

## Great Melton v Priory - 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024

The green, set in the grounds of the local cricket club, is one on which the Priory team has often struggled for a win and the evening's match would prove a difficult encounter although the friendship between the teams would continue to flourish.

Priory won the toss but gave the jack to their hosts hoping to get an early indication of how they would play and to have the last wood on the first end.

The clement daytime weather had been replaced by thickening clouds and as the first jack of the evening was cast the drizzle began. As the match progressed the weather worsened. The darkened clouds provided an eerie backdrop to the giant iron monsters marching across the countryside in the nearby fields. Although each had an extra leg they portrayed a picture of what listeners may have imagined in 1938 as Orson Welles broadcasted that dramatic story written in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: 'And still they come'.

Players on both teams battled the weather and although Derek Dore played at least half the match in his shirt sleeves, others dressed with more respect for what the skies had to offer: One adopted the appearance of a Victorian judge using a towel as a wig, another looked ready to man the lifeboats in their ankle-length waterproof and one of the hosts produced an umbrella, Mary Poppins style, from their bag.

The Priory team put in a good effort but struggled on all four rinks. Mike Betts made his debut as a number two, but by the end of the match had taken on the role of Skip as the team shuffled the pack in a bid to get on the scoreboard. Their fortunes improved but not enough to claw back the early two-figure deficit. Ivan Freedman, supported by Sandy Harding and Karen Smith, playing her first match as number two, put up a strong display but just missed out on a draw scoring one on their last end when they needed two. Steve Smith, also playing his first match as number two, and Ken Vann supported their Skip to come back from being eight shots down to win by one shot as the Club Captain's wood took three wicks as it worked its way through the head to take the shot on the last end.

Overall, the Priory team lost 44 shots to 64 shots, winning one and losing the other three rinks.

As with the result against Brooke the losing margin had been reduced compared to last season when the visit to Great Melton had resulted in a loss for the Priory team, 48 shots to 75 shots.

After drying their woods and removing their sodden outerwear, both teams retired to the comfort of the facilities provided by the cricket club which they happily share with the bowls club where a good deal of banter ensued between friends old and new. The hosts provided beverages and both teams enjoyed the splendid spread of sandwiches, scones and cakes including that made using a century-old Welsh recipe.

Before everyone departed into the night the Club Captains gave short speeches of appreciation and a raffle was run, with most of the prizes being won by the hosts reflecting how the evening's match had turned out for the Priory team.