

## TABLE TENNIS GROUP - Report by Peter Singer



The Mickleton Muckers go from strength to strength and show that table tennis is a great way to make friends, loosen up the limbs and take out one's frustrations on an innocent plastic ball. There is something very satisfying about wrong-footing an opponent with a delicate dip over the net, whilst a full-throttle smash certainly gets the endorphins flowing. Who needs cognitive behavioural therapy?

A recent, exciting development has been the arrival of a robot in our midst. The table tennis section of Mickleton Village Hall has purchased an automatic serving machine and we have been allowed to try it out as well. The machine, which is attached to one end of a table, serves the balls over the net for one or two players to hit back and has a surrounding net to catch returned balls. It will either oscillate, serving to one side then the other, or can be fixed in one position if a player wishes to practice the same shot repeatedly. The speed of the service and the amount of topspin or backspin can be adjusted, so it is quite a sophisticated robot.

This is a great way to brush up one's technique, although it does become tiring quite quickly, as there are no breaks between games, the serves are relentless and it requires maximum concentration. Definitely best in small doses, but ideal for players who may be waiting for a game. There is also the job of collecting all the balls that are sprayed around the hall by players desperately trying to keep up with the serves. Part of the kit is a cleverly designed tube with a strap across one end, which can just be pushed down onto a ball and it magically stays inside the tube. Once full, the tube can be emptied into the net for the robot to fire out once more. The future is here, folks!

If you would like to join our group to learn the game, improve your skills or just enjoy playing and socialising, please contact Peter Singer ([pandsinger@btinternet.com](mailto:pandsinger@btinternet.com) 07508 663998). All are welcome, whether you play regularly, have not played for some time or have never played before.