



# NatWest International



# The Island Games – The Friendly Games

**Above:** Dan and Allan carry out a measure under the watchful eye of Chris Locke from the Falkland Islands and marker Nicole Le Noury

**Opposite page:** Francis showing how it's done – we allowed the players to watch and learn instead of asking the players to step back and leave the rink

I have experienced some amazing events over the years whilst officiating. Every now and again an event pops up the memories from which will stay with me forever. That was the case with the NatWest International Island Games held on the stunning island of Guernsey

It was the first time bowls had been staged at the Island Games since way back in 2005 in Shetland. So, it was an honour to be invited, along with WBT colleagues Dan Bluett, Francis Fletcher and Mike Davies, to officiate at the week-long event. The weather was glorious when I arrived on the island and whilst it was a shame not to get some sun on my legs due to the bowls being played indoor, it could not have taken place in a better stadium.

The multi-sport complex at Hougue du Pommier also hosted the table tennis and one of the Shooting events for the games and that created a fantastic atmosphere and the opportunity for the public to see three very different sports all in one place. The attendance was great, and it was so nice to be able to speak about bowls to those that had never seen it being

played before. It is clear from the Try Bowls Tuesday events, that the team at Guernsey Indoor Bowls Centre have held post games, that those seeing the game for the first time were keen to try it out for themselves.

As for us officials, well we were just there to help out really!

Well, as I mentioned earlier, it was far more than just helping out as it provided some incredible memories and lasting friendships. First task on arrival was to join the technical meeting, a formal meeting to welcome the competing nations, run through the technical aspects of the event, including the conditions of play and to appoint a jury of appeal.

During my introduction to the officials, I highlighted that we were there to work alongside the players and be part of the team assisting them.

Little did I know that this team

spirit would be so good. It was clear from the outset, that for some of the players, this was also the first time they had played on a full-size indoor carpet and indeed for some the first time playing lawn bowls.

The delightful team from Ynys Mon (Anglesey) were crown green players, but that certainly didn't hinder them at all, and they were excellent competitors.

It was also the first time that many had experienced working with umpires and they were keen to learn all they could from us. We certainly ignored the normal etiquette of asking players to step to the bank whilst we were measuring. Some of the measures we carried out had not been seen before by some of the players. On occasions, it felt like we were training new umpires and we hope that some will go back to their Islands and learn more about officiating.



*“It provided some incredible memories and lasting friendships”*

No event can run without the incredible support from volunteers. The Guernsey Indoor BA should be incredibly proud of the support given to these games by their members, nothing was too much trouble and I mean nothing.

From explaining the game to newcomers, looking after our tea requirements or being our taxi service to the hotel and back and other places around the island.

In my article in July, I wrote about the umpire training weekend held in April on the Island. I was delighted to see the new umpires, Catherine Bonsall, Martyn de Carteret and Nicole Le Noury putting into practice what they learnt that weekend as markers. It was so gratifying watching their development during each game they marked and absorbing all of our feedback and using it in the following games. A huge achievement for those that had very little experience at marking. They did a sterling job alongside established Guernsey officials. Huge congratulations to Catherine for a great job marking the open

singles final between Alison and Ian Merrian.

The memories I take away from the Island Games? Friendship, teamwork, fantastic venue, beautiful island. Oh, and a brilliant wrap up party with singing, dancing, a donkey, and rather dodgy snooker trick shots. Thank you to everyone who made this event a huge success.

**FOOTNOTE:** *At the time of publication, I will be sunning myself – sorry, working very hard on the Gold Coast at the World Championships 2023. It’s going to be a busy event and as a deputy chief technical official, I will be based predominantly out of Club Helensvale. Fifty International Technical Officials from seven countries are descending on the Gold Coast for the 12-day schedule. ITOs will be covering three sessions per day across the five venues in various roles, including umpire, marker, timekeeper, board turners and flag raisers. It is going to be a great event. I will do my best to publish a daily blog from the event which can be found on my website [www.allanthornhill.com](http://www.allanthornhill.com)*