



Sussex County Indoor Bowls Association

Annual Report 2016/17

May I commence this report by looking back over the year and lamenting all of those good friends and colleagues we have lost and whose company on and off the green we shall greatly miss. We extend our condolences to all of their families.

We say farewell and a job well done to retiring President Martyn Naylor who now becomes the new County Team Secretary having taken over from Harry Payne who goes into full retirement with our deep gratitude for everything he has achieved for this County during his term in various positions. He becomes the proud holder of the 2017 SCIBA Martlet Award for an Outstanding Contribution to Club & County Indoor Bowls....richly deserved in my personal view.

A huge welcome to Barry Baillie (Horsham) who becomes President from today for the next year and a challenging year I foresee for him. He is without doubt the man for the job as they say and we wish him every success in his endeavours. He is already well known to SCB outside bowls for the sterling work he and his wife Fran undertook to launch the immensely successful new Horsham Bowls Club. I'm sure you will all offer him your full support during his tenure.

We must say farewell and thank you to Lew Mockett who has finally hung his boots up as County Match Secretary after nearly 13 years in post. Thank you Lew... you have been pivotal to the smooth running of SCIBA and will be greatly missed at all the meetings where you were always the voice of moderation. Following closely in Lew's footsteps will be Viv Evans (The Grattons) who has concluded after three years in post that the role of County Competition Secretary should pass to someone else. Thank you Viv. Such a great character and you brought a lot of accumulated wisdom to our ranks. We thank you for your service to the Indoor County and will miss your lively interjections at our meets!

It seems the demographic of our sport which concentrates so much on the mature age of its' players despite our intensive efforts to attract younger members is all but set in stone. Every indoor club in Sussex is trying their best to bring in new younger members....the type of person who can involve themselves not just in learning and playing the game but also engaging themselves in the administration and management of the sport not just at club level but beyond, both regionally at County level and if desired, Nationally through the EIBA Competitions.

Our best efforts have been directed in that way and as I speak with members and clubs I know a lot is being done on the ground to sell the sport, to bring in new blood and prevent a slide into obscurity. However, there is a marked change in the way bowls is being perceived by the new members.

The majority do not seek to involve themselves in the sport at a competitive level and with those that do many are limiting that to their clubs and not looking at National, County, or future International potential. Many within the administration of the sport, (including myself) have been warning of this gradual erosion of bowls for quite some time now. We have noticed the lack of outright interest in the sport and the way that new members simply using bowls as a secondary "fun" outlet choosing to spend a couple of hours rolling up with friends rather than spending half a day attending a match they often have to travel to at extra cost and which takes up many more hours of their time.

Those who are retired have a lot more disposable income than previous generations and they want to get more out of their retirement than bowls **on its' own** can offer! Clubs are accepting more and more new members who in truth are "social" bowlers as opposed to diehard competitors and we can't blame the clubs for that...they need to attract revenue from whatever source is available in order to sustain their own future but there is no denying the sport of indoor bowls is suffering as a result and that the trend towards social bowling is destroying the competitive aspects of the sport from within. At present I don't see any slow down in the process nor do I detect any change in the average age of new members which continues to remain predominantly in the "mature" bracket when we really need it to come down quite significantly!

Now for the past season... in general it went very well with only a modest number of concerns....mainly aimed at the running blog I maintain on the front page of our SCIBA Website. I try to cover everyone and everything of note but with my time now so stretched covering other Executive positions the simple truth is that I find it increasingly difficult to feed instant news to the many website visitors we have but I continue to do the best I can. It's a credit to the website that we have so many visitors and I know that other counties moving their administration on line have used our format as a guide to their own sites....so a feather in our caps on that front! I will always add news to the website if Members let me have the information. I can't always refer to the EIBA competition pages to glean the latest so it would be of great help for members to include me in their latest news so I can share it on the SCIBA website for our readers.

SCIBA Finals were a bit of a melange this year if I'm being honest. Kieran Jay (Egerton Park) playing in the Unbadged Singles against Simon Davey was not at all well just before the start and sportingly Simon refused to accept a concession from Kieran and the match was played a week later with Simon prevailing. It was good to see such a sporting attitude from one of our young, up and coming players and I thank him for his generosity of spirit.

The County Fours final was never actually played as the Falaise finalists were unable to field a team. As a result Horsham (their opponents) were awarded the match by default. Not the happiest way to settle a County Final but there it is.

Congratulations to all the Finals winners and commiserations to the finalists who live to fight another day. A quick mention of Father and Son duo Rob & Ajay Morphett who dominated the finals with Dad taking the County Singles title and Son scooping the Under 25 Singles Championship. I don't believe this "family" outcome has occurred before so well done the pair of them and talking about pairs the duo also bagged the County Pairs Championship! The two blue ribbon events and the Championship Pairs! Not a bad day's work I'd say! Our thanks go to Falaise for staging the Finals.

It was with much regret that we said good-bye to the King Alfred Indoor B.C. at the end of the season. Sadly the long awaited re-development is only planning for three rinks and we shall have to see whether membership numbers in the new Leisure Centre will be adequate to see the club through to SCIBA & EIBA Affiliation. Members have now joined other clubs or simply retired from bowls and moved on we wish them all the best for the future.

The old King Alfred was never a popular venue as a building but that was more than made up for by the great bunch of men and women members who always ensured a warm and friendly welcome to all visitors. Many of us won't miss the venue but we will certainly miss the members and it's always sad to see a bowls club die in this way. Our best wishes and gratitude leave with each and every one of the members.

May I thank all the Executive Officers, Club Delegates, Selectors, GPC Members and supporters for their determined efforts and sheer hard work during the season. Many thanks are extended to Club Secretaries and Bowls Committees who ensure our clubs remain viable centres for the sport of indoor bowls and without whose dedication to sustaining them year on year we would truly find out how rapidly our sport could decline!

This brings me to a serious question that I have to ask all SCIBA Affiliated Members. **Do you wish to see your County Association and the advantages it brings to your clubs disappear from the board?** The County has reached what I see as a tipping point in relation to its' future.

Without the life blood of SCIBA members volunteering to take on Executive positions it will simply wither on the vine. I've been administering SCIBA in one way or another for almost 16 years, many of those years as the Assistant Secretary and then as your County Secretary. We briefly had a Treasurer in season 2015/16 which was an immense help. Unfortunately for SCIBA he emigrated to South Africa and I once again had to take over the reins for this season. The Treasurer is also our Quartermaster and responsible for making sure we have our shirts, jackets, badges, medals, flashes, etc. etc. and it is a full on position....certainly not one that should be "covered" in an "acting" capacity. Nevertheless, I had to take it on. It's what the County Secretary has to do when there is nobody else volunteering or stepping up to help. The County Secretary position has exploded with additional work since we started modernising and bringing it into the 21st Century! It is more than it ever was and I devote as many hours a week throughout the year as I would if I was working a full time job outside! I am, like my colleagues simply an unpaid volunteer..and retired..though you wouldn't know it! Additionally I am the County Welfare Officer which is fair to say should be classed as Secretarial but the paperwork alone has changed with the necessity to involve oneself in risk assessments for our Under 18 members playing in SCIBA matches at both U25 and Senior levels. I have to be on top of the latest legislation, changed rules and regulations that come through on a frequent basis and all these matters have to be administered and then implemented. Add to that responsibility for annual parental consents, maintaining the volunteer driver list, DBS vetting etc. and you have a portfolio big enough for a position of its' own.

The point is that with the new season rapidly arriving SCIBA are also down a County Match Secretary and a County Competition Secretary in addition to the County Treasurer. We really need these three top Executive Committee positions filling in readiness for season 2017/18. It will be far too much for me to add them into my workload indefinitely. In order of priority as far as I am concerned a replacement Match Secretary is of most importance followed by a Competition Secretary.

Some of the pressure has been lifted off the Treasurer by me ordering plenty of stock for the future and as I have already commenced the new year's accounting I can continue for the time being along with the County Welfare role which I take very seriously and should be the last post to be considered.

I've set up the new season's competitions and am about to sort out the draw with the Sussex Indoor Presidents once the AGM has been concluded. As for the Match Secretary, Lew Mockett has left things in good order but later this year work has to commence on the 2018/19 match schedule.

We are in desperate need of fresh volunteers to manage SCIBA and may I urge you to very seriously consider giving up some of your own time to help the County out.

Due to the trend I have already consulted early with the EIBA about the possibility of SCIBA being no longer under adequate administration and suspending all county activities. This will mean no more county competitions, no further representative badge matches, the total loss of the Annual Patrons and club/county friendlies, immediate loss of joint insurance cover, loss of overarching County Welfare commitment and the general closing down of all county business. Clubs will no longer be able to affiliate through SCIBA to the EIBA and this will have a direct bearing on National individual and team competitions as players will no longer be able to enter them as they have done to date.

I warned just a short time ago that Sussex was heading for a fall similar in severity to that of Buckinghamshire CIBA a few years earlier. Their administration was run down to a single Executive Officer... the County Treasurer. Needless to say it simply folded when he became ill trying to hold it all together. **I do not intend to follow suit and is unfair to expect me to do so!**

As most of you are aware I have not bowled for the past 5 years due to a spinal disease and doubt I will return to the sport in this lifetime! What I have undertaken is wholly through my attachment to a game that I've played for 40 years and thoroughly loved. I really, really do not wish to see Sussex CIBA fail but I am now in my 70's, not in the best of health and could myself shut down at any time!

I've had to make a personal decision.....this will be my final season administering SCIBA whichever way things work out and I will endeavour to see it through and sign off properly but beyond this season it will be a matter for others to take the County forward if that is their wish.

I've given it my all. I am very tired. I am despondent there is nobody stepping up to take the jobs on. If you all believe there is no future for SCIBA then so be it.I shall have to start the winding up process towards the end of the 2017/18 season in order to complete what is constitutionally required so you have until the end of March, 2018 to decide whether, in light of the changing face of the sport, SCIBA is still relevant to your clubs.

Perhaps it no longer serves any purpose and can be shelved..... but that is a decision you will all have to make together. If there remains no progress on the volunteer front by the end of this year I will call an Emergency General Meeting to debate the issues.

With apologies for the lengthy report.....

Tony Phillips

Hon. Secretary

Sussex County Indoor Bowls Association

13th, June, 2017