

Witcham, Home of the Official World Peashooting Championship

Since 1971 the World Peashooting Championship has been held at Witcham. We are a small village and the original championship was staged to raise funds for the Village Hall.

Like all good stories, the 'Peashoot' has a curious and amusing origin.

The village schoolmaster, Mr Tyson, caught some mischievous pupils amusing themselves by ping-ponging their unfortunate schoolmates with peas and he confiscated the offending weapons.

At the time the village had identified a need for a village hall and they were seeking ways to raise funds, Mr Tyson came up with the idea of a World Peashooting Championship. The idea was an instant success and was central to each year's fund-raising activities. The hall was duly built on land gifted by Mr Harrison and each year since the 'Peashoot' has featured at the Annual Village Fair which finances the upkeep of the village hall. We are always seeking funds to maintain the hall facilities at a high standard; to give the local people the amenities they deserve, and to reflect the praiseworthy efforts of those who provided the hall. In common with most rural communities we find that there are few facilities available in small centres of population. We have many thriving groups in the village and we try to keep the cost of using the amenities at a reasonable level. Against this background any additional funds are vital to the upkeep and improvement of the hall.

However, the Championship also gives us a unique point of focus and it is run in conjunction with the Village Fair. We have village games on the green, stalls, a barbecue, cream teas and other traditional features all of which bring the community together in a way that is unusual in this day and age.

Sadly Mr Tyson passed away in 2003 and many of the "the old school" in Witcham carry memories of their time under his "guidance" and for this reason and as a token of thanks of what he did for Witcham the Parish Council funded the purchase of the John Tyson Shield on which the champion's name will be recorded each year.

We have, in the past had champions from abroad and some years ago some innovations such as laser sights and telescopic sights have been used, but often the traditionalists have held sway. The introduction of these highly innovative ideas had for some years been a source of keen interest from the media and raised the national profile of the event, however some felt that it gave an advantage to those with sights. The case has not been proven either way, but in an effort to resolve any potential conflict the Village Hall Management Committee, being the ruling body introduced a new Specialist Class for those using sights of any sort. To date this category has not proved popular, but it remains in the programme for anyone seeking to win a world championship !! We think it might make a useful team-building project, or schoolroom exercise.

Visitors have come from, the USA, Scandinavia, France, Spain, New Zealand and Holland.

For three years the Open Champion was teenager David Hollis of Witcham taking his last title by beating his father George, who as a former champion displayed his skills by appearing on the TV show " YOU BET". The event continues to be dominated by the youth of Witcham, 15year old Keil Prance winning in 2002, and 15 year old Danny Miles winning in 2004.

1998 champion Tom Walker using a standard peashooter also appeared on 'The Big Breakfast' with Johnny Vaughan & Denise Van Outen

In 2000, three TV programmes sent crews to cover the event;-

Channel 5/Sunset&Vine 'The Core', BBC 'Linford's Record Breakers ', & 'BBC Friends Like These'. In 2007 the BBC spent the afternoon filming the Pea Shooting for the Sunday Morning programme 'Countryfile', and Star Radio provided their Bouncy Castle.

Contact Joy Walker

tel. 01353 778657 or E-Mail - peashoot@witcham.org.uk

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