation or stopping doing things that reduces the chance of people participating. Some of these efforts are made in clubs but supported by BE such as the Big Bowls Weekend, where this national initiative enjoys better than usual coverage from the local media and where marketing material is provided to help clubs advertise their attempts to get more people participating. I know that across the YBA there will be those whose clubs have had great success in converting attendance at the Big Bowls Weekend into members and some who have had no joy at all. Sometimes that's just luck of the draw but sometimes it reflects that some clubs are engaging better with potential bowlers. It may seem an extreme example but I have attended a Big Bowls Weekend event at a Yorkshire club where the club members were playing an organised game on three rinks with a range of woods and shoes left on the farthest rink for *'anyone who comes along'*. Not surprisingly that club saw no success in recruiting new members!

Whilst recruitment is key, so is retention – sadly many who 'give our sport a go', stop and disappear. This is where the hard questions need to be asked; sometimes the uncomfortable questions. Why do these new to the game members leave so quickly?

As usual there are a range of reasons but people's commitment to clubs and activities has changed. Many of us will wish for competitive league bowling to continue and flourish but many new participants look for something different. Barefoot Bowling, which started out in Australia and BE's Bowls Bash are both simple, short format games of bowls that can be learnt and played quickly. These short format games have taken off in Australia and now leagues and competitions attract many players. In this country some clubs are finding themselves with waves of people calling in for a quick game and a couple of drinks on their way home from work. This initiative won't work everywhere but if you don't try, you will never know. This 'bowls light' option is just one indication of the growing trend towards more social bowling. This may not be the preference for all but if we are to attract and retain new bowlers some options other than just league bowling need to be available.

Other steps towards removing 'bowling barriers' still cause problems within some clubs and associations. Removing these barriers can often be as simple as easing the dress code – not everyone wants to have to change into boring grey or crisp whites to play a game of bowls. As mentioned social bowling is on the up and where clubs have accepted that, people can pretty well wear what they like and as for bowls shoes well have you seen how flat trainers soles are these days!

Another 'own goal' is around just when some bowls matches are scheduled to be played. Many counties struggle to engage with younger bowlers who are at school or working. This is particularly true in attracting young women into the game. So it is quite amazing just how many counties pitch their ladies inter county

games on a weekday, during the day, obviously excluding people in full time education and most who work – a barrier to participation that could be avoided!

In my role as County Administrator I have attempted to eradicate as many barriers to participation as possible. Some of these are symbolic but these symbols send strong messages to people thinking of playing our sport or who are new to the game. At a local level many clubs play in open leagues with men and women routinely playing in mixed teams and always have done. They compete in open competitions often on a weekly basis. Yet at a County level this open style of participation is rare if not non-existent. Some of this is down to the BE competition structure and the YBA cannot be held to account for that, but some things are within the YBA remit. One such example would be the County Finals Days, held separately for women and men. The proposition to merge these two finals days into a joint finals weekend was rejected within the YBA Executive.

Stepping down after two years in the role I do so with many regrets. The YBA Executive of itself has few real deliverables. The main inter county and competition activity is organised within the Men's and Ladies' Sections. So that leaves supporting and helping our affiliated clubs and attracting clubs to join us. Most clubs are very self-sufficient and once within the YBA make few calls on the resources within the YBA Executive. So apart from safely managing the YBA money what do we seek from this Executive? Well in the main it's around the role it was created for; promoting bowls within a safe, unified environment across Yorkshire. The areas that the Executive could make progress on playing and administrative unification were always going to be few in number but they were some of the more visible symbolic areas. I have sought to move to:

- completing the unification process with proposals such as
 - the creation of a single unified Presidential structure, this was rejected
 - moving towards a single unified Finals Weekend, this was rejected
- improving the quality of our playing surfaces, this saw some traction
- offering a consultancy support service to clubs from within the Executive, this saw no traction
- improving communication, green shoots of success with monthly Newsletters and Bowls Yorkshire (Facebook) rising in membership from less than 30 to over 450 users
- the Creation of a Bowling Academy, a few positive nods but no actual tangible support
- listening to the YBA membership through -
 - a countywide short survey, take up was low
 - a series of YBA Open Meetings around the Zones, attendance was embarrassingly low
 - Zone based greens meetings, a low take up but some energy that saw a county greens conference and an advice panel created
- developing an investment based Financial Plan, the plan never arrived and the proposals for re-investment such as buying green keeping equipment for struggling clubs and mileage expenses or subsidised travel for inter county matches were rejected.

The future of the role of the YBA Administrator will be discussed at this year's YBA AGM with the Ladies Sub-Committee proposing the role be removed. All will have their views and YBA delegates will vote on the proposal. As one who has held this role for two years, whilst it has been a frustrating environment in which to hold the office, I know that it is a role that BE and many clubs value. A co-ordinating role and one that in years to come may be allowed to complete the intent that it was created for through the unification of the Men's and Ladies' Yorkshire Bowling Associations into the YBA.

Andy Humphreys YBA Administrator