

Castle vs University of Manchester 1 **19th October 2014**

Division X: Dave Attwood (vc), Chris Betteridge, Clare Dadswell, Eleanor Hopkins

Division Y: Ann Diskin (c), Christine Wilson, Dan Gooding, Dave Webb

Venue: Gordon Banks Leisure Centre

Castle 1 got off to a flying start to the season with a 24-2 home win over Manchester University at the Gordon Banks, completely bucking the trend of last season when we managed only one win against student opposition, yet inexplicably beat much better city teams. The obvious challenge this season was therefore to maintain our city form whilst finding a way to outfox our university opponents and, on the basis of this match, things look very promising albeit against a team new to playing CEKL2 opposition. In a slightly revised line up since the departure of both Tom Shave and Reuben Hillyer to korfing pastures new, Dan Gooding made his Castle debut scoring an impressive 6 goals (the highest score by any Castle debutant) and vice captain Dave Attwood sank a mighty 9 (the highest in a single game by any Castle player since records began, i.e. since coach Jon can remember). Dave Webb gave his usual strong performance whilst Chris Betteridge (now a Castle veteran in his second season) scored 2 goals. Clare Dadswell and Eleanor Hopkins both netted one each and looked strong against their opponents. All around there was an excellent team performance. We have yet to travel to Yorkshire but, despite the glut of goals, Ann's record of only scoring within Sheffield city limits still looks solidly reliable.

Next up we have newly promoted Leicester Tornadoes, a completely different proposition and the team many think will dominate CEKL2 this season.

Final Score: Home win

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 24

Manchester Uni 1: 2

Castle Scorers: Dave Attwood (9), Dan Gooding (6), Dave Webb (5), Chris Betteridge (2), Clare Dadswell (1), Eleanor Hopkins (1).

Castle vs Leicester Tornadoes 1 **2nd November 2014**

Division X: Dave Attwood (vc), Dave Webb, Christine Wilson, Ann Diskin (c)

Division Y: Clare Dadswell, Dulcie Parcell, Jon Allinson (subbed Chris Betteridge, 35 mins), Dan Gooding

Venue: Regent College, Leics

This afternoon we took a trip along the A50/M1 for our 3pm match against the Tornadoes in Leicester, arriving en masse (in other words with one working substitute (Chris B, rendezvousing safely from his Halloween party in Doncaster, but sadly no longer decked out in our imagined Hulk outfit) and one injured strategist (Eleanor)) almost an hour early, such was our enthusiasm. With Eleanor injured (knee in a SaCKA game), Dulcie Parcell made a very timely debut for Castle, netting an impressive three goals.

Leicester *very* quickly went into an early 6-1 lead as Castle took time to find our feet and, having done so, began to make some headway, if not closing the gap at least sinking a few goals of our own and finishing the first half 13-7 down. Following considerable confusion at the restart (with both teams switching halves several times, until someone finally remembered who was supposed to be

where and doing what - glad it's not just me then) Castle came out strongly for the second half, with Chris Betteridge subbing on for Jon Allinson after 35 minutes. Castle put in a sterling performance, actually getting the better of Leicester in the second half but ultimately the damage had been inflicted in the first five minutes and Castle lost 22-18. However, given everyone thinks Leicester will be one of two teams storming the league this season (the other being Nottingham Uni), our competitiveness against them is a very positive sign (Ann even managed to score a goal outside the city limits of Sheffield!). Heroine of the match goes to Clare Dadswell who had her work cut out trying (successfully) to keep tabs on Jenny Freeman who did not stop all match (and, crucially, did not score). Suffering a huge sugar dip after the match Clare could barely walk, but I feel almost certain if she'd been more animated (i.e. able to talk) she would have been enthusiastically telling us how much she is looking forward to the return match.

Final Score: Away loss

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 18

Leicester Tornadoes 1: 22

Castle Scorers: Dave Webb (5), Dave Attwood (4), Dulcie Parcell (3), Christine Wilson (2), Jon Allinson (1), Chris Betteridge (1), Dan Gooding (1), Ann Diskin (1).

Castle vs University of Nottingham 1

16th November 2014

Division X: Dan Gooding, Dave Wood, Clare Dadswell, Dulcie Parcell

Division Y: Ann Diskin (c), Christine Wilson, Chris Betteridge, Dave Webb

Venue: Gordon Banks Leisure Centre

With Eleanor still recovering from her knee injury, Castle faced a shock late injury withdrawal the evening before our match against Nottingham University. Top scorer Dave Attwood suffered a freak exploding beer bottle accident which involved a sliced thumb, four hours in A&E, an X-ray, two stitches and a huge bandage (way to go Dave!). Fortunately for Castle, long time club player Dave Wood agreed to come to our aid; so we took him out, dusted him off and dropped him right into the middle of a game against probably our toughest opponents this season (we omitted to mention that he'd be playing against a team of very tall, energetic young people who played National League last season). Woody brought along a cheering squad of Katy, Alexander and Erin, armed with rattles and posters, so things finally started looking up.

Castle went down, slowly but inevitably, 6-0 in the first half, but rallied before half time to bring the score to a much more respectable 7-3 and a belief that we might be able to make a real game of this. Unfortunately, Nottingham Uni started the second half with increased belief also, and nicked a couple of early goals. Their front defence, interceptions and ability to find space were all better than Castle's, and we frequently found ourselves bunched up and trying to force the play.

That said, all in all it was a good performance from Castle, an excellent (and much appreciated) return by Dave Wood and we certainly weren't played off the court. With games against the league's two top teams behind us and solid performances in both, we can now look forward to the rest of the season with considerable optimism.

Final Score: Home loss

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 6

Nottingham Uni 1: 16

Castle Scorers: Dan Gooding (3), Chris Betteridge (1), Ann Diskin (1), Dulcie Parcell (1).

Castle vs University of Lancaster 1 **23rd November 2014**

Division X: Dan Gooding, Dave Attwood (vc), Clare Dadswell, Dulcie Parcell

Division Y: Ann Diskin (c) (subbed Eleanor Hopkins, 54 mins), Christine Wilson, Dan Tomkinson (subbed Mike Holdcroft, 42 mins), Dave Webb

Venue: Stanley Matthews Sports Centre

Following two tough opponents in as many weeks, Castle were looking forward to a slightly easier passage this morning in our alternative home venue at the Stanley Matthews Sport Centre. This very quickly proved not to be the case, with Dulcie's old team Lancs Uni showing their mettle early on and taking a 2-0 lead before Dave Webb sank an opener for Castle from the back of the court. Lancs then scored again, before Clare retaliated with a lovely runner. Lancs then hit a seam of form and scored four goals in succession taking their lead to 7-2, before Clare put a stop to the rot and scored a well worked drop-off. Castle and Lancaster then traded goals to end the first half with Castle down 5-9.

Castle came back onto court for the second half ready to take the fight to Lancs and took four goals in succession (a long shot and a free pass courtesy of Dave W and two cheeky pick up shots from Dan G under the post) to finally draw even after 35 minutes. Rattled, Lancaster took a time out and came back on court to score. Forty-two minutes in, Lion Mike subbed for Dan T (who was making his debut for Castle) and Lancs scored again taking the score to 11-9. Clare then scored a runner past her opponent and Lancs scored a drop-off, before Mike made a quick impression on the game and scored a drop-off of his own. Castle and Lancs then traded further goals and, with the score even at 13-13 and six minutes remaining, Ann subbed off for Eleanor and Lancs made a boy substitution. Christine then won a penalty, which Dave W sank with assured self-confidence, putting Castle ahead for the first time all match. Dave W then sank a long shot and Lancs fought back with another drop-off goal, before Dave A sank the last goal of the match - a long shot taking the score to 16-14.

It was all Castle at the end, with a strong attacking finish and with Christine scoring a disallowed defended goal. If only we started as well as we finish. Thanks to Dan T for making his debut and for his generous on court play and to Dave A for playing with half a thumb. Since Castle pulled today's win out of the bag when she subbed off, Ann has decided to view her contribution as that of tactical genius rather than on court liability.

Final Score: Home win

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 16

Lancaster Uni 1: 14

Castle Scorers: Dave Webb (5), Clare Dadswell (4), Dan Gooding (3), Dave Attwood (2), Christine Wilson (1), Mike Holdcroft (1).

Castle vs University of Leeds 1 **30th November 2014**

Division X: Dave Attwood (vc), Chris Betteridge, Clare Dadswell, Duclie Parcell

Division Y: Eleanor Hopkins, Christine Wilson, Jon Allinson, Dave Webb

Sub (not used): Ann Diskin (c)

Venue: Leeds University Sports Centre, Leeds

Castle were at Leeds today and, released from reffing duties (but sadly not infectious head colds from wee young daughter, Jessica), Jon finally got a full game after some considerable time. Castle played solidly in the first half taking a lead of 11-6 into the half time interval. Jon started the second half with a trademark long shot and this was followed up by a successfully retaken penalty by Dave A. Chris B and Dave W both then scored long shots and Eleanor earned a penalty which Dave W duly sank. Leeds then managed to get one back, taking the score to 16-7 in Castle's favour. Castle immediately hit back with a run of three goals - a long shot from Chris B, a runner from Dave W and a long shot from Eleanor. Leeds managed two goals in retaliation but Christine sank a lovely long goal at the end of the match to seal a comfortable win for Castle. Throughout it all Ann shouted encouraging comments from the sidelines and made no attempt whatsoever to sub for an unwell Dulcie who played like a trooper through it all.

Final Score: Away win

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 20

Leeds Uni 1: 9

Castle Scorers: Dave Attwood (5), Dave Webb (5), Chris Betteridge (3), Eleanor Hopkins (3), Jon Allinson (2), Clare Dadswell (1), Christine Wilson (1).

Castle vs Leeds City 2

25th January 2015

Division X: Ann Diskin (c), Christine Wilson, Dave Attwood (vc), Chris Betteridge,

Division Y: Dan Gooding, Dave Webb, Clare Dadswell, Dulcie Pacell

Venue: Gordon Banks

Castle took a steady two goal lead in the first half of our match against Leeds City today and we held the lead to come off at half time 4-3 ahead in an unprecedentedly low scoring half, having seen two goals from Dave A, one from Dave W and a lovely runner from the ever consistent Clare who has really come into her own this season. Leeds started the second half in attack against Dave Webb's division and scored an equaliser fairly early on. Castle responded with a long, flat goal sunk by Dave W, followed by an impressive long shot from near the centre, also scored by Dave W, to take the score to 6-4 in Castle's favour. Eleanor, who had subbed on for Ann at half time, unfortunately succumbed to an injury early on in the second half and was unable to continue. Leeds sportingly allowed Ann to return to the game and the match continued with a full complement of players and a goal to Leeds, taking the score to 6-5. Leeds slowly but surely managed to, from our point of view, frustratingly get their noses in front just as the half was running down, but we held our nerve, pulled it back to 9-9 and with only a few minutes left Ann scored the decisive goal and finished the game in a state of bewildered amazement.

In other news, Lion Mike, our sub for the game, mistakenly went to our home away from home and enjoyed a nice game of basketball at the Stanley Matthews Sport Centre rather than endure our nail biting finish. Next up: Sheffield Uni.

Final Score: Home win

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 10

Leeds City 2: 9

Castle Scorers: Dave Webb (4), Dave Attwood (3), Dan Gooding (1), Clare Dadswell (1), Ann Diskin (1).

Castle vs University of Sheffield 1

1st February 2015

Division X: Dave Attwood (vc), Chris Betteridge, Clare Dadswell, Dulcie Parcell

Division Y: Ann Diskin (c), Christine Wilson, Dan Gooding, Dave Webb

Venue: Gordon Banks

Castle came away with a big win in today's match, facing off against Sheffield University who had spent the previous day playing in the BUCS Regionals (finishing third and qualifying for the Nationals). Tired after their exertions and celebrations, Sheffield were no match for Castle's well drilled team and the first half finished with Castle 11-4 ahead. Consistently a stronger team in the second half, Castle continued this trend; defending well and extending our lead by some considerable margin, so much so that Dave W attempted to score one goal up through the basket (spectacular, but disallowed). Having scored two impressive goals from the half way line, Dan switched his attention to the back of the court and, teetering on the edge at the back having retrieved a loose ball, threw it with impressive force straight over his head and into the hands of a waiting Dave A on the half way line, thus proving his teacher credentials - they really do have eyes in the back of their heads. Castle finished up 28-6 winners and although the game lacked the competitive tension of some of our previous matches this season, it was a good run out and a recovered Sheffield Uni are sure to be a tougher proposition when we play them away later this season.

Final Score: Home win

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 28

Sheffield Uni 1: 6

Castle Scorers: Dave Attwood (9), Chris Betteridge (4), Ann Diskin (4), Dave Webb (4), Dan Gooding (3), Christine Wilson (2), Dulcie Parcell (2).

Castle vs University of Lancaster 1

8th February 2015

Division X: Dave Attwood (vc), Chris Betteridge, Clare Dadswell, Dulcie Parcell

Division Y: Eleanor Hopkins (subbed Ann Diskin (c), 35 mins), Christine Wilson, Dan Gooding, Dave Webb

Venue: Salt Ayre Sports Centre, Lancs

In a complete reversal of our previous meeting this season, away from home Castle took the lead with an early goal from Chris. Lancaster scored one back, before Dave W put away a lovely runner. Lancaster drew even again at 2-2, and Clare responded with an impressive long shot, putting us back in the lead. Chris then sank a cheeky goal under the post to make it 4-2. Lancaster stayed in contention, scoring one back before Castle went on a run, starting with a medium range goal from Dave W, a Dulcie won penalty which Dave A sank, and an energetic display from Chris which ended in a sideways running in goal. Lancaster then scored to bring it to 7-4 in Castle's favour, and won a penalty which they elected to pass to the back and shoot (and miss). Proving that last week's "eyes in the back of his head" pass was no fluke, Dan made a similar pass over his head in today's match, this time finding Eleanor free in his own division on the half way line, and more than happy to sink an impressive long shot. Dave A then scored a Chris won penalty, showing Lancaster that traditional penalties sometimes are the best. Clare heaped yet more woe on Lancaster with her second of the game (I'd say more about it, but I was searching the floor for Christine's missing hair band when it went in and missed it, but the rest of Castle's cheers made it sound like an impressive goal well

worth beholding). Not to be outdone Christine then sank an impressive diagonal goal from near the half way line, taking the score to 11-4. Lancaster pulled one back, before Chris, in yet another energetic display that left his opponent dazed and wondering where he was, scored his fourth of the half. Lancaster ended the half with one of their own making it 12-6 at the interval.

Lancaster showed some of the reason why we had such a close home game against them at the Stanley Matthews, starting the second half with a run of three goals, before Dave A sank one for Castle, making it 13-9. Ann then subbed on for Eleanor and Dave W and Chris B sank two each, putting Castle comfortably back in the lead at 17-9. Lancaster pulled two back, with Dave A scoring two in response. Lancaster missed a free pass, but ended the second half as they had the first, with a goal, making the final score 19-12.

All round it was an excellent performance by Castle. We'd taken on board Dulcie's insightful tactics prior to the match and stayed switched on and communicated well throughout. It was great to see Eleanor back from injury (although snotted up to high heaven) scoring a return goal and what an impressive haul from Chris B (who can drink Ann's water any time). Biggest winning grin of the day goes to Dulcie, who more than enjoyed her return to Lancaster (long may she play with Castle).

Final Score: Away win

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 19

Lancaster Uni 1: 12

Castle Scorers: Chris Betteridge (6), Dave Attwood (5), Dave Webb (4), Clare Dadswell (2), Eleanor Hopkins (1), Christine Wilson (1)

Castle vs Leicester Tornadoes 15th February 2015

Division X: Dave Attwood (vc), Chris Betteridge, Clare Dadswell, Dulcie Parcell

Division Y: Eleanor Hopkins (subbed Ann Diskin (c), 35 mins), Christine Wilson, Mike Holdcroft, Dave Webb

Venue: Stanley Matthews Sports Centre

Played at the Stanley Matthews and billed as the clash of the titans (or the Clare v Jenny rematch), Castle were pumped up for today's early (10am) return leg match against Leicester Tornadoes. Having lost the away match 22-18 in a highly competitive game at the beginning of the season, Castle came into today's match on a five game winning streak, putting Leicester and Castle 1st and 2nd in the league, respectively (conveniently ignoring Nottingham's games in hand).

Rules of sportpersonship (plus terrible observational skills and the retentive powers of a goldfish) forbid me from writing too extensively about today's crushing victory against the league leaders, but not from publishing the score which is a matter of public record.

With Dave A's division starting in attack, Chris (refreshed with Ann's now talismanic beverage, aka tap water from the Upper River Churnet) once again opened Castle's account, scoring the first goal of the match. Leicester responded with a goal of their own, before Dave Webb first won and then converted a penalty. Leicester levelled again, only for Castle to nudge ahead once more with a Dave Attwood runner. The score then yo-yoed back and forth, Leicester levelling and Dave A responding each time, with two long and one medium range goals to take the score to 6-5. Chris, having previously taken a knock to the nose, then defended a (disallowed) goal and Mike (a more than capable replacement for the unavailable Dan) sank a tight running in goal under the post, putting the

first chink of light between us and our opponents. Following the switch, Chris won a penalty which Dave A converted, taking the score to 8-5 at half time and a dramatic ending when a clash between Dave W and his opponent saw his Leicester counterpart sprawled on the floor (fortunately uninjured) shortly before the whistle.

The second half opened with Dave W's division in defence, successfully playing the ball out to the attacking division where Chris emulated his start to the match, scoring the first goal of the second half. Leicester then staged a relentless come-back, scoring three goals on the trot to take the score to a nerve jarring 9-8, at which point Dave A called a time-out and the planned substitution of Ann and Eleanor took place. Having steadied the boat with the time-out, Chris scored his third, a crucial goal taking Castle to 10-8. This was followed up by a goal from Dave W and then a goal from Leicester to make it 11-9. With impeccable timing Dulcie chose this moment to hit a deep seam of attacking form, winning first a penalty (converted by Dave A) and then sinking a gob-smacking long shot (health warning: do not high five Dulcie on the switch after a gob-smacking goal, not if you want to be able to feel your hand any time in the next five minutes). Leicester scored one back, before Dave W sank a long shot and, on the switch, Dave A scored again. Dulcie then executed a beautiful running in shot, wrong-footing her opponent with a delightful display of "snake-hips" to make it 16-10. Leicester, battling to the end, pulled back two further goals but time was not their friend and the match ended 16-12 to Castle.

Leicester proved to be both gracious hosts and welcome visitors; sporting and competitive in victory and defeat. Over the two legs Castle and Leicester tied 34-34 overall and this, more than anything, reflects the competitiveness of the two teams and Castle's improvement as the season has progressed. Castle now march on with six wins under the belt and next up a visit to Manchester.

Final Score: Home win

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 16

Leicester Tornadoes: 12

Castle Scorers: Dave Attwood (6), Dave Webb (4), Chris Betteridge (3), Dulcie Parcell (2), Mike Holdcroft (1).

Castle vs University of Manchester 1

22nd February 2015

Division X: Jon Allinson (subbed Mike Holdcroft, 45 mins), Chris Betteridge, Clare Dadswell, Dulcie Parcell

Division Y: Ann Diskin (c), Christine Wilson, Dan Gooding, Dave Webb

Venue: Armitage Centre, Manchester

Castle fell to a shocking defeat today at the hands of Manchester University in a late afternoon game played out at the Armitage Centre. We opened to an astonishing goal from Christine (it seems if your name doesn't contain "Chris" these days you don't get a look in for Castle's opener). The goal was one of those sweet ones that never even touch the sides of the basket and leaves everyone on court wondering, "Did that go in? Was it just an optical illusion?" Go in it did and Castle were off the mark, managing to keep just ahead throughout the first half in a fairly low scoring game, but never managing to open up the gap we'd hoped to.

Half time saw us a little disillusioned and downbeat, but still convinced we could push-on and take the points. Unfortunately it was not to be; Man Uni eventually equalised and then sneaked one ahead in the dying moments of the match, with Castle unable to pull back.

Despite the disappointing loss, it was yet again a great performance from Chris, who bagged another handful of goals, and from Christine who pulled off two birthday goals. Mike Holdcroft also made an immediate impact, scoring a goal within minutes of his substitution.

Thanks to "Stato" Jon I am able to place today's loss in the context of past Castle ignominious loses to Manchester University. It makes a sorry read; in reverse chronological order:

2015 lost 12-13

Our most recent defeat (made all the harder to bear following our massive 24-2 home win at the beginning of the season).

2014 lost 17-10

Dave A injures himself in the first half and is a passenger for the remainder of the match

2013 lost 12-13

Ann is violently ill the morning of the game and an unsuspecting spectator (lucky old Jo!) is drafted in to play in her place (Jon enjoys dinner at the Trafford centre on his way home).

2012 draw 12-12

Castle were one goal ahead with 30 seconds remaining. Tom was unjustly and quite outrageously called for time wasting, Man Uni get the ball up the other end and score!

In fact, Jon is unable to remember when Castle last won at Fortress Armitage and definitely recalls additional losses in 2006 and 2007. In his elegant summation, our terrible record against Man Uni away can be attributed to the "problems of an expansive team playing on a sugar cube!!"

Now that the problem has been identified (it only took four years) we'll be better equipped to deal with it next season.

Final Score: Away loss

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 12

Manchester Uni 1: 13

Castle Scorers: Chris Betteridge (6), Christine Wilson (2), Dulcie Parcell (1), Jon Allinson (1), Mike Holdcroft (1), Dave Webb (1)

Castle vs University of Leeds 1

8th March 2015

Division X: Dave Attwood (vc), Chris Betteridge, Clare Dadswell (subbed Charlotte Middleditch, 45 mins), Dulcie Parcell

Division Y: Eleanor Hopkins, Ann Diskin (c), Dan Gooding, Dave Webb

Venue: Stanley Matthews Sport Centre

You know as a team you are about to be put to the sternest of tests when Dave Attwood starts the warm up with the rallying cry of, "if you can: run across the hall". Coming into the tail end of the season, with many uni teams hitting their stride, we at Castle find ourselves stricken with injuries. Clare has been gamely carrying a foot injury through the last two matches, Christine went over on her ankle in a recent SaCKL match, Ann did her ribs in in a training session accident and Chris is sporting an ankle injury. It was with considerable apprehension that Eleanor (left knee swathed in magic tape) viewed the prospect of somehow having to get through a full match no matter what.

Dave A's division started in attack; however it was Leeds Uni who got off the mark first. Inevitably, (you know the drill by now) it was Chris who equalised for Castle with a well taken long shot. Dave W then converted a penalty and Eleanor scored a short shot to make it 3-1. Following the switch, Chris scored two more (all on one leg), a short shot followed by a running in goal to take Castle into a comfortable 5-1 lead. Leeds then got one back, before Dave W sank a lovely long shot; Leeds retaliated with one of their own, with Chris coming back with one for Castle and, after the switch, Dan scoring one of his own from behind the post. As half time approached, and after a Leeds time out, our opponents rather ominously started pegging Castle back from 8-3 to 8-6, before Dave W stopped the rot to make it 9-6 at half time and with Castle in a much better frame of mind at the break than last week.

The second half started with Dave A's division in defence. Once again Leeds scored first, but Clare and Chris both scored long shots to make it 11-7. Leeds scored again before Dave W scored a long shot and, following the switch, Chris bagged his sixth, a runner to make it 13-8. Castle then conceded a penalty, which Leeds converted; with Dave W returning the favour and converting one for Castle to make it 14-9. After a Leeds goal and another switch, Dulcie and Chris both scored runners (Chris in a daze after being flattened, his only concern being "did it go in!?"). Leeds got one back before Dave W sank another trademark long shot to make it 17-11. Leeds scored again, before Dave A, fresh back from the USA, converted a penalty. Leeds managed one further goal for the match to end with a 18-13 victory to Castle.

So Leeds Uni's 'vendetta' against Chris continues - last year a broken nose and this year flattened, but it didn't prevent him from scoring 7 of today's goals in a personal one-legged haul of awesomeness, but let the record show, Dulcie fed at least three of those goals, Ann cheered every one of them and Christine wrote them all down on a scrap of paper. TEAM EFFORT.

Big thanks to Eleanor who covered solidly for Ann (who spent most of the match cowardly lurking behind the post and making a strange siren noise whenever anyone made even the vaguest movement towards her, including Dan who swept in and collected everything from upon high) and who flummoxed the Leeds coach by switching girls every time he imparted a new game plan on her division. Big thanks to Clare who battled through 45 minutes (and didn't even get clapped off, what were we thinking?) and to Charlotte who made her Castle debut, defended like a demon and almost scored a debut goal.

Final Score: Home win

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 18

Leeds Uni 1: 13

Castle Scorers: Chris Betteridge (7), Dave Webb (6), Dave Attwood (1), Clare Dadswell (1), Dan Gooding (1), Eleanor Hopkins (1), Dulcie Parcell (1).

Castle vs University of Nottingham 1

19th March 2015

Division X: Dave Attwood (vc), Chris Betteridge, Clare Dadswell (subbed Ann Diskin (c), 55 mins), Dulcie Parcell

Division Y: Eleanor Hopkins, Christine Wilson, Dan Gooding, Dave Webb

Venue: Nottingham University Sports Centre, Notts

Castle travelled to Nottingham for a late night mid-week encounter against the league leaders, Nottingham University, expecting to have our work cut out for us. Although not fielding a full

strength team, Nottingham pulled ahead 3-0 in the opening minutes of the game before Christine scored an opener for Castle with a shot taken close in at the post. Nottingham scored again and then Dave A scored from the back of the court to make it 4-2 to Nottingham. Nottingham then won and converted a penalty and took the next goal from open play before Dave A sank first a long shot and then another goal from behind the post, making it 6-4 to Nottingham. A collision of heads then saw both Dave A and his opponent stunned for a few seconds, before the game continued with a goal from Dave W, sinking a trademark long shot. Nottingham then converted a free pass and a rather dubious penalty, before Dave A retaliated with a cheeky goal right under the post to make it 8-6 to Nottingham at half time.

The second half opened with a very (even by his own standards) long shot from Dave W and a missed Nottingham penalty. Dan then picked up a loose ball within his division and scored a runner to make it 8-8. Nottingham scored again and Clare ended up on the floor twice in quick succession before Chris scored to make it 9-9. Nottingham scored the next three goals, opening up a gap once more, before Dulcie scored one from under the post. On the switch, Dan scored a long shot and Dave W converted a penalty (on his second attempt, having also won the penalty) to make it 12-12. With the ball back down the other end, Dulcie scored again to put Castle in the lead for the first time. At this point the injury carrying Clare was unable to continue and Ann hastily subbed on. Chris then had a goal dubiously disallowed but shortly afterwards was awarded a penalty which Dave A converted (on *his* second attempt) to make it 14-12 to Castle. Nottingham then scored one back, Christine had another dubious disallowed goal ruling against her and then, with much confusion regarding a blown whistle (was it a time out, was it the end of the match?) Nottingham were awarded and converted a penalty to make the final score 14-14.

This match turned out very differently from expectations - the closeness of the score being one. The game was competitive and played in good spirits but suffered somewhat from confusion in the calls that were being made (but this affected both teams) and most noticeably in who was in control of timing the match. However, if you'd told us before the match we'd draw I think everyone would have been happy with that outcome.

Final Score: Away draw

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 14

Nottingham Uni 1: 14

Castle Scorers: Dave Attwood (5), Dave Webb (3), Dan Gooding (2), Dulcie Parcell (2), Chris Betteridge (1), Christine Wilson (1)

Castle vs Leeds City 2

11th April 2015

Division X: Dave Attwood (vc) (subbed Chris Betteridge, 55 mins), Mike Holdcroft, Clare Dadswell, Dulcie Parcell

Division Y: Ann Diskin (c) (subbed Fran Goodwin, 35 mins), Eleanor Hopkins, Dan Gooding, Dave Webb

Venue: Gryphon Sports Centre

Dave Attwood's division started in attack and with neither Chris (injured, awaiting an X-ray referral but supporting from the sidelines) nor Christine (holidaying in Tenerife, lucky thing) on court, it was left to Dave A to score Castle's opener, Castle having first conceded a goal. On the switch, Dave W scored and then, following a 'bowling ball' pass from Dave W to Ann (especially trained for at our recent social) and which left Ann's opponent confused and out of the picture, Ann (equally

confused) eventually decided to shoot and scored making the score 3-1. On the switch, Dave A scored two quick goals in succession and then Dave W sank a penalty taking Castle to 6-1 before Leeds managed to score one back. Mike, making a return to Castle 1 for the injured Chris, then sank a very welcome goal and Dave A followed up with another to make it 8-2. With Ann's division back in attack, Eleanor earned a penalty which Dave W converted. Leeds then scored the next two goals to take it to 9-4. Dave A sank another one for Castle and with Leeds taking the last goal of the half it finished 10-5 at half time.

The second half opened to a long shot put away by Dan and then two goals from Leeds, making the score 11-7. Five minutes into the second half Ann subbed herself off so she could fix her hair (which was looking well weird by this point), and Fran came on to make her debut for Castle 1. Leeds scored again and then Eleanor sank one for Castle. On the switch, with Castle attacking, a collision saw Dave A clatter to the ground near the post, taking the full weight of his fall on his left wrist. A stoppage allowed Eleanor to bind up Dave's wrist in purple tape (top marks for colour coordination) and Dave A played on, in obvious pain. By this time poor old Clare, recovering from injury herself, had also been injured; squished between numerous players she'd injured her back and was finding it difficult to walk and breathe, but somehow, despite all this, the injured division managed to take the next two goals with both Mike and Dave A scoring to make it 14-8. On the switch, one of the Leeds girls chased down a 'lost cause' loose ball, managing to keep it in play by tapping it back on court, only for Dan to have loped across the hall in time to accidentally tap the still loose ball against her legs, thus winning it for Castle. From the sidelines it sounded very much like the Leeds girl yelled in the general direction of Dan, "You trucker!" but she was smiling and all was well, plus Castle had the ball and off the back of this possession, Fran scored her debut goal for Castle making the score 15-8. Dave W then scored to take it to 16-8, a comfortable lead one might think; however, it was at this point that Castle's injuries began to really tell and Leeds City started to stage a comeback, scoring the next five goals to make it 16-13 before Dave A sank a long shot to take it to 17-13. Leeds then took the next two goals to make it 17-15. Even with Ann's super supportive yelling from the sideline, "if Chris can play on one leg you can play with one hand!" it was clear that Dave A was struggling and with around five minutes remaining Chris (who may or may not have a broken bone in his ankle, x-ray pending) stripped on the sidelines and ran onto court (having thankfully first pulled on a pair of shorts) to sub for him. Leeds scored again to make it 17-16 and then Chris, fresh on court and with nerves of steel, converted a penalty for Castle making it 18-16, which was enough, even with Leeds taking the next goal to keep Castle's nose just in front when the full time whistle blew. Talk about nerve wracking.

Thus, Castle's excellent recent form against Leeds in Leeds continues and, like our home game this season, we pipped them by a single goal. It was an excellent and exciting game by our rag tag bunch of injured players with a fantastic debut from Fran (scoring within ten minutes of being on court) and two great goals from Mike, playing in only his second full game of the season. As usual, Dulcie absolutely dominated in collect - in any given situation no matter who is involved in the mêlée you can always count on Dulcie to emerge from the scrum ball in hand.

Many thanks to our supporters (on this occasion we travelled in numbers) - Charlotte who came bearing home baked lemon cake and chocolate brownies, and Dan J who at one point was stripped down to his shorts as the boys' injuries mounted up. Attending just his fourth Castle game (as either player or supporter) Dan J has now witnessed his third serious injury but still, seemingly, hasn't been put off.

Final Score: Away win

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 18

Leeds City 2: 17

Castle Scorers: Dave Attwood (7), Dave Webb (4), Mike Holdcroft (2), Chris Betteridge (1), Ann Diskin (1), Dan Gooding (1), Francesca Goodwin (1), Eleanor Hopkins (1)

Castle vs University of Sheffield 1 **19th April 2015**

Division X: Jon Allinson, Dan Gooding, Clare Dadswell (subbed Christine Wilson, 35 mins), Dulcie Parcell

Division Y: Ann Diskin (c), Eleanor Hopkins (subbed Fran Goodwin, 35 mins), Mike Holdcroft, Dave Webb

Venue: Forge Valley School, Sheffield

Castle's final league match of the CEKL-2 season saw us back in Yorkshire once again. Having emphatically beaten (an albeit "under the weather") Sheffield Uni back in February we were rather looking forward to the final match of the season.

However, with Dave Attwood and Chris both unavailable through injury we were missing two valuable goal scorers from today's line-up. Sheffield got off to a good start with three goals, including a penalty before Jon (freed from reffing responsibilities and making one of his rare appearances this season) scored one of his characteristic long shots. Not to be outdone Dave W on the switch scored a long shot of his own. Sheffield then missed a penalty and Dave W shortly afterwards demonstrated how a penalty should be taken, sinking one for Castle and levelling the score at 3-3.

Clearly beginning to gain some momentum, play was interrupted for 5 minutes with an ill-timed argument over double-booking of the hall between our opponents and some indoor-cricketers. Possession being nine-tenths of the law, the korfers refused to yield the court (Dave W responding to the cricketers suggestion that we play outdoors with the pithy observation that cricket is an outdoor sport and they could do one).

The game resumed and Sheffield once again took the lead, sinking two goals before Dan scored from the half way line. Sheffield then missed another penalty and Eleanor sank a long shot to make it 5-5. Making more capital from their free shots than their penalties, Sheffield converted one before Jon responded with another goal for Castle. Then, in the run in to half time, Sheffield regained their opening three goal advantage to make it 6-9.

The second half saw an opener from Sheffield, followed by one from Ann for Castle. Sheffield scored again, with Claire sinking one for Castle in response to make it 7-11. Five minutes of the second half having been played, a double substitution saw Christine come on for Claire and Fran for Eleanor. Clearly unaware of the korfing greatness just unleashed upon them by the substitution, Sheffield proceeded to score four goals. Jon put a halt to their run with a converted penalty, before Ann scored first a short shot and then a long shot (it was Yorkshire and Sheffield, after all) to make it 11-15. Sheffield scored once more, before Jon converted another penalty. Another goal from Sheffield, followed by two more converted penalties by Dave W and Jon took the score to 14-17. However, the victory was not to be and Sheffield scored a further two goals before the whistle to make the final score 14-19.

It was a sad end to an excellent season, Castle once again falling foul to the curse of the small court.

Final Score: Away loss

Castle (Newcastle-under-Lyme): 14

Sheffield Uni 1: 19

Castle Scorers: Jon Allinson (5), Ann Diskin (3), Dave Webb (3), Clare Dadswell (1), Dan Gooding (1), Eleanor Hopkins (1)

Season summary 2014 - 15

		P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
1	University of Nottingham 1	14	12	1	1	225	100	125	23*
2	Leicester Tornadoes 1	14	9	1	4	220	123	97	19
3	Castle 1	14	9	1	4	233	178	55	19
4	Leeds City 2	14	8	0	6	201	155	46	16
5	University of Sheffield 1	14	7	1	6	137	184	-47	15
6	Lancaster University 1	14	4	0	10	129	190	-61	6*
7	University of Manchester 1	14	3	0	11	88	233	-145	6
8	University of Leeds 1	14	2	0	12	106	176	-70	2*

* = points adjustment

Read it and weep, baby! The table speaks for itself, but to embellish a little...

We at Castle have enjoyed our most successful season in living memory (mine at least), finishing third (on goal difference) in CEKL-2.

Along the way we enjoyed some massive wins (24-2 against Man Uni and 28-6 against Sheffield Uni) and some highly competitive games against league giants (both gaining automatic promotion) Leicester (1 win) and Notts Uni (1 draw).

Castle is also clearly the most entertaining of the CEKL-2 teams to watch, having scored the most goals in the league, but equally having conceded rather a lot (our mantra comes courtesy of Fat Les, "we're going to score one more than you").

Despite an injury stricken season, Dave Attwood finished 2nd highest scorer in the league (with 56 goals). Dave Webb was an impressive 3rd (53 goals) and Chris B (also injury stricken) 5th (35 goals, about half of which were scored on one leg). Dulcie was the top scorer among the Castle girls with 12 goals; Claire and Ann following up with 11 a piece.

Our challenge at the end of last season was to find a way to convert our successful city record into wins against our university opponents and happily (given that five of our seven opponents this year were university teams) we managed in large part to do this:

- City record (2 teams): 3 wins, 1 loss
- University record (5 teams): 6 wins, 1 draw, 3 losses

Our form at home was excellent with 6 wins and just 1 loss (to Notts Uni). Our away form was also decent with 3 wins, 1 draw and 3 losses.

In fact, we were so good that at one point there were serious concerns we might gain promotion.

The season saw a number of impressive debuts:

- Small Dan Gooding (who scored a record 6 goals in his debut match against Man Uni)
- Dulcie Parcell (3 goals in her debut match against Leicester)
- Fran (1 goal in her debut match against Leeds City)

We were also delighted (and relieved) to have debut appearances by Dan Tomkinson and Charlotte Middleditch (thanks for helping us out guys) and a returning Mike Holdcroft who scored a number of vital goals.

The injury list this season was long and varied:

- Eleanor (knee)
- Dave Attwood (thumb taken out in an exploding beer bottle incident, wrist injury sustained in the match against Leeds City, clash of heads in the Notts Uni game and, most serious by far, shoulder injury crawling on the floor with a 1 year old)
- Claire (foot for most of the season and a back injury sustained in the match against Leeds City)
- Ann (ribs)
- Christine (ankle)
- Chris B (ankle)

Thanks to everyone who played through their injuries or stepped in (Woody, apologies for duping you into playing last minute against Notts Uni).

Congratulations to Dave Attwood who scored a record 9 goals in a single match (vs Man Uni) and to an injured Claire for being more than a match against her Leicester opponent. Dulcie absolutely dominated in collect throughout the season, somehow always emerging from the mêlée ball in hand and undisputed owner of the biggest grin of the season following our win against Lancs Uni in Lancaster.

If last season's challenge was to overcome our uni opponents, next year's should probably be how to overcome the challenge of playing our expansive game on smaller courts - we suffered a number of defeats partly due to our inability to do this.

Thanks to everyone who played and supported throughout the season - there have been many of you! Your willingness to participate and travel up and down the country has made captaining this season a very easy job. A special mention to Eleanor for once again always turning out for us (and especially for her contribution to running the summer tournament) and to Chris who continues to withstand the vendetta Leeds Uni has against him. Jon, as always, has been incredibly selfless. He remains as dedicated as ever to korfbal and Castle, coaching us throughout the season, deeply involved in both CEKL2 and SaCKA, sitting on Castle's committee, organising the tournament, reffing all of our home matches and even playing in a few. It's been a massive contribution and we very much appreciate it.

Thank you Charlotte for the cakes!

Ann Diskin,
16 July 2015.