

## The Tollemache

About this time of year, mid-October, the County Association sends off its entry to the EBU for the Tollemache. What is the Tollemache?

It is a national inter county teams of eight round robin competition. About 32 counties enter from the Channel Islands to Kent and up to Cumbria plus East Wales. The Tollemache has been held from 1934 and pre dates the EBU which was set up in 1936!

On the first weekend, to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November at the Holiday Inn at Birmingham Airport, the 32 teams are drawn into 4 sections of 8 where each team will play the other 7 in a round robin. In all 98 boards are played over the weekend – equivalent to 4 weeks bridge for a weekly club player. The top two teams from each section then go forward to the final – after recovering from this marathon event – the lucky winners (or unlucky if very tired) go on to repeat another 98 boards on the weekend of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> February at Solihull.

Clearly as it is a national event the counties tend to send their top players. Some of the Counties are big, like Manchester or Middlesex, and will have some very good players; their names may be familiar to you. Although Northants has entered for many years we have not won the event and seldom get past the qualifying round.

In 2014 Northants managed to break through into the final which was a major achievement in itself when looking at the rest of the field. We are pleased when we do well on the initial weekend as we can be up against some very strong teams.

The Northants County Association supports its team by paying the entry fee and making a contribution towards accommodation costs.

The team is selected by the County Selector, Mike Trask and tends to be players who play in the County A team representing the county in the Eastern County League.

This year the team is Mike Trask, Mark Tilley, Ufuk Cotuk, Jim Deacon, Chris Wormleighton, Robert Miller, Daniel Baines, Trevor Thrower and Marcus Witt. You will notice that this is a squad of nine; we are allowed a squad of 12 with some sitting on the bench, resting, for some matches.

The County Association and all the 600 or so players in Northamptonshire wish our team good fortune.

You may wonder where the name Tollemache comes from. We don't know. However there is a Tollemache family originally from Suffolk who go back to before the Norman Conquest – I wonder if they were bridge players back in 1934.

For those who actually play in the event it is fondly known as the Tolle (pronounced Tolly).