

## **The Confederation Years (1989 – 2001)**

### ***The Confederation of Northern Croquet Clubs - Extracted by Tony Thomas from Minutes of Meetings***

In 1989, the Croquet Association wished to increase the number of Croquet Federations to cover similar geographical areas as used by the Sports Council. The Federation of Northern Croquet Clubs, already organized in three regions – North East, Yorkshire & Humberside and the North West – agreed with the CA proposal but wished to maintain an oversight and run the Northern League, so renamed their Federation the Confederation of Northern Croquet Clubs. Each region then became a separate Federation so gaining a Sports Council Grant of £250 each but under the administrative umbrella of the Confederation. The North East became known as Croquet North.

A Constitution was agreed in 1990 with the object of liaison between clubs, promoting new clubs, organising the Northern Croquet League and producing an annual leaflet – ‘Croquet in the North’. Clubs involved were: Belsay Hall, Beverley, Bowdon, Bury, Chester, East Riding, Ellesmere, Fylde, Harrogate, Huddersfield, Lancaster, Ormesby Hall, Pendle, Ripon, Southport, Tyneside, York. Whilst the Confederation continued to manage the Northern Croquet League, the individual Federations organized their own leagues and tournaments as appropriate.

The management committee were: WE Lamb (Chairman), J Beech (Secretary/Treasurer) and EJ Davis (League Manager). The first Confederation Northern League was contested by ten clubs and won by Pendle Forest in 1990 who were awarded the Confederation Cup. The prestigious ‘Presidents Cup’ was held at Bowdon, the first time this event had been held outside of Hurlingham – subsequently won by David Maugham of Bowdon. The Great Britain and Ireland Test Team had won the MacRobertson Trophy in New Zealand and included two Confederation players – Colin Irwin (Bowdon) and Mark Saurin (Southport).

In 1991, Crake Valley, Richmond and Upton joined the Confederation. In 1992, John Beech became Secretary, Treasurer and League Manager, whilst Bill Lamb continued as Chairman.

Nine clubs (Tyneside, Bowdon, Ormesby Hall, Pendle, Beverley, Ellesmere, Belsay Hall, East Riding, Southport), contested the Northern Croquet League in 1993, won by Tyneside. Major issue was the correct allocation of bisques in Handicap games, compatible with tournament regulations.

In 1994, John Beech (Pendle) became Chairman, Mike Evans (Beverley) became Secretary, with Alan Sutcliffe (Ellesmere) the League Manager. The 1994 AGM was timed for 1.15pm to avoid clashing with church services. Beverley won the league in 1994. Harrogate club closed but new clubs opened in Oxenhope and Hutton Cranswick.

The World Championships were held at Carden Park in Cheshire. Players handicaps continued to cause problems and it was decided the maximum handicap to be used in league play was 20. Some clubs wished it to be 16 to maintain league standards.

Only seven clubs contested the League in 1995, (Belsay Hall and Southport had withdrawn), which was won again by Beverley. Radio 5 and Radio 4 ran articles on croquet. A new club was established at Brodsworth Hall (near Doncaster). Crake Valley transferred from Croquet North to the North West Federation. Funding to the CA from the Sports Council had now ceased, accordingly the historical funding reasons for setting up the Confederation presents a case for re-combining the northern Federations.

### **The End is Nigh**

The Confederation had a change in Officers for 1996 with Anna Giraud (Huddersfield) becoming Secretary and Julian Tonks (York) the Treasurer. Mike Evans and Alan Sutcliffe continued as Chairman and League Manager respectively. Beverley won the Northern League in 1996 for the third year in succession. Carlisle club closed. The value of the Confederation and its future was now being questioned.

Yet again, Beverley won the league in 1997, now competed by six clubs (Beverley, Bowdon, Ormsby Hall, Tyneside, Pendle, Ellesmere). Ellesmere announced they would be leaving the league. Crake Valley and Belsay Hall established a record for the Guinness Book of Records in a 24 hour match when 372 hoops were scored. Ormsley Hall moved to a new site and were renamed Middlesbrough Croquet Club.

With the demise of regional Sports Council grants, the Croquet Association suggested a merger of the three northern Federations – this was rejected by the Confederation since the three separate Federations were viable and the existing Confederation provided a convenient forum for liaison and managing the long standing Northern League.

Once again, Beverley won the Northern League in 1998, now managed by Derek Buxton (Bowdon). New clubs were established in Auckland Castle, Culcheth, Sheffield and Hornsea. East Riding decided to rejoin the Northern League. International Golf Croquet was played at Ripon. Mike Evans was re-elected Chairman, Anna Giraud as Secretary, Julian Tonks, Treasurer and Derek Buxton, League Manager.

Only ten clubs were represented at the 1999 AGM in November. Pendle won the Confederation League Trophy and Ripon decided to enter the league in 2000. Norton Hall club closed leaving only five clubs in Croquet North, however, other Federations remained strong.

### **Final Blow**

Middlesbrough won the 2000 Northern League. However, Bowdon and Pendle

announced their withdrawal from the Northern League – leaving only five clubs (Beverley, East Riding, Middlesbrough, Ripon, Tyneside), all east of the Pennines to contest the League. This raised a major question about the representative structure of a Confederation League. Serious discussions were now held about the Confederation future and a Planning Group was established (two representatives from each Federation, chaired by Neil Williams) to decide on changes needed and given the power to enact them. The immediate conclusion was the Northern League was no longer viable and a decision was taken to disband it immediately.

The Planning Group consisted of Neil Williams (Chairman/Secretary), Derek Trotman and Charles Waterfield (Croquet North Fed), John Haslam and Roger Schofield (North West Fed), David Jenkinson and Julian Tonks (Y&H Fed).

Deliberately, no subscriptions were raised in 2001 which proved to be the final year of the Confederation. The Planning Group concluded that since the Northern League had provided a higher standard of play than the local Federation leagues, future plans should contain opportunities for advanced play in addition to preserving contact between east and west clubs.

These aims were quickly established. A new East Pennine Advanced/Handicap league was established. The already established structure of North West leagues was also extended to encompass an Advanced league. A new event was established to ensure continued cross-Pennine contact – the Pennine Cup - an annual event, hosted alternately between the east and west. The first event was planned for July/August at Southport.

The Confederation Constitution required an AGM to dissolve the Confederation and transfer remaining funds to the Croquet Association. An AGM would be difficult since members would not be willing to travel for a one-item agenda with a foregone conclusion. Consequently, the Chairman, Michael Evans cancelled the 2001 AGM and announced the Confederation was now in suspension.

It was agreed to continue publication of the ‘Croquet in the North’ leaflet until the Confederation funds (about £180) ran out.

<b>Northern Croquet League for the Confederation Cup</b>			
1990 Pendle Forest	1991 ?	1992 ?	1993 Tyneside
1994 Beverley	1995 Beverley	1996 Beverley	1997 Beverley
1998 Beverley	1999 Pendle	2000 Middlesbrough	

