

STORY OF THE YEAR - BRIMFIELD AND LITTLE HEREFORD BOWLING CLUB

After celebrating its 25th anniversary with a handshake from Her Majesty the Queen and its 30th birthday with a prestigious fixture against the Friends of English Bowling, Brimfield and Little Hereford Bowling Club continues to go from strength to strength.

This high-profile club is at the heart of the local bowls community. Indeed, its sporting and administrative contributions spread far beyond the Herefordshire borders. This season, our ladies competed in every county final – with only 25 lady members, 15 are county players who compete regularly in the Bowls England national championships, reaching the quarter finals this year. We make sure our voice is heard, too, off the green – 50 per cent of the Herefordshire's county ladies committee are members of our club. At a time when some clubs are struggling our membership is growing, exceptional in such a rural area and for such a relatively young club.

One of the stories of our year has been our success in the Tony Allcock Trophy. After triumphing against teams from Herefordshire, Bristol, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, we met the holders Banbury Central, winning that match and the National quarter finals at Royal Leamington Spa before bowing out in the National semi-final, an achievement for our Club to be very proud of.

Newly established links with the Bowls Development Alliance led to a series of Play Bowls days this year (in addition to our annual open day which led to 15 new members joining), with new and current members all able to benefit from expert tuition and find out more about our facilities and what we offer. The County Coach, a BDA level 2 coach and umpire, is one of our members and two of his peers have also recently completed coaching courses.

Brimfield and Little Hereford Bowling club (current membership 65) welcomes bowlers of all ages and abilities and supports the BDA Women Can initiative. It supports gender balance and has embraced the Bowls Disability Mark. Our facilities include disabled access, adapted toilet and parking plus access to equipment that can be made available to suit individual needs. We clearly echo the philosophy of Bowls England that bowls should be open to all regardless of sex, age, disability, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, religion or other beliefs.

Our extraordinary tour to the Windsor area in 2011 still regularly comes up in conversation and in the local and national media. The Queen drove herself down from Windsor Castle as we prepared for our game against the Royal Household in Windsor Great Park. One of our proudest moments as a club came next, Her Royal Highness shaking hands with all players and staying on to watch the opening ends.

In addition to club, county and national competitions, and because of the rural location of our members from a 30-mile radius, we regularly hold social events throughout the winter months and teams compete in local skittles and indoor bowls leagues. During the season we have around 30 friendlies matches, league and twice weekly stroller sessions.

Promoting our Club and encouraging people to 'Play Bowls' is a vital element of the work of the Committee, via regular press articles, our website, with its easy to read Welcome Pack, Facebook and Twitter. Our guide to bowls and what new people can expect as well as including important contact information has been a key element of our recruitment drive this year and for this the Club has been identified as a Sport England case study for the sport of bowls.

Quote from new member:

'I just wanted to email you to thank you for a wonderful year. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting involved, making new friends and even improving with the Bowls! It's a great club and you should be very proud. Thank you, best wishes, Philip' 2019