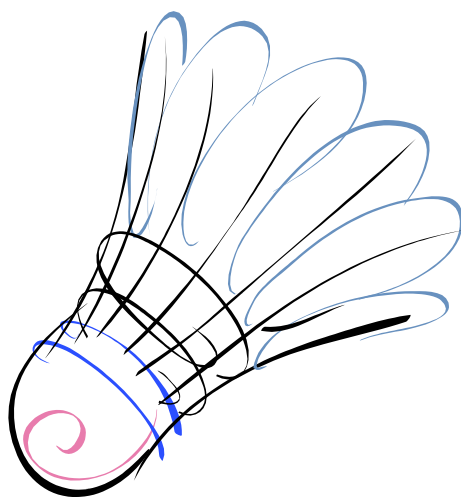


Novus Badminton Club



1947 - 2007

FOREWORD

Novus Badminton Club celebrated its 50th. birthday at the Pie Factory in Tipton eating 'mad cow pie', with most of our club members and our visiting French team present. It was a night of nostalgia and immense fun, although of nominal interest to our newer members. With this brief history for our current birthday celebrations, I have tried to compile a historical sequence of events that map out the previous 60 years and give the current membership some idea of the origins and successes of the club they have joined. I duly apologise for any personal slant that might appear to influence the document, but it is difficult to remain excluded when the club has been a major part of my sporting life for over 40 years! As your president, it has been my pleasure to assume authorship of the document, some might say it is about time I earned my keep, but I must acknowledge the help of Ros and Trevor Appleton for research material, Graham Jebb for information on Men's badminton, Malcolm Majhu for archive photographs, and Sam Hood for her computing expertise.

Graham Lewis.

Novus Badminton Club

A Brief History

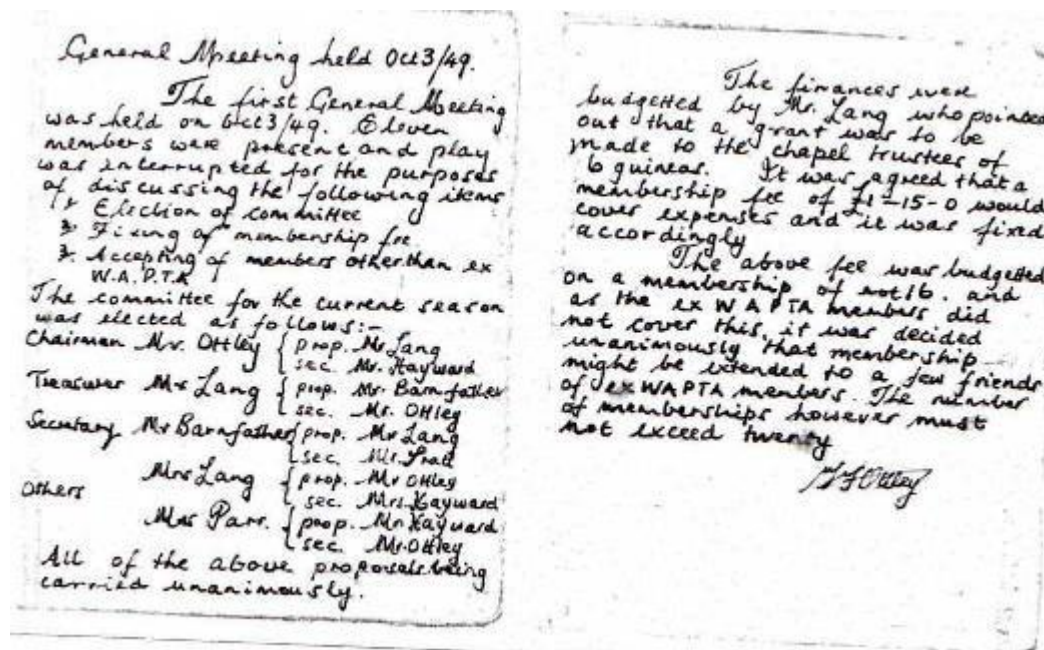
It was in 1947 that a few members of the parent teacher association linked to Woodfield Junior School in Penn decided to form a badminton club in an attempt to stay fit and enjoy a social evening together. The hall they used was a very small assembly hall hardly conducive to competitive badminton but adequate for their needs. By 1949, the Woodfield Avenue Parent Teachers Association (or W.A.P.T.A), had grown to about a dozen members and found that the small hall in Woodfield Avenue was inadequate for there ever improving game and so they made overtures to the church in Ranelagh Road, Penn Fields, for the use of their church hall.



Woodfield School

Now well and truly established, there became a need for rules and regulations, a committee and fees to reimburse the church for the use of their hall.

Below you will see a record of the inaugural meeting of WAPTA and a setting of the first annual membership fee of £1-15-0 in old money!



Minutes from A.G.M 3rd October 1949

The club continued at Ranelagh Road and the full membership of 16 was achieved. Boldly in 1959, they decided to measure their ability by entering a mixed team in the newly formed South Staffordshire Badminton League (S.S.B.L). They were warmly received and duly hammered in every match! A learning curve you might call it, but the minutes of the day recorded that they enjoyed the experience. Of course as members of the league, they had to decide on a name for their club. Strange that they decided on a Latin word "Novus" that was very much appropriate at the time, since it translates to "new" and they were forming a very new club, but once established, of course, the word new was out of date and certainly after a sixty year history, rather misplaced. Little did they realise that their club would exist for such a length of time or achieve such memorable successes over this period. I am sure that the founder members if they were alive today would be

proud that their club remains the oldest club in the whole of South Staffordshire.

1961 heralded the entry of a Ladies team to the league, and a move of premises to a one court gymnasium at Highfields School in Penn. In 1962, a Men's team was entered in the league, and all this on a membership of 16. They hardly fared any better than other teams and were soundly beaten on most occasions.

There were only three men's leagues at that time and clubs were distributed over a wide area. Not many fixtures meant lots of social badminton but the gymnasium had only one court in the spacious hall, so there was a lot of sitting around. Feathered shuttlecocks were the only shuttles available in those days and they were not cheap! So there was a lot of steaming tubes before evening play and smoothing of feathers during play. Racquets were made of wood and considerably heavier than current metal ones and all dress had to be completely white with ladies in long white skirts. But games were played with great sportsmanship. For instance in those days you had to strike the shuttle cleanly with strings only; if you did not and any part of the frame came into contact with the feather, a 'wood' had to be declared and the point forfeited. There were some arguments about the validity of such a shot but for the most part players were honest.

Early minutes of an AGM in the late fifties mention the furor created when the committee had the audacity to raise subscription levels to an unprecedented £2-2-6d., and that for the entire winter season, stretching from September through to March. All badminton was played then in single court halls, whether school gymnasiums or church halls. At least the flooring was wooden and kind on feet and legs even if there was no heating. Wall bars, school benches and the click of knitting needles encapsulated badminton in those early days, and several late nights after closely fought matches. There were some daunting fixtures away from home like Walsall Police at Chuckery Street School. You never felt easy about coming away with a win against the Police, but always relieved to escape the backstreets of Walsall in one piece. The Jubilee Hall in Brewood where the ceiling was so low you felt you might scrape it with your racquet with an overhead shot! Mind you, the teas afterwards at Brewood more than compensated for that singular inconvenience. That was something else. When you had a home fixture, it was expected that you would provide substantial amounts of food to entertain your guests. Thus was the social side to the competitive nature of the fixture. Wombourne Community Centre was another venue of significant interest,

particularly if they had held ballroom dancing classes the night before in their hall as they frequently did. Badminton on ice seems a fitting description of what ensued. Three Spires at Frog Lane was another where the back court lines were drawn on the central heating pipes just above the floor and a piano was far too close to the sidelines for comfort. I might make fun of these away fixtures and could mention many more, but they were played against some wonderful sporting opponents who played the game in the right spirit.

In 1969, the club moved from Highfields, and took advantage of the two court gymnasium at Wolverhampton Grammar School. This was an ambitious move but proved successful. It meant that membership could be expanded, other league teams introduced and the club could meet twice a week rather than a solitary Thursday evening. We actually won a Men's league in 1970 and gained promotion to Division 2, a novel experience. Then Ken Laughton and Beatrice Golding as she was then, won the mixed doubles title at the medium players tournament at Alumwell. This represented our first club success in the South Staffs arena. The following year, Ken's very youthful son helped an aging (in comparison) Graham Lewis to the Staffordshire restricted men's doubles title . The latter repeated the victory two years later with another youthful and regular club member, Malcolm Majhu. Badminton was a rapidly growing sport, and new clubs were being founded all over the south of the county. The county first team was one of the best in the country boasting international players such as David Eddy, Eddie and Barbara Sutton and Keith Hawthorne. By the mid seventies, the men's divisions of South Staffs totalled some 10 divisions and rising. Mixed badminton was similarly on the increase and extremely popular and there were more ladies playing the game than ever before. Schools badminton had really taken off, coaching was available all over the county for all age groups, and junior county teams were selected from the county open competitions that were on offer. The sport had never been healthier as was proved by the massive entries that the league committee received for their annual competition called the 'medium players tournament' that was held at Alumwell School over a whole weekend. The men's first division continued to be won by a local Dudley team called Baylies whose concurrent victories stretched to 12 in 1975/76, a record that stands to this day.

By this time, Novus had improved so much that their first men's and mixed teams were in the first division and more than holding their own. Second teams provided most members with some sort of competitive play, and juniors had been encouraged so much that they were forcing their way in to club teams. Membership stood at the upper twenties and

recruitment of players no problem. It was in the following season of 1976/77 when the full potential that the club could realise first became evident. Established members of the first men's team including Colin Thurstans, Malcolm Majhu and Graham Lewis were well supported by two very promising junior members in Stuart Atkinson and Russell Harman, and a successful season finished with a first ever win against Baylies on our home court that was memorable for all concerned and denied Baylies the championship for that year. Indeed that year Colin Thurstans and Graham Lewis won the medium players league tournament in men's doubles. This was followed in 1977/78 by further club success in the annual league tournament as the Express and Star reported.

Novus men dominate...

Members of the Wolves-Novus badminton club, who have recently moved their HQ to the Wolves gymnasium at Molineux, made up three of the four pairs in the men's semi-finals in the South Staffordshire medium players tournament at the Alumwell Centre at Walsall.

In the final, Graham Lewis and Malcolm Majhu (Wolves-Novus) won 15-8, 15-6 against clubmates Stuart Atkinson and Russell Harman.

Semi-finals: Lewis and Majhu beat Alan McGracken and Paul Burton (Norton Canes) 15-18, 15-7, 15-6. Atkinson and Harman beat John McNally and Glyn Jones (Wolves-Novus) 15-10, 15-10.

Lewis was also on the winning side in the mixed doubles final. He partnered Janet Harman to a 15-11, 15-1 victory against Martin Gould and Margaret Blakeway (Walsall NALGO).

Semi-finals: Lewis and Harman beat John Hirst and Margaret Hirst (Nomads) 17-14, 15-8; Gould and Blakeway beat Majhu and Sue Raybould (Wolves-Novus) 15-4, 15-2.

Women's doubles semi-finals: Mandy Clarke and Ann Betteridge (Nomads) beat Barbara Bowman and Chris Fox (Hednesford) 15-12, 15-6; Pam Willis and Ann Perrett (Wednesbury) beat Pam Quintyne and Pat Phipps (YMCA) 2-15, 15-4, 15-13. Final: Clarke and Betteridge beat Willis and Perrett 15-7, 15-1.

★ ★ ★

Entries for an American handicap tournament to be staged by Wolves-Novus at the Molineux gymnasium on Saturday and Sunday, April 8 and 9, are to close on Easter Monday, March 26.

Article from
Express and Star
9th March 1978

Novus badminton club were now moving forward in leaps and bounds, and when Sammy Chung became manager of Wolverhampton Wanderers, he invited the then club chairman, Graham Lewis and secretary, Malcolm Pugh to meet with the directors of the football club to discuss moving the club to the indoor 5 court facilities at Waterloo Road. The dream was that Wolverhampton would be to England, what Real Madrid was to Spain, and all champions of sport in the local area would play and be adopted

under the "Wolves" umbrella. Well, that was the plan and they acquired Novus who were permitted to rename themselves 'Wolves-Novus' from season 1978. The Wolverhampton Gymnastics Club was also engaged, but Wolves were unable to attract any other sport. It was probably a good job because within two years, Sammy Chung severed his association with the football club and Wolves entered one of the darkest eras of their modern history with continuous relegation through the football leagues to the fourth division. Not so Wolves-Novus! They entered the most successful period of their history.

We were in a position now to recruit many more members, and the splendid facilities at the Wolves Social Club appealed to new members of all abilities. So, the first men's team were strengthened, and the club policy of encouraging younger members paid dividends in that they were forcing their way into both men's and ladies teams. First team places were no longer assured and had to be earned. Season 1979/1980 was momentous in that the club were crowned champions of Division 1 men for the first time in their history and they continued this outstanding feat for the following four years. This achievement was principally because of the stability of the club, obviously the playing ability of the men's section, the facilities which were second to none and the extraordinary competitive atmosphere generated within the club. We fielded 4 men's teams, 5 mixed teams and 3 ladies teams in 1982/83 which meant that very few members were not playing league competition. In fact during that season the S.S.B.L housed 19 Men's, 16 Mixed and 12 Ladies divisions in total, the greatest number ever, and a stark comparison with the 4 Men's, 2 Mixed and 2 Ladies of the year 2000! Indeed in 1982, Wolverhampton as a town could offer some 10 different clubs!!

The club committee was not without ambition or courage, and it was decided to take advantage of the sport's popularity by arranging the first ever open American Handicap Tournament for any member of the S.S.B.L. We somehow obtained free use of the Molineux facilities during a weekend in April toward the end of the season in 1982 and sent out invitations to all members of the league clubs. I seem to remember that we were a little daunted at the volume of entries we received and had to reschedule our arrangements by having men's doubles only on the Saturday, and then ladies and mixed on Sunday. Even so, we had to begin the competition at 09.30 and were still going strong at 20.00 hours. Drinks and food were provided by club members and the event was declared an overwhelming success. Financially, the club made a lot of money, despite giving away very expensive cut glass prizes to winners, runners up, and semi-finalists. A repeat performance was also enjoyed the

following season and suddenly handicap competitions were vogue with other larger clubs organising their own. With the proliferation of such competitions came a reduction in entrants and whilst other clubs ran their competitions successfully, they were never on the same scale as the inaugural ones at Novus.



Wolves' first team were not rewarded with any silverware during their last season . . . but it was a different story as far as the resident Novus badminton club were concerned. In their most successful season, their teams carried off both the South Staffs League men's and women's first division titles without dropping a game. They will be meeting some familiar opposition next season. Members of the club's second teams gained promotion by topping their respective second divisions. One of the members, Stephanie Craner-Buckley, 26, has been named in the 12-strong Tarmac School of Sport team to meet the Isle of Man's Silesowen on Sunday, July 26.

Members of the women's team, pictured above with the trophy, are (left to right) Kirsty Fabian, Christine Hartness, Mandy Lane, Kerry Davies, Stephanie Craner-Buckley.

The men line-up (left to right): Colin Day, Mark Moore, Russell Harman, Malcolm Majh, Graham Lewis, Paul Jones, Dave Roberts.

All good things seemingly have to come to an end. With board room struggles at the football club, take over bids rumoured, we had our

contract with the parent football club terminated and we were faced with finding new accommodation in a very short space of time. I suppose we were extremely fortunate to secure the use of the sports hall at Our Lady and St. Chad's School at Fallings Park. This proved a good deal more expensive, so it was as well that we had made significant profit out of our tournaments. Most of the membership continued their association with the club, even though we now had only four courts and slightly inferior conditions in which to enjoy our game. A new court meant we no longer had such home advantage as before and so it was not surprising that we were relieved of the Division 1 championship in 1984/85 by consistent adversaries, Cannock Olympia. Disappointment was minimal, however, since our Mixed and Ladies teams were declared champions of their respective Divisions 1. The following season however we bounced back and not only did the men's team regain the Division 1 trophy, but our ladies team, helped by their youthfulness, claimed the ladies premier division title again. This was a year to savour and remember, season 1985/86, and our achievement was recorded in the Express and Star.

Article from Express
and Star 5th Aug 1982



In my experience, it seems that in the history of every sporting club, there occurs a time when disaster overtakes the institution and is so damaging that the very existence of the club is threatened. At best the club is split asunder and struggles to retain the atmosphere and playing standards that it has enjoyed for a substantial time. The summer of 1986 was such a time for Novus. A stupid row developed over, in my opinion, matters that were trivial, and the club was wrecked in months! Most of our better team players decided that they would leave the club, membership fell to 40% of what we had experienced, and we could no

longer afford to maintain our court space at St. Chad's. Yes, we were on the move again and, in order to cut costs, had to return to the two-court hall at the Grammar School. The club was effectively on its knees. We had just won the premier division, but had only retained one man from that victorious team, so had to field a virtual second team in the premiership. With the further loss of quality players, our future looked grim, and in 1988, we made a request for voluntary relegation to Division 2, but this was turned down by the League Committee and we were made to suffer the humiliation of losing every match in that next season. The spirit of the club however had not been broken, and there was a strong determination to continue and rebuild the club from these ashes.

Not only did Novus enter a deep depression, but the popularity of the sport seemed to be in free fall. Local Authorities were chiefly to blame for the diminution of private clubs. It was exceptionally difficult to find a court in sports halls that could be booked on a regular basis, an essential requirement for the stability of a private club, so clubs were folding at an alarming rate, and the sport entered the Dark Age. Novus had been very fortunate in having use of the Grammar School and were even further favoured by gaining court space in the brand new ,purpose built sports hall in 1992, which they enjoy to this day. The league committee made the decision to redevelop the league structure and increase the content of each league to 8 teams, which of course meant many more fixtures per season and fewer divisions. When the move to the current sports hall was effected, the club committee made a conscious decision to maintain the existence of the club irrespective of the playing ability within the club or the competitive future of the sport in the area. If the S.S.B.L league folded, then the club would continue on purely social grounds.

In 1992/93, the club were really desperate for members in order to retain league competition, and indeed the ladies section had to withdraw their second team from competition. This meant that the club fielded their fewest numbers of teams for over 25 years, namely one ladies, one mens and two mixed teams, and their performances could only be described as average. Despite excellent playing facilities in the Sports Hall, recruitment proved difficult and membership was slow to improve. In 1993/94 the 1st. mixed team were relegated to division 4 (of 6), and then were immediately promoted as winners of that division. Curiously in 1995/96, the Ladies team won their division 3 and gained promotion to division 2 ,only to withdraw completely the following year because of a lack of suitable players. Then the following year they were reinstated in division 3. After demotion in 1996/97, the club's Mens team won division

4A and were promoted into division 3 where they played most of their league badminton.

I suppose the most momentous and memorable feature of the 1990's was the annual English/French exchange that was initiated in 1993. This developed principally because of a French Assistant who taught for a year at the Grammar School and took a serious interest in badminton. He was already a fine tennis player of near national standard, and over a period of some five years, established and ran a badminton club in a small village called Ampuis, just south of Vienne near Lyon. Badminton was a rapidly developing sport in France and continues to this day, but it was something of a surprise when Renaud, as he was called, declared his intention of bringing his club side to Wolverhampton to challenge Novus in serious competition! We made them welcome, arranged a team tournament in the Sports Hall, provided board and lodging and duly sent them back to France after a good hiding! Needless to say we were invited to France the following year, when Ampuis B.C. went to extraordinary lengths to entertain us over a few days, did all they could to reduce us to physical wrecks before engaging us in serious competition during our final weekend. They underestimated our staying power, superior fitness, and ability to consume vast quantities of French wine without losing the ability to see a shuttle and then hit it! We returned victorious.

The victorious team!



Only those people who took part, particularly in France, can appreciate what wonderful experiences we enjoyed, with overnight stops in the mountainous Vercours region, climbing mountains with snowshoes in 3 ft.

of snow; extensive trips to the Beaujolais region and enduring interminable winetasting, not to mention the all night dinners and partying in the restaurant in the Pilat mountains. I have used the word memorable, not loosely since I do not think anyone who enjoyed those trips would ever or even would want to forget the great fortune of our experiences. Also from the sociability aspect of the exercise, it helped bond a hard core of members together. It was a great pity that such a luxury had to die a natural death in 1999 like all good things does, but it represented six years of quite outstanding friendship and camaraderie.



The Novus/ Ampuis Exchange

So we head toward the new millennium, and still the South Staffs leagues suffer and end the century with only 4 Men's, 2 Ladies, and 2 Mixed divisions. The game in the region is now under considerable threat, but the sport at Novus continues, alongside the only other club in the Wolverhampton area, Tiki.

The last few years have seen healthy numbers continuing to keep the club as one of the largest in the League. There have been regular battles for promotion for both the men's and mixed teams as we try to get back into

the highest divisions. In the Beasley trophy there have been some fairly successful runs, with several finals and semi-finals in recent years. But the win to get our name back on the trophy has remained frustratingly elusive. Efforts are also underway to start coaching the next generation of Novus players so the club's history can successfully extend into the coming years.



At the time of going to press, the club are planning a celebration of their sixtieth birthday by engaging in a mammoth 60 hour sponsored badminton fund raising event. This is truly a remarkable and adventurous project and they deserve our every best wish in the successful completion of such an inspiring attempt. The architects are prominent current members of the committee of the club, and their ambition is true to the spirit that has kept the club in existence for the past 60 years. Good luck to them!

HONOURS

League Winners

1970	Mens div.3			
1974	Mens div.2	Mixed div.3		
1976	Ladies div.3	Mixed div.2	Mixed 2nd div.3	
1977	Ladies div.2			
1979	Mens div.1			
1980	Ladies 2nd. Div.2	Mens div.1	Mens 2nd. Div.2	
1981	Mens div.1	Mens 3rd. div.4B	Mixed 3rd. div.3A	
1982	Mens div.1	Mixed 4th. div.5C		
1983	Mens div.1			
1984	Ladies div.1	Ladies 3rd. div.4D	Mixed div.1	Mixed 4th. div.4C
1985	Ladies div.1	Mens div.1		
1987	Mens 2nd. Div.4D			
1994	Mixed div.4A			
1997	Mens div.4A			
2001	Mixed div. 4			