

Captain's Report - 2025

The club had an excellent summer season. Two promotions in the BDBA & Whitchurch Leagues respectively, a third place finish in the Men's BDBA Rinks League, a fourth place finish for the Sapphires in the Stan Hardman League and qualification for the quarter final play off for the Stan Hardman Plate competition, and Brenda Grout and her partner from Fleet United reached the Hampshire North & East Area Final of the Bowls England Ladies Senior Pairs. Finally, we won back the Ginger Nut Cup in the annual challenge match against Marnell.

Our membership has continued to grow to over 130 this year with 25 new members joining us in 2025. Unfortunately, of these one or two have decided not to renew their membership for 2025/2026 having found it difficult to fit in playing bowls due to other commitments. Several of our newer members have progressed to playing in friendlies and I hope that in summer 2026 more will do so and also start to play in our league teams.

The season got off to a warm, dry, and sunny start when the green opened in mid-April with a 100-Up competition, one of various Club Events arranged by Brenda & Ron Walker throughout the season. We played our first friendly on 27th April and the Whitchurch League matches started on 30th April all in warm dry and sunny weather a far cry to the previous season when heavy rain meant that we had to in delay the opening of the green by two weeks.

At the end of last season we took the decision to reduce the number of weekend friendly matches to be played in 2025 from 35 in 2024 to 25 and in June & July instead of playing two friendlies per weekend reduce this to one, to be played either on a Saturday or Sunday. We also moved the dates for some friendly matches to be played later in August & September when it was hoped that more players would be available to play. I believe that this change has worked well and has reduced the number of friendly matches that have had to be cancelled by us due to lack of player support to 3. A total of 7 friendlies were cancelled, but the others were due to factors including hot weather and requests from our opposition for cancellation.

The club plays weekend friendlies for several reasons, but the number one reason is that for our newer members it is by far best way to learn and gain experience playing bowls.

Our Monday and Tuesday afternoons roll-up sessions were well supported with up to 16 members playing on some afternoons during the summer season. Unfortunately, towards the end of the season the numbers dwindled to as low as 8.

The Thursday evening coaching and practice sessions run by Lyn Voce, Alan Phillips and Bob Grout proved to be popular and beneficial to all our newer players that attended. The six-week rotating coaching course started in May allowed new bowlers and bowlers who wanted to refresh their skills, to engage in a fun programme every Thursday evening.

Entries for external competitions (Bowls Hampshire, Whitchurch and District and Basingstoke & District) were particularly good and up on previous years. Mike Draper & Martyn Kee did particularly well in all the Bowls Hampshire, BDBA & Whitchurch Pairs Competitions that they entered, reaching the 2nd round in several competitions and only

losing by the narrowest of margins in some matches. Lyn Voce & Alan Phillips entered a number of BDBA and Whitchurch competitions and reached the semi-finals in the BDBA Over 60's Pairs only for Alan to be unwell meaning that they had to concede the match to their opposition.

Entries for the Club's Internal Competitions showed a considerable increase in numbers from last season. The Club Finals Weekend took place on 30th and 31st August. Despite the gloomy weather forecast of heavy rain over the weekend all matches were played with only a slight hint of rain on both days. The finals produced some remarkably close finishes with several being settled by just one or two shots.

It was very pleasing to see new names on the list of winners and runners up in this season's finals. More than 50 members turning up during both days to watch the matches.

My thanks go to the Organising Group and particularly Stan Goddard, and everyone else involved in organising and providing support to make the finals weekend a great success.

My summary of the summer season is as follows:

Mixed Friendly Matches.

25 friendly matches were arranged for the season of which 18 were played with 7 matches being cancelled for various reasons including hot weather. Of the matches played we won 5 and lost 11 and there was 53-53 draw against Odiham in August. More than 50 different players took part in the friendlies with several players playing in at least 10 or more matches, and it was good to see a few of our newer members playing in matches towards the end of the season.

Hook Foxes & Hares - Whitchurch & District League

Congratulations to Hook Hares for finishing as runners-up in Division 3 and winning promotion to Division 2 of the Whitchurch & District League for next season. Mike Draper's inspirational and enthusiastic captaincy produced an excellent team spirit amongst the players and spurred the team on a winning run that culminated in a single shot win over the league champions Marnell Jades to confirm promotion in the last match of the season at the end of August

With a blend of ever improving newer players and a sprinkling of "old hands" I fully expect the Hares to be challenging again next season at the top of Division 2

Hook Foxes had a credible finish in 4th place in Division 3 just a couple of points behind Andover Stags in 3rd place. The Foxes had a problem during the season with getting enough players to be available to play on Wednesday evenings and some of our most experienced players did not play throughout the season.

The Foxes did have the satisfaction of beating the Hares in the 2nd derby of the season by 3-2 (45-40) to avenge the 4-1 (55-35) defeat by the Hares in the 1st derby in June.

Hook Diamonds & Sapphires. - Stan Hardman League

Hook Sapphires had a good season finishing in 4th place in the Stan Hardman Area 3 League and qualifying for the Quarter Final Playoffs for Stan Hardman Plate. Having drawn to play Howard Park Saints unfortunately they lost by 55-49 overall score and by

2 points to 1. The eventual winners of the Stan Hardman Shield were Basingstoke Town and Yateley Oakes were the winners of the Stan Hardman Plate

By contrast Hook Diamonds had a poor season in the Stan Hardman Area 2 League finishing next to bottom just ahead of Hawley. This was a surprise as in the previous season the Diamonds won the Area 2 League and were in the Quarter Final Playoffs for the Stan Hardman Shield.

Hook Triples Team - Basingstoke & District League

Congratulations to our Triples Team for finishing as runners-up in Division 1 of the BDBA Monday Night Triples League and winning promotion to the Premier Division for the 2026 season. After 10 matches the league was split so that the top and bottom 3 teams played off against each other to determine the final promotion and relegation positions. In the play offs for promotion our Triples Team won 3 and lost 1 match and finished runners up to the champions Whitchurch Silks with St Mary Bourne finishing in 3rd place

Hook Rinks /Fours Team - Basingstoke & District League

Our Rinks /Fours Team had an excellent season in Division 2 of the BDBA Friday Night Rinks /Fours League finishing in 3rd place just a couple of points behind Whitchurch who were runners up to the champions Old Basing

The highlight was our crushing victory by 24 shots (46 to 22) and 5 points to nil win against Alton Social in August which guaranteed a 3rd place finish with Alton Social finishing in 4th place.

Other Competition Matches

Unfortunately, we suffered a heavy 5-0 defeat to Fleet United in the 1st round of the Bowls Hampshire Mixed Top Club Competition.

In the 1st round of the Bowls England Tony Allcock Trophy, we were very unlucky to lose to Oakley by 5 shots (36 -31 overall score)

We won back the Ginger Nut Cup in the annual challenge match by beating Marnell by 29 shots (105-76 overall score)

Club Events

The Summer 321 Competition was played in early September. The winner was Alan Phillips with an overall score of 146. The runner-up was Peter Holliday with an overall score of 137.

The Hallier Trophy was a three all draw in rinks won, but Hook Men retained the trophy against Hook Ladies with an overall score win by 114 to 76.

Thanks to Brenda & Ron Walker for organising the Aussie Pairs Competition and Candlelight Bowls evening, both of which were well attended by our playing members.

Short-Mat – Leagues, Friendlies & Competitions

For the 2024-2025 season the Short Mat JAM Thursday League was divided into two divisions with both Hook Hawks and Hook Ravens in Division One based on the previous seasons results. A separate League Cup Competition was introduced to be played on a "round robin" group league basis with Hook Hawks drawn in Group A and

Hook Ravens in Group D. The eventual winners of each group would progress to semi-finals and a final.

Both the Hawks and Ravens had a poor season finishing at the bottom of Division One. The Ravens were relegated to Division Two together with Odiham. The Hawks finished just above the Ravens and narrowly avoid relegation by just 1 point.

In the League Cup Competition, the Ravens did not fare any better than in the league and finished bottom of Group D. However, the Hawks won Group A and progressed to a semi-final against Fleet United Swans which was lost by 22-59 overall score.

Once again Fleet United Swans were the league winners and Fleet United Cygnets were runners-up. Fleet United Cygnets won the League Cup competition and Fleet United Swans were runners-up.

Both of our league teams started playing again in the Thursday League in October and we are now underway again in the Wednesday Evening Triples and Friday Afternoon Pairs Internal leagues.

Short-Mat Friendly matches for the winter season started in October. So far, we have won against Fleet United, Farnborough Gate, Pamber Heath and Liphook and lost against Sandhurst. We have a full programme of Short-Mat Friendly Fixtures arranged for weekends up to the end of March 2026. I hope that some of our newer players will putting their names down to play in these friendly matches as this provides the best platform to learn to play the Short Mat game.

Congratulations to the winners and runners-up in the various Short Mat Competitions in 2024-2025

I would like to thank everybody for their continued support, particularly those players who played in the various friendlies, league matches and competitions during the summer season and Short Mat matches during the winter season. I look forward to another enjoyable and successful season in 2026.

Dave Clark