

**THE ICT – 1966 TO 2015**  
**A BRIEF HISTORY**



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Cover design from artwork produced by the late Pip Capon for the 25<sup>th</sup> ICT

2015 marked the half-century of the ICT or, to use the formal title initially used, the “Inter-County Junior Badminton Championships”. Over the years this title has undergone subtle changes – sometimes the ‘Inter-County Tournament’, sometimes the ‘Inter-Counties Tournament’ .... hyphens optional. But for the thousands of team and tournament officials, and the tens of thousands of players who have been involved in the event, it’s always been ‘the ICT’ .... and ‘the ICT’ it will always remain!

How did it start? How did it become the annual badminton bonanza we know and love? The following account has been compiled from available documentary sources, supplemented by the recollections of the writer and other colleagues .... and as written records, like memories, are not comprehensive, it’s the best we can manage in the circumstances! If you, your parents .... even your grandparents .... have information which might fill some of the factual blanks or provide additional colour, please let us know.

But – on with the story .....

### **In the Beginning ....**

The ICT had its first outing on Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1966 at the Wyndham School Sports Hall, Egremont, Cumberland. Yes; just a one-day event, although travel to and from the far west of Cumberland involved two further days, the northern motorway network being little more than a series of disconnected urban by-passes at that time .... and some may say that travel in Cumberland hasn’t much changed in the past half-century. Even the Chairman of the Cumberland Schools’ Badminton Association wrote at the time “Cumberland is so remote that we see few major matches of any sort”.

So why hold the event in that county? Because Len Wright, the instigator of the English Schools Badminton Association and its first Secretary came from Cumberland, and persuaded the infant ESBA to hold such an event, and because the Cumberland SBA, formed in 1962, offered to organize it. The ESBA had only been created in July 1965 after an inaugural meeting in Manchester, called jointly by the Cumberland and Lancashire Schools’ Associations and attended also by Essex and Hertfordshire. So, with financial and organizational support offered by Cumberland SBA and the County Council, and accommodation provided by the near-by Ingwell School, it was an obvious choice.

Another reason was the opening of Wyndham School “.... with its large sports hall”, such provision being quite novel in those days where school indoor sports facilities were usually low-ceilinged gymnasia. Two members of the organizing committee were Ian Graham (Overend School, Whitehaven), and Harry Jarvis (Workington Grammar School), both of whom remain actively involved in badminton in Cumbria and Yorkshire respectively. (In those early days the ESBA was very much a teacher-lead, schools-based organization, although ‘outsiders’ were being added to the ranks from the 1980’s.)

By 1966 the ESBA had expanded to include Warwickshire, London Schools and Birmingham Schools, but only four teams entered the first ICT .... and only three turned up – Cumberland, Lancashire and London. Cumberland won, and were presented with the Gannon Trophy – donated by supporters from the county. (The trophy remained in use until all space for inscribing the winners’ names was exhausted. New trophies for the top four positions were presented by Warwickshire SBA in recognition of the efforts of County stalwarts Nev MacFarlane, Pip and Netta

Capon as Chairman, Treasurer and Tournament Secretary respectively of the ESBA for many years.) The prize-giving ceremony was followed by a dance – a forerunner of the famous ICT Disco?

The Competition Rules were .... simple; just six in number:

1. Each competing county is allowed a team of 4 boys and 4 girls, plus 2 reserves
2. Counties to play against each other in each event
3. The Tournament will be played under B.A. of E. rules
4. The winning county shall be the one (a)winning the most matches, or in the event of a tie (b)winning the most games, or in the event of a tie (c)scoring the most points
5. The Tournament Referee (appointed by the host county), will be in charge of the Tournament, and his ruling on all matters will be final
6. Team Managers must notify the Tournament Referee of any changes before a match.

The current Rules, not far in spirit from these originals, run to two closely-typed pages .....

Players were told that they must only wear white clothing on court (other colours/patterned clothing was some years away from becoming acceptable badminton clothing), and to score their own matches. And the event was played with RSL synthetic shuttlecocks, as feathers didn't come into official use in junior events until several decades later.

The programme stipulated that the event was “.... restricted to competitors under 16 at 1<sup>st</sup> September 1965”, and ‘Under 16’ remained the age limit until 1999 when the international junior age groups moved from school-year to calendar-year qualification dates, and from even-age to odd-age competition.

### **The Early Years**

By the second ICT membership of the ESBA had increased to ten associations (Wiltshire, Surrey and Sheffield joining those from the previous year), and six counties entered the Tournament. This was another one-day event, held at Harlow Sports Centre in Essex. The teams took sleeping bags and camped out in the Sports Centre – something now virtually unknown in England but still commonplace in parts of continental Europe. Cumberland was again victorious, retaining the Gannon Trophy for another year, with Essex runners-up.

Harlow was again the venue for the 1968 ICT; ESBA membership had expanded to sixteen counties, ten of which participated in the event. The increased numbers meant that the original concept - each county playing all others - had to be abandoned. Teams were allocated to two initial groups, with the top four teams playing a final group to decide the leading positions. It also meant that play now had to extend over a day and a half, with a practice session on the preceding evening. Reversing the results from the previous year, Essex emerged victorious with Cumberland runners-up.

1968 also saw two badminton stalwarts make their first appearances in ICT records – Nev MacFarlane (ESBA Chairman 1967/1990), and Eric Brown (ESBA Chairman 1990/2002 and Schools & Youth Chairman from 2002 when the ESBA and BA of E. amalgamated. Sadly, Nev is no longer with us, whereas Eric .....

A change of venue for the 1969 tournament – Keele University, Staffordshire. 14 of the ESBA's 22 affiliated counties participated, necessitating a further change in format (now four initial groups, with a final play-off group for the four top teams). Although spread over two full playing days, it

still required dropping two of the Singles matches from each tie, and reducing match points from 21 to 15 in order to fit into the court-time available. Essex again ran out winners of the event and retained the Gannon Shield, with Surrey taking the runners-up spot and being awarded the Povey-Richards Trophy.

An unfortunate combination of running boy, plate glass window and substantial repair bill resulted in the ICT's departure from Keele after just one year, the 1970 ICT moving back to Cumberland. Evidently this was not an entirely satisfactory outcome, involving the use of two playing halls on different sites with teams and officials billeted at three hotels some 20 miles away. In consequence the famous ICT Shuttle 'Bus made its first appearance although, even then, some teams had their own transport.

The first U16 National Championships were also held at the event ... involving the same players. As Referee Len Wright commented, "a number of players were very tired when the finals of the Individual tournaments were played, especially those who were involved in the top four (team) play-offs" – something of an understatement, one suspects!

Lancashire won the team event with Nottinghamshire runners-up. In the Individual championships one Nora Perry (*nee* Gardner) took the Girls Singles title as well as playing a full part for Essex in the team competition.

### **Home to Roost**

Following a suggestion from ESBA Vice-Chairman Stewart Robertson (from Nottinghamshire), the 6<sup>th</sup> ICT in 1971 saw the event's arrival at Nottingham University where the problems of finding suitable accommodation for the growing number of teams and officials near to playing venues were finally overcome. As the programme for the event commented – "it is very difficult to find a venue for this tournament. We have been very lucky in being allowed to play at Nottingham University. We would like to come back next year. We will be invited again only if the behavior of all players is satisfactory" .... which, presumably, it must have been!

Players were advised that "boys are not allowed in Ancaster Hall or girls in Sherwood Hall. This rule will be strictly enforced under all circumstances and players ignoring it will be asked to return home". A rather more relaxed approach to sexual segregation was subsequently adopted.

1971 also saw the first 'foreign' team entering the ICT, Ulster taking that honour. The ESBA's involvement in international competition began only in 1968 (England v Scotland), followed the next year with a match against Denmark, and in 1971 with an England/Scotland/Ireland triangular. Ulster was to be the first of many non-English teams, normally drawn from Scotland and Wales, and with Leinster becoming a 'regular' from the mid-1970's onwards. But only one continental team to date – Duinwijk from The Netherlands making a single appearance.

The growth in ESBA membership continued apace with 27 counties by 1972, 16 of which competed in that year's ICT. By now something approaching the current repechage system was in place so that it wasn't only the top handful of counties which went into the second round to compete for the final placings. Lancashire won their third successive title, with Ulster as runners-up (Ulster were to continue their run of success by achieving 3<sup>rd</sup> place in both the following two years).

Once again the U.16 Individual Championships were held to coincide with the ICT and, if that wasn't enough, they also shoe-horned the first National Schools Competition Final into just three

playing days at Nottingham (no doubt the child protection lobby would have something to say if such an arrangement was tried now!). Mercifully the 'Top Schools' departed for pastures new the following year, but the National Championships continued hand-in-hand with the ICT until 1975 when the event moved initially to Blackpool.

The 1974 ICT was the last to be played on the 'traditional' county boundaries. Local Government re-organisation that year resulted in the creation of Metropolitan Counties covering the main conurbations, and some but not all counties opted to use these new groupings. A couple – Greater Manchester and Humberside – played in the 1975 tournament but the majority– Avon, Cleveland, Merseyside and Tyne & Wear - didn't appear until 1976 or later. Additionally, Cumberland and Westmorland were merged to create 'Cumbria', and Herefordshire and Worcestershire were combined to form the even less originally-titled 'Hereford/Worcester'. Many of the local government changes were short-lived, as were some of the newly-created Schools Badminton Counties; with the exception of Avon, all the Metropolitan-based counties had been reabsorbed into the traditional BA of E counties by 2004. However, when first created, they did provide a windfall of additional counties for the ICT with numbers increasing from 16 in 1973 to 22 in 1975 and to 32 in 1976 (albeit helped by some of the aforementioned 'foreign' teams and by both Derbyshire and Yorkshire fielding 'B' teams). Moving the U16 National Championships to another date freed up court time, but it still required play on the now-traditional four days. 32 teams was considered the ideal number for the tournament, and this figure was maintained until 1983 when increasing demand from English counties resulted in all entries being accepted ..... and the playing format adjusted to suit. Numbers subsequently stabilized around the upper 30's, with a high water mark of 42 in 1986.

While the 12-court facility at Nottingham University was adequate in the short-term, once team numbers went beyond 32 additional court time was required. Nottinghamshire BA came to the rescue with the 'county courts' at Chilwell Olympia, supplemented by day-time use of the 'public courts' at the same venue. The Sports Hall at Sandiacre Friesland School was in regular use for many years but, with Easter being a moveable feast and school term-times sometimes impinging on ICT dates, other venues in and around the city had to be utilized; the Trent Polytechnic air-hall and Rushcliffe Leisure Centre were two examples. The construction of the Jubilee Campus Sports Hall resolved some of these problems when it was used from the 2006 ICT onwards.

In 1986 a Sporting Spirit Trophy was introduced. Voted for by team managers following consultations with their players, it was intended to reward the most sporting team at the event .... and duly did, although the tendency was for it to go to smaller counties who were unlikely to figure among the medalists. And so it remained until 1994, when Leinster not only won the ICT but the Sporting Spirit Trophy as well. (Some folk reckoned this latter award owed as much to the .... hospitality and cabaret provided for officials in the bar by the Leinster parents and supporters as it did to any on-court efforts by the team, but this must surely have been a case of sour grapes.) Unfortunately the Trophy didn't make the return trip from the Emerald Isle the following year, and the award went into abeyance .... although the whole event has always been played with a high level of good sportsmanship which, given the numbers of players and the intensity of play, is pretty remarkable.

The attached summary sheet records the finishing places of counties over the past 49 years, albeit with a few blanks where either the records are incomplete or the playing format didn't produce final positions for more than the top few counties.

## **Sponsors, Shuttles, Subsistence and Suchlike**

Although RSL Shuttlecocks were used for the ICT in the early days, Carlton were the major suppliers of synthetic shuttles to schools for several decades and were quick to offer support when the tournament began (they even took out an advertisement in the 1966 Programme).

Subsequently Carlton synthetic shuttles were used for all ICTs until 1995 ..... by the simple expedient of donating all that were needed as well as providing the ESBA with hard cash! In 1990 – the Silver Jubilee of the event – it was decided to use feather shuttlecocks for the first time, again provided by Carlton (prompting one Junior Tournament Secretary, a keen ornithologist, to resign in protest at the impact on bird life!) Later shuttle suppliers included Victor and Ashaway; Yehlex came on board in 2002 and continue to support the event.

In 1976 the ESBA secured its first ICT title sponsor – Hearts of Oak Insurance Company – and they remained for the next five years. Thereafter, Carlton were the only recognized sponsor until 1996 when Victor Sports took over. Harrod became title sponsor in 2004 and have remained to the present time.

Over the years teams and officials have been accommodated in the majority of Halls of Residence on the University campus although, latterly, Sherwood and Derby halls have been the most regular venues for the 500+ ICT folk. Initially it was possible to provide all three daily meals in Hall but, as the playing schedule got tighter and the use of outside playing venues greater, the ‘packed lunch’ was introduced.

The ICT Disco – almost as memorable as the event itself – had its origins in the simple expedient of trying to find something to occupy those teams which didn’t have matches on the final evening, the joys of TV, table-tennis and bar billiards having begun to pall after three days. Yorkshire SBA suggested a disco and offered to help run it .... and so it came to pass. Initially held in the Portland Building on the far side of the campus, it subsequently moved to one or other of the Halls of Residence to avoid the lengthy late-night trek back and the possibility of losing players in the woodland areas en route .....

Incidents? There’ve been a few. The player found sleeping in the Team Manager’s car with the Manager’s dog occupying his room (the dog was unhappy in the car!); players disqualified for breaking the night-time curfew; all players being summoned from their beds to investigate the disappearance of the pool table balls (subsequently found in said pool table, jammed in with a coke can); various games of ‘hide and seek’ in and around the Halls of Residence (players hiding/officials and team managers seeking); the occasional over-indulgence of liquid refreshment.... But with several hundred lively teenagers, significantly fewer problems than one would expect to encounter on a Saturday night in any town in the country.

The ‘ESBA Shop’ made its first appearance at the ICT in the 1980’s with a modest selection of badges, T-shirts and furry animals, sold from a small table on the Sports Hall balcony. Things have moved on somewhat, and we now have the sports goods emporium in the Upper Practice Hall. This was run for a decade or more by Fran and Glen Foye and, when they moved on, the tradition was maintained by Ian Little/Yehlex. Similarly ‘team photographs’ began in 1991 and have become something of an ICT institution since then.

## **Keep it in the Family**

At the 25<sup>th</sup> ICT we celebrated the first known 'parent and child' appearances – Memet Nevzat for London in 1966 and his daughter Sarah for Bedfordshire in 1990. Since then they've come thick and fast – Karen and Ben Beckman, Nora and Lee Perry, Chris and Sam Dobson, Darryl and Kris Roebuck, Jill and Jenny Wallwork, Glen and Elaine Foy, Sue Louis, Alex and Ben Lane – and many more besides. We await with interest the arrival of the third generation of players to compete at the event .....

Of the thousands of youngsters who've played at the ICT some have gone on to become stalwarts of their senior county teams, or to make sideways moves into coaching, sports administration and the like. Past players figure prominently amongst the ranks of ICT Team Managers and tournament officials. And for some, international honours at senior level beckoned, as the attached su

## **ICT PLAYERS KNOWN TO HAVE REPRESENTED ENGLAND AT SENIOR LEVEL**

(Year shown is first at ICT; number of England appearances in brackets. International representation from BE records correct at September 2014)

**Bedfordshire** Gail Emms 1990 (68)

**Buckinghamshire** Nicola Beck 1988 (25); Nathan Rice 1996 (3)

**Cheshire (inc. relevant areas of Greater Manchester and Merseyside)** Ella (Miles) Tripp 1991 (38); Helen Davies 2001 (4)

**Cumbria (formerly Cumberland and Westmorland)** Margaret (Beck) Lockwood 1966 (46)

**Derbyshire** Donna Kellogg 1992 (87); Kristian Roebuck 1995 (7)

**Devon** Sue (Louis) Lane 1980 (27); Miles Johnson 1980 (10)

**Dorset** Graham Hurrell 1989 (5)

**Essex** Keith Arthur 1968 (4); Nora (Perry) Gardener 1969 (90); Barbara (Giles) Sutton 1969 (49); Richard Outterside 1977 (30); Tracy Dineen 1984 (1); James Anderson 1989 (20); Ian Pearson 1989 (10); Emma Chaffin 1989 (9); Peter Jeffrey 1991 (5); Sarah Walker 2003 (10)

**Gloucestershire** Nick Ponting 1983 (56); Robert Nock 1986 (3); Ian Sullivan 1991 (13); Rebecca Pantaney 1991 (10)

**Hampshire** Nigel Tier 1973 (38); Helen (Troke) Alcock 1978 (115); Claire Palmer 1981 (3); Alison Humby 1987 (18); Andrew Smith 1998 (33)

**Hertfordshire** Natalie Munt 1991 (21); Liza Parker 1995 (6); Suzanne Rayappan 1995 (12); Rachel Howard 1999 (3)

**Jersey** Elizabeth Cann 1991 (40); Mariana Agathangelou 2003 (12)

**Kent** Ray Rofe 1972 (6); Nick Yates 1976 (105); Gill Clark 1977 (14); Jo Muggerridge 1983 (40); Peter Knowles 1984 (39); Neil Waterman 1990 (2); Sarah Hardaker 1990 (31)

**Lancashire (inc. relevant areas of Greater Manchester and Merseyside)** Peter Bullivant 1967 (2); Kathy (Redhead) Cashmore 1970 (1); Andy Fairhurst 1984 (4); Chris Hunt 1983 (91); Jill (Pringle) Wallwork 1977 (2); Joanne (Wright) Nicholas 1989 (36); Michael Edge 1991 (8); Ian Palethorpe 1996 (1); Harry Wright 2000 (4)

**Lincolnshire** Joanne Davies 1987 (44)

**Middlesex** Dipak Tailor 1978 (53); Rajiv Ouseph 2000 (59)

**Northamptonshire** Julian Robertson 1986 (47)



**Northumberland (inc. relevant areas of Tyne & Wear)** John Quinn 1985 (47)

**Nottinghamshire** Nathan Robertson 1992 (111); Anthony Clark 1993 (106); David Lindley 1993 (24); Andrew South 1994 (20); Robert Adcock 2001 (5); Chris Adcock 2002 (21)

**Oxfordshire** Julie Bradbury 1983 (43)

**Staffordshire** Tracey Hallam 1988 (81)

**Surrey** Karen (Bridge) Beckman 1972 (83); Fiona (Elliott) Smith 1979 (76); Julie Munday 1983 (16); Wendy (Poulton) Wadsworth 1979 (1); Chris Langridge 1999 (14); Ben Beckman 2003 (3); Samantha Ward 2004 (3)

**Sussex** Karen (Puttick) Chapman 1973 (37); Steve Baddeley 1976 (143); Gill Gowers 1978 (123); Tanya (Groves) Woodward 1986 (10); Simon Archer 1987 (88); Joanne (Wright) Goode 1987 (61); Stephen Isaac 1989 (1); Heather Olver 2000 (8)

**Warwickshire** Steve Butler 1978 (74); Wendy (Massam) Bayliss 1978 (3); Julia Mann 1985 (87); Mark Constable 1990 (19); Jill Pittard 1992 (14); Chris Tonks 1998 (4)

**Wiltshire** Pete Bush 1983 (13)

**Worcestershire (inc. relevant areas of Hereford/Worcester)** Chris Dobson 1978 (28)

**Yorkshire** Paula Kilvington 1972 (8); Mike Brown 1973 (21); Mike Adams 1980 (5); Dave Wright 1981 (34); Justine Willmott 1986 (6); Paul Trueman 1997 (1); Robin Middleton 2000 (9); Jenny Wallwork 2001 (36); Andrew Ellis 2002 (4); Marcus Ellis 2004 (3); Gabbi (White) Adcock 2004 (23); Kate Robertshaw 2005 (4); Jess Fletcher 2008 (2)

mmary shows – again, two generations of past ICT players figuring in a few instances. Not only in badminton have past players made their mark – the Durham and England cricketer Graham Onions (Tyne & Wear 1996); Leeds United footballer Andrew Couzens (Yorkshire 1991); TV and stage actor Ralf Little (Greater Manchester 1996) to name but a few.

### **The Future is .... ?**

The ICT has certainly come a long way since its humble beginnings, but how will it fare over the coming years? We know that the University has plans to re-develop the Sports Centre which, when completed, will result in a bigger and better venue for the event .... and a probable reduction in the need for courts at outside venues (with consequent benefits for match scheduling and fewer problems caused by road works, traffic jams and unscheduled shuttle 'bus disappearances!) On the downside, many universities are converting their Halls of Residence into student flats with less formal eating arrangements; will Nottingham follow suit? Only time will tell .... and in another 25 or 50 years (unless medical science has worked yet further wonders on the ageing process!), some other writer will have to continue the story of this great event.