

Gravesend is not what you might describe as on the tourist map but 170 bowlers and guests descended on the small Kent town this July for the Sportsmanship Games, a little sight-seeing and a lot of fun.

Some of the Stirling contingency arrived on the Wednesday, so they could go sight-seeing in London. I together with a few others arrived on Thursday, in order that I could get things in place. Then all bar a few arrived throughout Friday, getting settled in and grabbing a few games of practice.

Friday night has now become the traditional quiz night, run fiendishly well by Peter Fyles. This year the ante was upped to an entry fee of £2 per person, with all the money raised going to charity. The evening provides a nice ice-breaker in to the tournament with friendships made and renewed and banter-a-plenty. Team Wantz had been triumphant for the past two years but this time it was a combination of Brooklyn Heights and Spin Reapers who were brain-boxes of the evening and donated their £150 to **Marie Curie**. Runners-up were Pick 'n' Mix who donated their £50 to **Cystic Fibrosis**. Both teams were rewarded with a large box of chocolates and some hotel vouchers that would come in handy at the bar the next evening.

There may have been a few late night revelers but the majority were tucked up in bed by midnight, ready for the early start the next day. With the hotel completely taken over by "Gamers", the catering arrangements changed slightly with everyone having to grab breakfast within an hour window and it was served as the "Full Monty" - very quickly and efficiently, I might add.

Finding the bowling centre from the hotel was not the easiest of tasks, even with Sat Nav but everyone mastered it in the end and all made it in time for the first squad of singles. I played my introductory pieces of music, made a little speech and the 14th Sportsmanship Games was under way.

Following the singles there was a break for lane maintenance and the chance for everyone to tuck in to the extensive buffet put on by the centre. I also played a montage of music where bowlers had to guess the connection in order to win a £20 drinks voucher. My warped sense of humour linked Gravesend to a theme of "death" which was guessed by quite a few. I am afraid I forget who the winner was – but maybe that is because they never treated me out of their winnings!

The doubles took care of the second part of the day and was all done and dusted by 6.30pm – giving everyone ample time to get ready for the evening's proceedings.

Saturday night is always a highlight and this year was no exception. It is a shame that lack of space for this article prevents me from going in to further detail. However to sum up, all bowlers and guests sat down to a three course meal and were entertained by singing duo "Zodiac" and a rather dodgy DJ,

Adrian who made the mistake of thinking he could rap! Others may say the highlights were Fred Miller and the dancing skeleton or Geoff Rens sailing in his inflatable (with home made paddle) on the lake. The candles from the tables looked rather pretty, as they sailed across the lake as well!

Once the entertainment shut down at 2.00 am a few people remained for a final drink and were in bed by 3.00 - quite tame by comparison to some years.

As Sunday morning dawned it was time for another "Full Monty" and off for the trios. Pat & Kaz Byrne were making their debut at the Games and hadn't quite mastered the art of partying hard AND having to get up early. They were allowed a little grace from forgiving opponents and soon caught up, without any delay to the tournament.

Following the break it was the 6th man event and then the presentation of certificates to all participants, made by Assistant Manager Ray Cooper and team photos. The weekend then reached its climax with the team event, with many medals still to be decided.

As the bowlers finished, they stowed away their gear and then sat down to the post-tournament buffet as the final results were calculated. With the podium in position and medals at the ready, centre manager Kay Ackland, assisted by Angie Barlow made the presentations to the lucky winners.

Mike Duckworth, representing UKTenpin.com was there to take photos, videos and interviews which went out on the internet and was another little added touch to the tournament. It is hoped that coverage will be even greater next year.

Lack of space has prevented me from going in to too much detail but all results and scores can be viewed on the tournament website: www.sportsmanshipgames.moonfruit.com I must however mention the "King of the Games" – young Scottish international Mark McQueen who bagged six gold medals and set a new record in the all events, averaging over 233. Ian Senior deserves a mention for getting close to a 300 – shame I watched the 10th frame and put the kibosh on it!

The final award, the "Good Sport of the Games" went to the Marshall family. Mum Jo had just given birth four weeks earlier but didn't want to miss the event. Dad Simon took equal turns on baby duty and both of them managed to grab some medals (if not sleep) along the way. And baby Kori was the youngest attendee to the games and no trouble at all.

With the final pieces of music playing, the bowlers said their fond farewells and made their way back home or for some, a final night at the Inn on the Lake to discuss the weekends play and wind down with a drink.

And the date for next year: The 15th anniversary will be at AMF Washington on the weekend of August 1st/2nd. Some bowlers are already plotting for next year's antics...and so am I.