

## **SOUTH EAST WIN NATIONAL REGIONAL SQUAD CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The South East Regional Cadet (under 15) Squad, which trains at Angley School, Cranbrook, Kent, triumphed against tough opposition in the National Regional Squad Championships, held at Fenton Manor School Sports Centre, Stoke on Trent on Sunday 22 April. Last year the squad came third.

The SE was represented by under 15 boys - Lewis Gray (Kent) & Stephen Eckford (Sussex); under 15 girls – Kirsty Wilson (Kent) & Sarah Russo (Sussex); under 13 boys – Harry Lumb (Kent) & Ross Wilson (Kent); under 13 girls – Yolanda King (Sussex) & Chelsea Furnival (Sussex); under 11 boys – Helshan Weerasinghe (Sussex) and Jack Bennett (Sussex); and under 11 girls – Emma Torkington (Sussex) & Lauren Beaumont (Kent).

In the group matches they beat the Eastern region 7-5, the North West 9-3, and the North East 9-3, before drawing 6-6 with the reigning champions East Midlands but being given the verdict on games average count-back to go to the final. In the East Midlands match Yolanda King and Chelsea Furnival both had crucial wins over their higher England under 13 girls ranked adversaries, King ranked no.3 beating the no.2 Lucy Davidson (Derbys) 11-8, 8-11, 11-8, 11-7, and Furnival, no.6 beating no.5 Emma Cole (Derbys) 11-8, 9-11, 6-11, 11-5, 11-4.

The South East then lifted the title with a 7-5 finals victory over the South West. Chelsea Furnival and Helshan Weerasinghe (now living in Dartford, Kent), who had won the England Schools boys under 11 singles title the previous day, were both unbeaten throughout the competition, and Stephen Eckford, Harry Lumb, Sarah Russo, Emma Torkington and Lauren Beaumont lost only once. However Lewis Gray from Benenden, who lost in the England Schools under 13 boys singles semi-final on Saturday, found playing above his age group for the under 15s tough going.

All of the triumphant South East squad except Emma Torkington, Stephen Eckford and Lauren Beaumont take part in Regional Performance Centre training sessions every Wednesday evening at Angley School, Cranbrook, and all have attended Sunday SE regional training sessions.

Regional coach Ken Muhr emphasized that winning the Championships was an excellent team effort: “There was tremendous team spirit and everyone supported each other. It is a great reward for all the hard work the players have put in.”