



## Lancashire Chess Association

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### *Annual General Meeting - 6<sup>th</sup> September 2012*

**Venue:** Lytham Ex-Servicemen's and Social Club, Chapel Street, Lytham St. Annes, FY8 5ND.

**Present:** Bill O'Rourke (Heywood) - President and U160 Captain  
Carl Tillotson (Preston) - Secretary  
Martyn Hamer (Great Harwood) - Treasurer  
Dave Almond - U140 Captain  
Peter Barlass (Rossendale)  
Liam Bromley (Poulton)  
John Cooper - U180 Captain  
Peter Edhouse - Junior Congress Organiser and Team Manager  
Steve Fanning - Web Editor  
Blaine McGrady (Bispham)  
Brant Nuttall (Bispham)  
Phil Raynor (Lytham Ex)  
Simon Rogers (Poulton)  
Phil Shaughnessy (Urmston) - U100 Captain  
Dave Thorp - U120 Captain  
Simon Woodcock (Atherton) - Congress Treasurer

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Chief Junior Trainer Dave Gaston (Knights United), Congress Director Geoff Jones (Atherton), Steve Mason (Tameside) and Malcolm Peacock (Preston).

### **2. Minutes of 2011 AGM**

The meeting accepted the minutes of last year's AGM.

### **3. Matters Arising**

The meeting noted with sadness that since last year's AGM, John Lund of Rossendale Chess Club had passed away. John had been a great servant to Rossendale / Rawtenstall Chess Club in particular and to Lancashire chess in general. He will be greatly missed.

There were no other matters arising from the 2011 AGM.

### **4. Officers Reports**

#### **President's Report**

Bill reported on a successful year for Lancashire's teams in the NCCU County Championship, with three teams crowned NCCU Champions (U160, U140 and U120) and the other three finishing as runners-up. All six of our teams progressed through to the national stages of the ECF County Championship and no other county achieved this feat. Well done to all the team captains and players.

Bill once again offered thanks to the group of people who make things happen for Lancashire chess, particularly:

- The county captains, especially those who have just finished their first season in post.



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- All those who help with the juniors, especially Pete Edhouse, Ian Hughes and Dave Gaston.
- Geoff Jones and Simon Woodcock for their work running the Blackpool Congress.
- Carl Tillotson for standing in as Secretary at short notice.
- Steve Fanning for his work on the website.

## Secretary's Report

Carl reported that on taking over as Secretary it had proved difficult to identify the exact point of contact in each club but things had improved this year, as evidenced by the number of people attending this meeting! A form designed to elicit the latest contact details for 2012/13 had been sent to each club by e-mail and it would help if clubs could complete these and return them as soon as possible.

Having just recovered from an operation and being very busy at work, Carl stated that he would be happy to step down from the role of Secretary if anybody else was willing to take it on.

Carl suggested that we might make better use of our Twitter account, particularly with regards to the new junior development initiative to be discussed under agenda item 14.

## Treasurer's Report

Martyn handed out a copy of the accounts that he had prepared, which showed a small surplus over the year. The meeting noted that a number of items (both revenue and expenses) appeared in these accounts that related to the previous accounting year.

Martyn was aware that a small number of clubs had still not paid their overdue LCA subscription but stated that he would be following this up urgently.

Bill stressed that it is the players who make the finances work because if the county had to pay travel costs to county matches, then we wouldn't be able to afford to enter teams.

Simon queried whether that the organisation's assets should appear on the balance sheet. The county owns equipment of significant value (sets, boards, analogue and digital clocks, etc.). Martyn will consider this suggestion for next year.

The meeting accepted the Treasurer's report.

Attendees were reminded that some of the equipment is available for loan to existing or new Lancashire long play or rapid play congresses and that the county will support new congresses with both entry forms in their first year and marketing.

## 5. Reports from County Team Managers

### Open (Mike Conroy)

Lost to Yorkshire by 3½ - 8½ in the NCCU stages; beat Warwickshire by 11½ - 4½ in the preliminary round of the national stages; lost to Surrey by 6½ - 9½ in the quarter final.

### U180 (John Cooper)

Lost to Yorkshire by 3½ - 8½ in the NCCU stages; beat Kent by walkover in the preliminary round of the national stages; beat Bedfordshire by 9 - 7 in the quarter final; lost to Yorkshire by 5½ - 10½ in the semi-final.

As in previous years, the U180 team was badly affected for the semi-final match by a clash of dates with the South Lakes Congress. We understand that the ECF have agreed to move the semi-final back by one week for the 2012-13 season, which should avoid the same problem arising.

We also understand that the ECF are re-considering the grading bands for season 2013-14 onwards; so for example the current Open/U180/U160 bands might be replaced by Open/U170 bands. If this is the case then 2012-13 will be the last season with an U180 band and so we should make every effort to try and win it!



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## U160 (Bill O'Rourke)

Beat Cumbria by 7 - 5 and Yorkshire by 9 - 3 in the NCCU stages; lost 7 - 9 to Greater Manchester in the quarter final of the national stages.

The quarter final match was very close and won by the better team on the day. It was ultimately decided by the three very strong juniors that Greater Manchester fielded on the top three boards and our objective must be to produce a conveyor belt of similarly talented youngsters.

## U140 (Dave Almond)

Beat Yorkshire by 6½ - 5½ in the NCCU stages; beat Warwickshire by 11½ - 4½ in the quarter final of the national stages; beat Surrey by 10½ - 5½ in the semi-final; lost to Hertfordshire by 7½ - 8½ in the final.

Captain Dave Almond reported that his first season in charge proved both rewarding and time consuming, although ultimately the journey ended in disappointment on Finals Day as the team lost a very close match. He had found it very difficult both to identify / contact eligible players and to persuade those players to turn out to represent their county.

## U120 (Colin Greenwood / Dave Thorp)

Beat Yorkshire by 7 - 5 in the NCCU stages; beat Worcestershire by board count in the quarter final of the national stages; lost to Hertfordshire by 4½ - 7½ in the semi-final.

Colin Greenwood captained the team in the first game and Dave Thorp took over the reins for the games in the national stages. For the semi-final the U120 team also suffered player loses to the South Lakes Congress but this gave Dave the opportunity of drafting in some new county players, which will help the team next season.

## U100 (Phil Shaughnessy)

Beat Yorkshire by 6½ - 5½ in the NCCU stages; lost to Kent by board count in the quarter final of the national stages.

After his first season as captain, Phil Shaughnessy stressed to the meeting that this team was constantly in need of fresh blood and this again underlines the need to bring more juniors through.

## General Points

The following related actions arose during discussion of the county teams:

- Could a facility be added to the website so that prospective players could easily send a message to the relevant team captain to express their interest in playing for Lancashire? Perhaps a button per team could be considered. Steve Fanning will investigate and implement.
- Bill O'Rourke will get in touch with contacts at the University of Central Lancashire and Lancaster University in an effort to attract players for the county's teams.
- Bill O'Rourke will circulate a link to all captains regarding the rules of the NCCU and ECF County Championships.

The meeting noted that to play county chess, it is not a requirement to be a member of the ECF. However there could be a liability to pay game fee for players who are not members.

## 6. Report of Congress Organisers

Simon presented and explained the audited congress accounts to the meeting, for the period 4<sup>th</sup> October 2010 to 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011.

Blackpool was again well attended with 418 players taking part, exactly the same number as last year. Unfortunately this year's congress was marred by a dispute over the eligibility of one of the section winners, which ultimately ended up going to a small claims court with the Lancashire Chess Association losing the case. Attendees expressed their empathy for the situation that Geoff, Simon and the Association found



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themselves in during the period after the event and the meeting fully endorsed the actions that had been taken by the Association afterwards. In particular there was unanimous support for Geoff and all that he has done for the congress; the meeting expressed a desire for Geoff to continue in his current role with the best wishes of the Association, its clubs and its members. Geoff has agreed to continue as Congress Director for the 2013 event if required, assisted by Simon.

Simon circulated a copy of the latest draft entry form for the 2013 Blackpool Congress and invited comment on the revised entry conditions, designed to avoid problems with players entering inappropriate sections. The meeting agreed that the draft conditions appeared sensible and no further changes were needed.

Bill reported that the Heywood Congress was a great success this year with numbers up 25%. He felt this was due to additional marketing and the rollout of a new website, with online entry facilities.

## 7. Report of Junior Organisers

Bill reported that there had been six junior congresses during the season, with typically 70 to 80 youngsters playing at each event. Next year extra congresses are planned, along with coaching – further discussion of these plans took place under agenda item 14 below. The junior account is in a healthy state and we have a large stock of books for juniors.

## 8. Report from Website Editor

A new website had been launched during the season, with the new website constructed using a modern Content Management System called Joomla. This will enable other authors to contribute material without needing any particular IT skills, beyond the ability to type into a simple word processor. Anyone interested in assisting should get in touch with Steve and Carl via the website's Contact Us page.

## 9. Reports from Lancashire Leagues and Clubs

The East Lancashire League's AGM had taken place on the previous Tuesday. The league had agreed a change of format, with Division 1 comprising six teams playing each other twice and the remaining eleven teams competing in Division 2 playing each other once. Knights United Chess Club had resigned from the league, as had Pendle Chess Club although most of their players were intending to play at Clitheroe in future.

Peter Barlass advised the meeting that Rossendale Chess Club were moving to a new venue at the local ASDA. The Company have a policy to work with the community and this might be a useful possibility for any other club who suffers difficulties with their venue. Peter will provide relevant information to Bill.

The Central Lancashire League AGM had also taken place. Despite contracting a little, the league still had enough teams for three divisions, although Division 3 will only have four teams this season playing each other three times.

A report was given on the Blackpool and Fylde League and attention was drawn to the fact that the Silver Queen competition is open to any players, not just those playing for teams within the league. Phil Raynor agreed to provide additional information to Steve, who will publicise the event on the LCA website.



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## 10. Election of Officers

The following officers / posts were unanimously elected / re-elected at the meeting.

<b>President</b>		Bill O'Rourke
<b>Secretary</b>		Steve Fanning
<b>Treasurer</b>		Martyn Hamer
<b>Team Captains</b>	<b>Open</b>	Mike Conroy
	<b>U180</b>	John Cooper
	<b>U160</b>	Bill O'Rourke
	<b>U140</b>	Dave Almond
	<b>U120</b>	Dave Thorp
	<b>U100</b>	Phil Shaughnessy
<b>Junior Organiser</b>		Bill O'Rourke
<b>Web Editor</b>		Steve Fanning, Carl Tillotson
<b>Congress Director</b>		Geoff Jones
<b>Congress Treasurer</b>		Simon Woodcock
<b>ECF Representative</b>		Bill O'Rourke
<b>NCCU Representative</b>		Dave Almond, Jim Tennant-Smith, Simon Woodcock

## 11. Appointment of Auditor

The meeting voted that Peter Howarth should be re-appointed as Auditor.

## 12. Subscriptions Proposals for 2013

Martyn proposed that subscriptions should remain at the same level for the coming year (i.e. £20 or £25, depending on club size), while the impact of the new ECF national membership scheme is assessed. This was agreed by the meeting.

## 13. Membership Schemes 2012 - 2013

Bill provided the meeting with an overview of the new ECF membership arrangements, explaining that he had emailed 577 Lancashire players for whom he had an e-mail address, in order to elicit feedback on how to react to the new national membership scheme. He thanked all respondents for their e-mails and phone calls regarding membership. As a result of this consultation it was decided to sign up the LCA to run an agreed Membership Organisation (MO) with the ECF. This means the LCA will agree to compile an electronic list of all people who wish to join the ECF through the LCA, preferably through their club but directly if the person does not belong to a club, and in return the LCA will gain £1 per player whom we administer.

The reasons for this decision are threefold:

### 1) Organisation within Lancashire.

It is important that we centrally pull together all of our players and their contact details, so that we know who is eligible to play for the county, to compete for Lancashire prizes, to obtain Lancashire discounts and to play in Lancashire leagues if they require ECF membership to do so. A list of all known ECF members affiliated through Lancashire will be very regularly updated on the LCA website.



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## 2) Financial.

Although we have some of the most successful county teams in the country, success comes at a cost. Ever escalating prices for venues and refreshments for six county teams impose a real drain on county finances. We wish to maintain our teams and so the £1 rebate per player would be most welcome (probably worth somewhere in the order of £200+ to the county per year). Joining via the LCA will be entirely voluntary and players could privately join the ECF, do the administration themselves and gain a £1 rebate if they so wished. However supporting your county with the £1 instead would be greatly appreciated!

## 3) Timing.

The new scheme gets under way on September 1<sup>st</sup>, so if people wish to benefit from the lower entry prices at congresses in September, they can join via the LCA who will do all the administration for them.

Bill will shortly send to each club separately a listing of all their NMS members from last season (as he has done for the last seven years). This time he will be asking the club membership organiser to indicate which level of membership (Bronze, Silver or Gold) each of their members would prefer.

For the LCA to gain the £1 incentive per player, it is essential that we send details of members to date and the monies to accompany those memberships to arrive with the ECF by October 31<sup>st</sup>. Bill is therefore asking that all memberships are with him by Friday October 20<sup>th</sup> latest but preferably much earlier. After that date it is suggested that the clubs and players sort out any outstanding memberships directly with the ECF themselves.

Junior players will be able to enrol with the LCA MO at the September 29<sup>th</sup> Junior Congress or by sending everything directly to Bill.

Bill asked all attendees to stress to their club officers and colleagues that going through the Lancashire MO will support the Association in so many ways and that the LCA would appreciate all efforts of clubs to garner the support of their members in accomplishing this.

## 14. Junior Development Plan 2012 – 2013

Bill reported on plans for improving the development for Lancashire's junior chess players. At the final junior congress of last season, the junior officers, team managers and people who currently help train Lancashire junior players attended an initial meeting during the congress to discuss ideas for the development of juniors throughout the county. Several good ideas were forthcoming and plans are in hand to implement some of these.

Our county can be notionally split into six general coaching areas – North, South, East, West, Fylde and Central. These zones are for reference only – there should be no demarcation; we are one county Lancashire and we would generally guide youngsters into the zone suggested but if for some reason they wanted to undertake training in another zone, then no problem! The idea would be to organise training in these zones, maybe 3-4 hours, perhaps once per month. A co-ordinator will be sought to take the organisation lead within each zone.

The number of junior congresses planned for the coming season is increased to 8 and a calendar for these events was handed out at the meeting and will be put on the website. The intention will be to have coaches available at each congress to provide coaching for all those participating (previously no official coaching was laid on at these events). At the first junior congress on 29<sup>th</sup> September at Heywood it is expected that Dave Gaston will coach the beginners while Mark Talbot will coach the slightly more experienced players. A timetable for a typical junior congress day was circulated at the meeting.



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It is hoped that the second junior congress of the season will be in Blackpool on 13<sup>th</sup> October. Peter Holden is investigating a suitable venue but at the time of the AGM, this had not been confirmed. The intention is to ensure these congresses are spread across Lancashire region.

The training in zones alongside training within the eight junior congresses being planned per year will provide a great deal more training than is currently being undertaken and yet should not prove onerous to individual trainers.

In summing up, Bill stressed that this is about the youngsters and chess politics will not be allowed to interfere. Anybody who wants to help develop the chess playing ability of our juniors will be very welcome.

These plans were accepted by the meeting and many attending expressed a desire to support the initiative.

Other significant general points raised during this discussion were:

- Ideas are always welcome about how to stop youngsters drifting away from chess as they go through secondary school.
- Given the number of young players participating in the UK Chess Challenge, are we missing something in attracting those players into other chess activities?
- Would the local press be interested in promoting and covering the junior congresses?
- The LCA will pay the costs arising from any necessary CRB checks for the various junior development activities.

## 15. Lancashire History Book

The hard copy version of the Lancashire History Book is all but ready to go to print. Bill passed a version around the meeting, inviting comment on the mock cover. Those attending thought the cover looked fine.

It was agreed that a batch of 150 books should be printed in the first instance, with a sale price of £15 to LCA members and £20 to others. Any profit will go straight into the LCA's main account.

Two suggestions were offered:

- Consider publishing the book on the website.
- Consider approaching Amazon about making it into a Kindle book.

Bill to investigate.

## 16. Any Other Business

Brant drew the meeting's attention to the sponsored bicycle ride that he is involved with at the end of September, hoping to raise money for the British Heart Foundation. Steve to publicise on the website.

## 17. Date of Next Meeting

A suggestion was made that the LCA AGM be held earlier in the year, perhaps before the various league AGMs took place. After some discussion the meeting agreed by a clear majority that the meeting should be held at the same time, the beginning of September, next year.

It is hoped that it will be possible to hold the meeting at an East Lancashire venue in 2013. Peter Barlass agreed to take this suggestion back to the East Lancashire League so that they can propose a venue.