



Issue 14

February 2010

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Ten years ago the NURC published 'Fifty years of service' a history of the NURC from 1950-2000, which contains many passages comparable to umpiring conditions today. In 1953 Tom Blunn, former ETTA Chairman wrote "the long awaited Handbook for Umpires has recently been published by the ETTA and is available to all County Umpires". My long awaited copy came through the letter box this morning.

Brian Brumwell, former Essex and England player wrote in 1953 "I have noticed during tournaments that the organizers usually have difficulty getting umpires and I think the players are partly responsible. Generally speaking I would say that players treat umpires very badly, whereas if they were to treat them with more respect and courtesy I think it would be easier to get people to umpire". What has changed?

"During the 1998-99 season it became obvious that morale among umpires was low. There was a widespread feeling that organizers regarded umpires as a non-essential cost and that, as a result, their status was being downgraded. A meeting was arranged with senior officials of the ETTA to make them aware of the problem and to try to find ways of overcoming it. One of the main conclusions was that there should be a code of practice setting out the responsibilities to each other of organizers, and the NURC. Such a document has now been agreed and will come into effect in 2000". Would it be of interest to the Association?

"Of an umpires' association, "Our researches have shown that in a number of other sports are organized in independent Societies or Associations, the ruling body of the sport having no direct control, or only limited control, over the activities of these umpire organizations. We have considered the possibility of instituting similar arrangements in table tennis, but have rejected it for the following reasons:

- a) So far as we are aware, there has never been any demand for, or initiative towards such an arrangement.
- b) The initial difficulties of setting up, and the subsequent task of fostering such independent and new bodies would be so great that, even if the ultimate results were satisfactory, the delay before the project became effective would be unduly long.
- c) Since umpires already take a considerable part in local and national administration of the game there is no real danger of their feeling that their views could only be voiced through such an independent body."

Fifty five years later the AETTU came into being with 40 members. By 2010 the number has risen to 90+ members.

It was interesting to read again this account of the rise of the NURC in the light of present events. There have been changes and many improvements, some of which may never have occurred without the advent of the Association. Things change but some things never change.

Talking of change, as the secretary states in his report, there is no intention to change the date of the Umpires' Tournament. We would however, consider the tongue in cheek suggestion by one member "given that the Grand Prix has been re-arranged in Doncaster for the AETTU week-end - shall we offer to umpire and play our competition on the free tables?"

At the last committee meeting it was suggested that the Committee be increased from 5 members +4 officers, to 7 members +4 officers. It was also suggested that as the nine current members are all I.U's and male perhaps the new members could be N.U's or C.U's and include male or female umpires. Volunteers or nominations would be welcomed. In the first instance they would be co-opted members of the committee, as the change in number would have to be agreed at the A.G.M. when the normal elections take place. Jim Kenny C.U. has already agreed to be co-opted. He would replace Geoff Taylor who wants to stand down as committee member, but has agreed to remain as editor/producer of the magazine. This will leave two vacancies. Please don't all rush at once.

When selected for an overseas event umpires have to write a report of the event and the late Jack Randall I.U. included this incident in his reports "I was umpiring a match in the team final between Germany and Japan when there was a disputed point. I re-affirmed my decision and then saw the Japanese captain get up from his chair and walk towards me with a menacing look. Instinctively I waved my hand imperiously at him and, somewhat to my surprise, he immediately turned round and resumed his seat. You have to show them who's in charge!" How true this is.

My best wishes to everyone. The next committee meeting will be held at Bulkington (near Coventry) on Sunday 25th April. If you have any suggestions, queries or stories to impart please let the secretary, any committee member or me know.

**GEORGE TYLER.**

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT - JANUARY 2010**

I hope everyone had a Happy Christmas and 2010 is a prosperous New Year. The AETTU continues to grow and I believe we can have an impact on how umpiring is developed. The question of recruiting, training and retaining umpires and referees is a hot subject. The NURC is the committee that deals with umpiring and refereeing on behalf of the ETTA and is responsible for recruiting and training. Stuart Sherlock, Chair of the NURC, submitted a paper to National Council with a number of recommendations about recruitment and retention. I believe that ongoing training, mentoring and good working conditions are an important part of retaining umpires and it is the responsibility of all umpires to help in these areas. One suggestion submitted is that there should be an annual training day before the start of each season when new and experienced umpires can be brought up to date with new Laws, Regulations and match practices. A national training day may be too large to organise but regional days may be preferred and the organisers can be assisted by experienced umpires. This is only one suggestion. I am sure that umpires, new and experienced, have suggestions to improve recruitment and retention and I would ask that suggestions be submitted to me for collection and submission to the ETTA - NURC.

At the English Open in Sheffield there were examples of fantastic table tennis but the organisation and use of umpires left a lot to be desired. The AETTU have submitted a report to the ETTA / NURC with a view of all the umpires present at the tournament. A copy of this report is included in this magazine. Hopefully lessons will be learned and working conditions will be improved for the next Open in January 2011.

For some time the AETTU annual table tennis tournament has been arranged for 3/4th July 2010. This year it will be held at Wood Green, Nr Wolverhampton (Further details will follow at a later date.) The Doncaster GP, which was cancelled due to bad weather, has been re-arranged for 3/4th July 2010, the same week-end as the umpires tournament. Last year a similar clash occurred and the Association changed the date of its competition to assist the organisers. This will not happen again this year. I would hope that members intending to take part in the umpires tournament will continue to do so and that umpires not taking part will volunteer for the GP.

**Tom Purcell**

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**£10K**

**By Derek Sherratt**

The umpire's numbers crisis continues to unfold as we speak and unlikely to be halted in the foreseeable future. Organisers are becoming increasingly desperate in their attempts to attract, entice or even cajole blue jackets to attend their next event.

This Paper is prompted by the need to examine ways of spending some of the £10,000 allocated by the ETTA to try and repair the present situation in a useful and practical manner.

An opinion expressed at National Council suggested that the money should not be used to subsidise umpires' travel expenses and made specific reference to foreign travel. An alternative voiced is for improvements to the welfare provided for umpires together with the setting up of a series of seminars.

I will begin my analysis by discussing travel abroad. To some, this conjures up a romantic vision of trips to exotic sun drenched places; of lazy days sipping up the local brew whilst watching the sun go down. True this sometimes happens. It is however the exception to the rule.

The reality is with a heavy work schedule the umpire returns to the hotel too late to think of anything but a quick drink and then off to bed ready for the next day. Nothing new in that, it is what we expect back in England. Occasionally the foreign umpires might be granted time off to visit some nearby tourist attraction; mostly this is not the case. The foregoing is not however the basis of my case.

To umpire abroad one has to indicate to the ETTA that you wish to be considered for a specific event. A selection panel will then, subject to certain criteria, nominate the chosen few. Almost always the umpire

will be advised that the host Association will provide hospitality plus 15 Euros per day. No assistance with the major part of the travel such as air fares. It is this fact that I would like to address.

Even with Budget Airlines air travel does not come cheap. Add to this visas, airport car parking and travel to the point of travel and the cost to the umpire begins to rise. Now here is a curious fact. Your letter of appointment will inform you that you have been selected to "effectively represent your country" in France, Poland, China or wherever; No mention of assistance with cost. I may be a bit wrong here but do our players, coaches and people in suits who one sees at these far flung events pay for their own travel? I suspect not. So why is it that umpires are singled out for this treatment?

Critics among you may say "nobody is forcing you to go" and you are right. But if England is to regain its influence in the world of table tennis then it is just as important for our technical officials to be part of the big picture. This can only be done by encouraging umpires to travel to the far corners.

There is another factor that has emerged in recent years; Blue Badge evaluations. These can only be held at major events. Sheffield in October was the only English event since the Blue Badge came into being some nine years ago where evaluations have taken place on English soil. In any event it is natural for umpires to aspire to be involved at the highest level. One must also recognise that umpires in general do not belong to the monied classes and to be expected to fork out, in some cases, hundreds of pounds to simply work, albeit a sport they love, is not acceptable.

To be strictly fair the overseas travel only affects something less than 10% of the workforce. For many a trip to Scotland or one of the islands is as good as it gets. I maintain however that a good case can be made out for some form of financial support for umpires overseas travel.

Turning to the question of welfare, the major points have been highlighted in previous articles. It is fair to say that improvements over the last few years have been seen thanks to the work of the AETTU. However we still have some way to go.

For instance many tournaments offer Friday night accommodation because of early Saturday starts. They do not however offer a meal or in some cases any sort of refreshment. Bearing in mind some umpires may have travelled something in excess of a hundred miles, setting off from home on Friday morning. Similarly on the Sunday umpires travelling home possibly long distances are not offered sustenance. In both cases cited most umpires pay for missing meals out of their own pocket. Add to this the cost of their uniform and you get the picture.

The reasons for decline in umpire numbers are manifold and complex. One such reason is the complete failure or unwillingness of Organisers to appreciate the needs of today's dwindling band of bluecoats. Historically there has always been enough to get the job done; when this halcyon period was, is not all that clear to me, but the sentiment remains.

In this new century modern man has much more choice in how he or she will spend their precious weekend and a day in your armchair watching Skysports is not always an unattractive alternative.

Whilst I personally do not like to admit it, we umpires do not get any younger. If one cared to do a demographic study of the existing band of brothers (and sisters), the figure for even ten years hence would I am sure be very revealing. But enough of this gloom.

Whatever is decided about travel I am all in favour of an Annual gathering of umpires in the form of a seminar. This must be totally funded by the establishment and hopefully would be in conjunction with the NURC

**Derek Sherratt**

**MINUTES FROM AETTU COMMITTEE MEETING  
SATURDAY 21st NOVEMBER 2009 12-00hrs BULKINGTON VILLAGE CENTRE**

Present: George Tyler (GT), Derek Sherratt (DS), Tom Purcell (TP) Geoff Taylor (GTay), Stan Clarke (SC).

**1. APOLOGIES: John Lawton, Nick Osland, Steve Welch**

**2. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING 09/08/2009.**

Minutes were accepted as a true copy. Proposed : SC. Seconded GT. **Carried**

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES 09/08.2009**

**Action a) - TP to contact NURC and suggest the use of Umpires' page on ETTA web site to circulate information and other important issues.**

TP informed the meeting that he had spoken with John Mackey the coordinator of the umpires' section on the ETTA web site. TP advised John about the recommendation of the AETTU and John stated that the NURC had already planned to include issues like the laws of TT, NURC information and umpires details. The update to the umpires' page was waiting for the update to the ETTA web site and John Mackey was waiting for Richard Pettit from the ETTA to carry out the update.

**Action b) - Secretary to arrange date for the 2010 AETTU Competition.**

Competition arranged for 3-4th July 2010. Full details with agenda item.

**Action c) - Secretary to contact the NURC re proposed red tie for English umpires' uniform.**

Not complete - To be completed before the next Committee Meeting.

**4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.**

Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked GTay for arranging the venue and refreshments. Chair reported that membership continued to grow and there was now 91 members of the Association. At the English Open 18 of the 22 English umpires were members of the AETTU. At the tournament in Bridlington 15 of the 17 umpires were members and at the National Junior Championships in Sheffield in December were members of the Association. Chair suggested to the meeting that new members of the Association should be issued with a welcome pack which contained a copy of the Laws of TT, a set of umpires' cards and a net measure. There was a general discussion on this subject and it was agreed that new members would be issued with a welcome pack as described.

Chair also recommended that a list of Association members should be circulated to new members. There was a general discussion on this subject and it was recommended that a list of members' names together with their County details would be printed in the next issue of the magazine, available to all members.

**Action 1 - New members to be issued with welcome pack.**

**Action 2 - Members names to be included in next issue of the magazine.**

**5. SECRETARY'S REPORT.**

Secretary reported that the English Open had recently taken place. There were a number of good comments about the Open from members who had been involved, however, there were critical comments about the shortage of umpires at the tournament and the umpires' schedule. The Open would be dealt with as a separate item on the agenda.

Umpires are now buying new blazers from the suppliers identified by the AETTU. At the 2009 AGM members asked whether the new ETTA Insurance still covered umpires. TP reported he had been in contact with Rob Sinclair and he had confirmed that there had been no changes to insurance cover for umpires. Umpires were covered by ETTA insurance when travelling from home to recognised ETTA tournaments including to and from hotels. For personal accident there was an age limit of 75 years of age and benefits are reduced by 50% for persons over 70 years of age. Umpires are covered whilst attending recognised overseas tournaments but they are reminded that if they required ETTA travel insurance they must contact Rob Sinclair with their personal details before travel.

The new Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) is introducing a Vetting and Barring Scheme for persons who are involved with children and vulnerable adults in regulated activity. (This includes umpires). This is an addition to the current CRB checks. Enquiries with the ETTA reveals that umpires who have a current CRB should renew it through the ETTA on the renewal date. (Lasts 3 years). Umpires who work at Junior/Cadet tournaments must have a CRB check carried out. The cost will be paid by the ETTA and the applications forms can be obtained from the ETTA web site. Umpires will be expected to register with the ISA from July 2010, however, there is a suggestion that because of the workload involved persons involved in the Sports Sector may not need to be registered until 2011. Further details to follow from the ETTA.

## **6 TREASURER'S REPORT.**

Treasurer, Steve Welch wasn't able to attend the meeting because of work commitments however he did forward a copy of the current Association Balance Sheet. The Balance sheet showed that the AETTU tournament had incurred a loss of £138.00. SC asked how the loss was incurred. There was general discussion on the subject and the loss was identified as the increased cost of hiring the venue together with a one off cost of the Association covering the accommodation and meals of Faith Moore (Ken Armson's partner) and flowers for the Mayoress who made the presentations. SC also pointed out that there did not appear to be any income from the purchase of badges and tossers. TP reported that he was in possession of money, which had to be forwarded to the Treasurer, obtained from the sale of AETTU badges. GTay pointed out that the tossers had been obtained to give as free gifts to Association members and therefore there would not be any income. Members agreed that at the next Committee meeting the Treasurer would supply a detailed breakdown regarding the tournament and the purchase of the badges.

**Action 3 - Treasurer to provide breakdown costs re the AETTU competition and the purchase of badges.**

## **7. ENGLISH OPEN.**

Secretary reported that 18 of the 22 English umpires at the Open in Sheffield were members of the AETTU. Members reported many good aspects of the tournament including accommodation, transport, meals and venue. However, all umpires, domestic and overseas, taking part in the Open, considered that there was insufficient umpires to cover the number of games. As a result of 2 other International Open competitions being cancelled approximately 80 additional players entered the Open which resulted in the number of games and playing day being extended but additional umpires were not recruited. As a result the umpires schedule was very busy and on the Saturday was totally chaotic. Umpires also considered that the Umpires' Contoller, Diane Kirkland was overworked and should have been helped by an assistant. The committee had a general discussion on the subject and it was agreed that the Association would submit a report to the NURC, Mike Holt and the Chair of the ETTA with the umpires' review of the tournament.

**Action 4 - Secretary to prepare report for submission to the NURC.**

## **8. SELECTION**

DS reported that a number of umpires were concerned about the selection process for the English Open. Selection had been made by a panel consisting of Richard Scruton, Steve Welch and Stuart Sherlock. Questions were raised as to why the normal NURC was not used to select the English umpires. The NURC had a broad knowledge about umpires' experience.

## **9. RECOGNITION.**

Secretary reported that an Irish Table Tennis Umpires Association (ITTUA) had been created. Secretary had been in touch with the Irish Association to establish its credentials and establish if it could help with the recognition of the AETTU. The ITTUA reported to the ITTA and prepared policy relating to umpiring that was published in the name of the ITTA. The Chair of the ITTA was a member of the ITTUA Committee. The ITTUA appeared to be the equivalent of the ETTA NURC. There was a general discussion on the subject of the ITTUA and it was agreed that the Irish Association was under the auspices of the ITTA and not an independent Association like the AETTU. It was agreed the AETTU would keep in contact with the ITTUA.

## **10. UMPIRES' TOURNAMENT.**

Secretary reported that the 2010 AETTU Competition would take place over the week-end of **3-4th July 2010**. to date there no other tournaments taking place that week-end and it was agreed that the

date of the tournament would not be changed. There was a general discussion about venues for the tournament and DS was tasked with finding a suitable venue.

**Action 5. - Derek Sherrett to find suitable venue for 2010 AETTU Competition**

**11. MAGAZINE.**

Geoff Taylor gave a briefing on the contents of the AETTU magazine which was circulated a few weeks earlier. He had received a number of articles from different members and a copy of the minutes from the AGM. Geoff had included some photos from the umpires competition but the photos in the magazine were of poor quality. There was a general discussion about the magazine. Chair agreed with the circulation of the Standing Order form for members. Committee members to encourage AETTU members to submit articles of interest to the magazine. Chair pointed out that some members probably didn't have wide knowledge about other members and after discussion it was agreed that a list of members' names and their Counties would be included in the next edition of the magazine. This would give new members the opportunity to contact colleagues for advice and mentoring.

**Action 6. - List of AETTU members and their Counties to be included in the next magazine.**

**12. AOB.**

**1. Committee members.**

SC recommended that the numbers of committee members should be increased by two further members. SC pointed out that with the increase of the AETTU membership there should be an increase of member representation on the committee. There was a general discussion on the subject and DS pointed out that all current committee members were IU's. It would be a fairer representation of membership if new committee members were not IU's.

**Action 7. - Committee to consider new members.**

**2. Tournament support**

Chair pointed out that the National Junior tournament was taking place in Sheffield in December. Roger Vardon still needed umpires for the tournament. There was a discussion about umpire availability for tournaments throughout the year e.g. Nationals, BL, VETTS, JBL etc. It was believed that the NURC did not have an up to date contact list for the majority of umpires and it was agreed to offer the list of AETTU membership to the NURC and other tournament organisers.

**Action 7. - Secretary to contact NURC and other organisers re use of members list.**

**13. 2010 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.**

After discussion it was agreed to hold the AETTU 2010 AGM at 14.00hrs on Sunday 1st August 2010 at the Bulkington Village Centre. Warwickshire.

**14. NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING**

**12.00pm Sunday 25th April 2010. Meeting closed at 16.40hrs**

XX

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Sunday 25th April 2010.** Committee Meeting. (Ideas, suggestions) to Tom Purcell

**Week-end 3rd/4th July 2010** Umpires Tournament at Wood Green School, Junction 9 M6 (More details when fully finalised)

**Sunday 1st August 2010** Annual General Meeting at Bulkington Village Hall Near Coventry at 14.00hrs. Further details to follow.

## LETTER SENT TO STUART SHERLOCK RE - ENGLISH OPEN 2009 AT SHEFFIELD

This letter is forwarded as observations by umpires who worked at the recent English Open at Sheffield between 28th October-1st November 2009. It is not a detailed report but the observations are from **ALL** umpires domestic and overseas and include favourable observations and observations in areas where umpires believe there could be improvements.

### PRE - TOURNAMENT

**Selection:** Qualified umpires were invited to apply for selection for the tournament. Invitations were sent to overseas Associations and overseas umpires were selected in plenty of time to organise their transport and accommodation. Overseas umpires received paperwork about the tournament in plenty of time to organise their travel. Domestic umpires also received their instructions in plenty of time for the tournament.

There was some concern by the manner in which English umpires were selected for the tournament. An "independent" panel selected the umpires but all the English umpires could not understand why the NURC was not used to make the selections. Members of the NURC selection panel see the umpires on a frequent basis and are aware of the umpires with the necessary experience to work at the tournament. **Accommodation:** The hotel used to house the umpires was a good quality hotel which supplied good quality food. The restaurant's staff accommodated persons with dietary issues and supplied alternate meals from the regular menu. The restaurant in the hotel stayed open until 11pm each evening which was fortuitous because most evenings umpires and other officials were not returning to the hotel until after 10pm because of the hectic playing schedule.

**Transport:** The shuttle service between the hotels and the EIS was very good and ran every thirty minutes in both directions.

**Parking:** Parking for umpires' vehicles was supplied at a multi-story car park near the hotel. The hotel had a concession of £10 per day with the car park. A driver carrying other umpires in his car could claim the full 24 hours parking fee but umpires travelling on their own could only claim £5 per day. For one reason or another some umpires travelled on their own and considered it unfair that they could not claim the full 24hrs rate.

### VENUE

The EIS is a dedicated sporting venue with good facilities and access from all areas. On the first 3 days of the tournament there was a 12 table layout with spectator seating on the four sides of the courts. Spectators were close to the playing area but they did have trouble seeing the small score boards on the umpires' tables on the courts furthest from their seating.

On the first day of the tournament table numbers were attached to the side of the umpires' table, however, the majority of the spectators, who could not see the sides of the tables, had difficulty in identifying the courts. This problem was quickly identified by the organisers and from the second day numbers were displayed on poles close to the individual courts. Spectators also had trouble identifying players during the tournament. It is appreciated that ITTF Regulations only allow players' numbers for qualification rounds but on the first 3 days players displayed a players' number or their name on their shirts. Because of the distance between the spectators and some of the courts, spectators had great difficulty in identifying players without numbers.

This difficulty was even greater on day 4 when the playing area was reduced to a four table layout and some players, who had qualified from the qualification rounds, were allowed to play without a name on their shirts.

An umpires' rest room was created close to the restaurant and near to the playing area. Tea, coffee and water were supplied for the umpires. On the first day 1 bottle of water was supplied per umpire per day, however, this quickly ran out because of the heat and long working day. This problem was passed to the organisers and from the second day there was plenty of water together with a plentiful supply of fruit in the umpires' room.

The restaurant for match officials was open between 12.00 - 14.30hrs each day. There was plenty of food which consisted mainly of pasta and rice dishes but a number of umpires had dietary issues and were not able to eat the food. In addition the restaurant closed at 14.30hrs. and a large number of umpires and other officials continued working until late in the evening without access to refreshments until arriving late at the hotel after the day's play.

## **UMPIRING**

### **Umpires' Briefing:**

There was an umpires' briefing in the hotel on the evening before the tournament commenced. The Referee and Deputy Referees were present together with the Tournament Organiser, Mike Holt. During the briefing umpires were given a written guidance from the Referee together with a list of umpires' pairings. The Referee re-enforced his guidance with a verbal briefing. The umpires schedule was not distributed until the following morning, before start of play and all umpires required to be present for the first period of play.

### **Umpires' schedule - Days 1-3:**

When the umpires schedule was circulated on the first day of the tournament a number of errors were identified in the schedule with umpires recorded as umpiring, assisting and (*resting???*) at the same time. This was quickly identified and corrected.

The umpires' schedule was very busy. Umpires were working from first play until late in the evening. When the Open was first organised approximately 240 players were due to take part in the tournament and 19 pairs of umpires were identified for the first 3 days of the tournament. However, two major international tournaments, which were due to take place around the same time, were cancelled and approximately 80 additional players were registered for the English Open. This required the playing schedule to be extended for the first 3 days, unfortunately the number of umpires was not increased and as a consequence the umpires had an extremely busy schedule.

Players numbers were not distributed to players before the first round of matches. The numbers were sorted out by the Umpires' Controller and helpers during the first session and distributed by umpires to players from the start of the second session.

It is normal practice at international tournaments that visiting umpires are given a half day break to visit local tourist attractions or shop before they return home. This is normally spread - out between the umpires during the tournament but because of the shortage of umpires and the very busy schedule the visitors were not given a break until the Saturday morning with unfortunate consequences.

### **Umpires' schedule - Day 4:**

On the afternoon and evening of day 3, six English umpires who were only due to umpire for the first three days of the tournament finished their schedule and returned home. On the Saturday morning (day 4) a number of overseas umpires were given a half day break from umpiring. The venue was reduced to 4 courts and each match had an umpire, assistant umpire and two "twiddlers" Each match was scheduled for 45 minutes and in the following match the umpire and assistant swapped with the 2 "twiddlers". New teams umpired for the 3rd and 4th sessions. The umpiring parties and players, from the 4 show courts, were expected to march onto the courts in unison.

One of the matches in the first session on day 4 took over 1 hour to complete. This knocked the playing and umpires' schedule out of sync. As the day progressed other matches over ran and caused chaos with the umpires and playing schedule for the rest of the day. A number of overseas umpires had a half day break on the Saturday morning and therefore were not available to assist with the matches. Even though there was chaos with the schedule, umpires on rest breaks and waiting to *son* or finish their schedules volunteered, at short notice, to umpire, assist or "twiddle" as needed and resulted in at least one umpire to work continuously for 3.5 hours without a break.

**Umpires' Controller:** During the course of the tournament the one umpires' controller was placed under a great deal of pressure dealing with a very full and chaotic playing schedule. All of the umpires were pleased with the controller but felt that a second controller should have been used due to the very busy schedule and long playing days.

**Conclusion:** The English Open was located in a good venue with good facilities for the players and spectators. There were favourable comments from spectators and players about the tournament, however, behind the scenes the increase of players without an increase in umpires placed a great deal of pressure on the Umpires, Controller, Referee and Deputy Referees. The organisers knew about the increase in players a few weeks before the tournament and should have taken steps to recruit a further 10 umpires. This would have allowed for a morning and the late umpires' schedule.

There are always issues and problems that arise during a tournament, however, an increase in umpires together with the increase of players would have reduced the vast majority of problems incurred by the umpires and match officials.

**Tom Purcell - Secretary AETTU**

## **MY TRIP TO THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2009**

We all know what a great nation Hungary is in the world of table tennis and it was that 'mystique' that prompted my visit last year.

My father and I agreed we should visit somewhere, having not been on holiday together since I was a lad. Neither of us had been to Hungary before, so I decided an option might be to spend a long week-end to coincide with their National Championships.

I contacted their association and found myself conversing with their General Secretary. Their dates conferred with ours, i.e. March. All piecing together quickly, a couple of weeks later my father and I were enjoying a bowl of goulash in Budapest. We spent the week-end touring the city; the Zoo, the Danube and the 500 year old Turkish Baths, visiting the table tennis on Sunday afternoon.

The Championships were held in a basketball court with seating for spectators slightly elevated on two sides. There was no entry fee at the door, no trade stands, six tables and a control desk located off to the side, behind the playing arena about 4 umpires and their assistants, the referee and his assistant. My father and I took our seats in stands quickly aware we were among family and friends. The proceeding were calm, controlled and very well managed as one would expect.

Richard Walters Umpire from Surrey

## **JOHN HARDCASTLE WRITES**

I thought this little snippet out of a church magazine would be apt for all of our umpires to read.

"In life, we face many obstacles, long and short, thick and thin, off and on. In our personal journeys towards becoming better people, we gain personal friendships, lasting memories, and many other experiences which help us continue in life along the right road with right people. These people are called friends. In good times, friends are easy to make and keep. If the world was pure and good, everyone would be friends, but that is not true. True friends are those who stand with you through good and bad, easy and hard times. A friendship without hard times is like a muscle. It can die out. A friendship that has endured the difficulties, odds and ends of life will grow and affirm in strength. Remember that a best friend is one that will always listen and be ready to take the pains as well as the good in life standing by your side always".

## **AN APPEAL TO ALL MEMBERS**

It would be appreciated if you could find time to let me have short report to print in the magazine. It could be something that happened at a tournament, something that happened on an overseas trip, a small item which you think would interest members (Like the one above) any suggestions how we could improve the magazine. Or most importantly any way that we could improve the AETTU, we are open to suggestions.

Geoff Taylor.

