

## **JAMES BERRY RETAINS TITLE OF CLUB CHAMPION**

It is very fitting I think that following a very successful season for the club with multiple awards and achievements both for teams and individuals that it all culminates in the popular Club Championships which has a greater attraction than the Leicester Closed. Although, it must be said, I have not seen any results of that this year.

The first thing to happen was for Frank Gao to step in at the eleventh hour to take the place of the not very well Catherine Lv in the Open Singles – hopefully Catherine has recovered. Frank was up second and took a game off Terry Clifton for 1-1 before the latter won the next two 11-8, 11-4 to progress to the final.

Before that James Berry and Karen Smith revived their often played opposition with the two of them sharing the first two games before James was able to stamp some authority to win 11-4, 11-4.

I think it is the first time Ross Adams had reached a final and it was Karen once again stepping forward for the Veteran Singles with the first two games shared for the third set in a row. Karen had won the first 11-4 but Ross seemed change tactics a little and began to get on top, winning the next three games 11-5, 11-7, 11-7 for a well deserved title.

Breaking off at this point for a few refreshments and tea or coffee organised by Shirley Pickering and friends with many able to catch up with those they perhaps had not seen for a while before moving on to the second half and the handicap events.

Pity the club does not have full details of the last few years of how many times Martin Pember has reached this stage in one or the other, or both, of these and here he was once again, this time partnering Ayhan Celik in the doubles with no advantage to either facing Terry Clifton and Penny Eames. Terry and Penny built up a lead in the first before Martin and Ayhan fought back but not quite able to get on terms at 21-19 to the former. The second game was clear cut all the way with Terry and Penny running out winners at 21-9.

The Handicap Singles found the two youngsters who had contested the Cadet Singles this time with Ethan Hu receiving 5 against Muhammad Osman, the latter making that start count at 21-18. Then Ethan found some great moves that got better as he gradually hit top form to win the next two 21-13, 21-8.

What can one say about James's success, his fifth Open title in succession. The first game was a cracker and could have gone either way, James winning by a short head at 15-13, and then took a 6-0 lead, looking ominous. Terry Clifton fought back brilliantly and it was his turn to get the verdict at 12-10. From this point we saw why James has won so often as he upped his game to take the next two against a valiant opponent 11-8, 11-4.

The Hard Bat singles was a little disappointing in attracting only 10 on the night, less than half of last season, with Shirley beating organiser, Chris Parmar-Saville in one semi and Cayden Cheung overcoming Jack Bitenieks in the other. In the final Shirley's experience shone through to come through 15-9, 15-3.

**NOTE:** I used the same Word Document this time that I did last year with exactly the same heading. Will that heading change next season?

John Bowness.