

Federation of Crown Green Bowls

Press Officer

Tel: 0113 253 9033

Email: holgate249@btinternet.com

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Sixty Plus Merit 2014

The Sixty-Plus Merit, now in its tenth year, was held at its traditional venue, Owley Wood Sports and Social in Weaverham near Northwich, and attracted an entry of forty-one players which included six ladies. The excellent two Green facility with its first class catering and ever helpful staff provided, once again, the perfect stage for the Merit. The winner for the fourth time, following his first win in 2007, was Bolton's evergreen John Mort.

John won it the hard way as he started in the Preliminary Round and won six games to pick up the trophy and the £80.00 first prize but few of his opponents gave in easily. Bill Atkinson (Wallasey) was the first to challenge John and reached nineteen, 2012 winner Peter Rowles (Grange Valley) came next and totalled fifteen followed by John Brooker (Cheshire) who was to reach seventeen. In the quarter-finals Roy Mack (Middleton) was the next to challenge John and was level at eighteen but failed to trouble the scorer further and in the semis Brian Hoole (East Lancashire) led 6 – 5 in the early stages but faded to see John through to the final with a 21 – 11 score-line.

In the other half of the draw John Sharp (Halifax), in contrast to multi winner John, was entered in the Merit for the first time and had avoided the Preliminary Round to come through his First Round game with a comfortable win against Ralph Westwell (East Lancashire) and then had a bye into the quarters where he met and defeated the holder of the title Joe Carr (Bury) 21 – 13 to move into the semis where he met his Halifax teammate Michael Skwarek and proceeded to the final with a 21 – 15 result, despite a late six end winning burst by Michael.

In the final it was John Sharp who took an early lead, winning eight of the first thirteen ends, all but one to singles however, to lead 9 – 7 at that stage only for John Mort to take control with five consecutive pairs. Sharp was not deterred and fought back to win five of the next six ends to get within two charks at 16 – 18 before John Mort finished off his opponent with a pair and a single.

Of the six ladies taking part Linda Mitchell (Wallasey) and Glenys Cullingworth (Doncaster) went the furthest, both reaching the last sixteen. Halifax & District would be pleased with the performance of their entrants having three in the last eight when no other affiliate had more than one.

Brian Holgate
Press Officer