

Lancashire Chess Association – Annual General Meeting

22nd July 2008 – St Richard's Parish Club, Atherton

1 Present

Bill O'Rourke, John Cooper, Phil Raynor, Mark Taylor, Geoff Jones, Pete Edhouse, Steve Fanning, Dave Gaston and Simon Woodcock.

The meeting noted that Mike O'Hara had passed away in September 2007. Mike is sadly missed but it was agreed that as a mark of respect the meeting should get on with business – he would not have wanted a minute's silence!

2 Minutes of 2007 AGM

The minutes of last year's AGM were reviewed and accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 Matters Arising

At last year's AGM it was noted that the Lancashire U100 team had no opponents from other NCCU counties and it was suggested that efforts be made to organise friendly matches to generate interest and team spirit amongst the players in preparation for the national stages. This had not proved possible during season 2007-08. It was felt that the idea of a match between U100 players from the Blackpool & Fylde and Central Lancashire Leagues should be pursued in season 2008-09. John Cooper and Phil Raynor agreed to search for someone in the Blackpool and Fylde area who is "IT-enabled" and would be prepared to organise such an event in conjunction with Mike Horne, the U100 captain.

Related to the discussion about U100 friendly matches, Bill advised that the NCCU are investigating the possibility of running their Open, U175 and U100 competitions as a one-day jamboree. It is hoped that this approach might encourage more teams to enter those sections, which could in turn result in more NCCU teams progressing to the national stages. The U125 and U150 competitions will continue with the current arrangements.

4 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Armand Catz.

5 Officers' Reports

5.1 *President's Report*

Bill gave a short report, the highlight of the year being another fantastic victory for the Open team in the ECF National County Championships earlier in July.

Bill offered particular thanks to the people who were present at the AGM, they are the ones who make things happen for Lancashire chess.

5.2 *Minute Secretary's Report*

There was nothing to report.

5.3 *Treasurer's Report*

The overall conclusion was that the county's finances were again in a very sound state.

Main Account

Simon handed out details of the Main Account for the years Jan-06 to Dec-06 and Jan-07 to Dec-07. There had been higher than usual expenses for the county teams in 2007 with five qualifiers and two national final successes (£814) but the final bank balance was still healthy at £2080. Mike O'Hara had left an amount of money to the Lancashire Chess Association and this will appear in the 2008 accounts.

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Simon reported that the increase in affiliation fees agreed at last year's AGM had not been actioned and the meeting agreed with this approach. Bill commented that two new clubs were in the process of affiliating (Tameside Juniors and Knights United) and this means that Lancashire would probably draw level with Kent as the two English counties with the most affiliated chess clubs.

Congress Account

Simon handed out details of the Congress Account for the year to October 2007. It was noted that there is not only a healthy balance at the moment but also significant assets being built up in the form of equipment, such as electronic digital clocks together with good quality sets and boards.

Junior Account

Bill handed out a statement of the junior finances for the 2007-08 season and commented that the junior set-up continues to prosper. Two particular points were noted:

- We have been able to use the Heywood junior congress venue at no charge. It is not clear how long this will continue.
- The NYCA competition entry fees are very high. The meeting agreed to enter the four teams again in the coming season but this time next year we should review whether the money could be better spent (e.g. funding extra coaching opportunities).

Chessfest Account

Bill stated that there is currently a surplus of £525, monies that ultimately belong to the LCA.

6 Reports from County Team Captains

The Open team won the National Championships for the second successive year. They won in 1967, 1968 and 1969 under Mike Conroy's captaincy; can he repeat the hat-trick with another win next year?

The U175 team lost by the narrowest of margins to Yorkshire in the NCCU Championships. Yorkshire are much better organised than in previous years and Lancashire captain John Cooper had encountered problems getting his strongest players to take part. It is sad that each year one very strong team is denied the chance of playing in the national stages because only two NCCU counties enter teams at this level.

The U150 team were NCCU Champions but were comfortably beaten by Cambridgeshire at the quarter-final stage of the National Championships when forced to field a weakened team.

The U125 team finished second on the NCCU Championships but lost out to Leicestershire in the preliminary round of the National Championships. Captain Phil Raynor believes that we have a good squad at this level but that we didn't play to form when it mattered. It was disappointing to find out that the NCCU Champions (Cleveland) defaulted their quarter-final match in the National Championships.

The U100 team were NCCU Champions without playing a match but lost their quarter-final match in the National Championships against Nottinghamshire. All need to ensure that captain Mike Horne is provided with information about emerging players (especially juniors) that would enhance his squad.

7 Report from Congress Organisers

Blackpool

Simon stated that the 2009 event would be held at Blackpool Football Club, a fantastic venue with refreshments available on site. The football club offers 100 free car parking

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spaces while there is a huge public car park over the road. Entry will be limited to a maximum of 450 players but it is projected that even if all entrants enter and pay early (thus paying £25 and avoiding late entry surcharges), the event should still make a surplus over venue costs.

The event will offer five sections, i.e. Open, U170, U135, U115 and U80. Prizes in each section will be £400 (1st), £250 (2nd) and £150 (3rd), with four grading prizes of £100. It is likely that all sections will be controlled by senior arbiters.

Lancashire Championships

The Lancashire Championships will take place within the Preston Congress in November 2008. The meeting agreed that cash prizes, funded by the Mike O’Hara legacy, should be awarded to the Lancashire Champions in forthcoming years - £50 for the Open, £25 for the Major and £25 for the Minor. Bill agreed to advise the Preston Congress organisers immediately after the meeting.

Only bona fide members of Lancashire will be eligible for these awards and the meeting agreed that a list of such players should be created and maintained on the LCA website to avoid any uncertainty.

8 Report from Chessfest Organisers

Unfortunately a change of personnel at the Hilton Blackpool hotel has led to an increase in venue fees from nothing to £700 and the event is not viable at that cost. Bill proposed the following “replacement” events:

- NCCU Junior Championships to be held in Heywood sometime in September. One advantage of this date change would be to avoid the UK Chess Challenge Terafinal, which often clashed with the Blackpool event in August.
- Invite all interested players to a blitz tournament that is already being planned for the Bury & Rochdale League, again at Heywood.
- Organise a rapidplay event for 120 players at Heywood, again possibly in September. Although many rapidplays take place on Sunday, this one may move to a Saturday because the Heywood venue is easier to book then.

If nothing comes of such events, any monies currently in the Chessfest account would be transferred to the LCA.

The meeting discussed the possibility of running a North West Grand Prix but it was felt that a lot of effort would be required for little gain.

9 Report from Junior Organisers

Steve reported on junior activities, as follows.

Six junior congresses had been held during the season at Skelmersdale (October), Heywood (November, February and April), Aughton (January) and Parbold (June). A new innovation had been tried this year known as the Premiership. The objective was to keep the older and stronger juniors involved in the junior congress scene by running a self-funding section with slightly higher entry fees and worthwhile cash prizes. The section was run twice, apparently successfully on both occasions, but after each event a parent raised difficulties (including personal abuse against the event organisers). The junior organisers may give it another chance in October but this is still to be decided.

Junior team results were mixed, as follows:

- The U11 team performed well, qualifying for the EPSCA final and finishing above the other teams from the North West. Lancashire successfully hosted the U11 zonal at Holy Family, Heywood.
- The U12 team finished 4th out of 8 teams in the NYCA competition.

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- The U14 girls won the Northern Region Cup.
- The U14 team finished 5th out of 7 teams in the NYCA competition.
- The U16 team were runners-up in the NCCU Pennine Cup and finished 5th out of 8 teams in the NYCA competition.
- The U18 team finished 3rd out of 6 teams in the NYCA competition.

It was a disappointment that we were unable to compete in the following events:

- U9 EPSCA zonal.
- U11 Girls Whitehead Cup.
- U18 NCCU Jamboree.

Coaching sessions were organised for small groups of our more promising junior players. These sessions, taken by Jeff Horner and Bob Newton, were a great success and we hope to expand on this next season. Bill reported that GM Keith Arkell is moving to the Heywood area and he may be another possible coach.

A Child Protection Policy Statement is now in place and the meeting considered that it may be appropriate for the junior organisers and coaches to be CRB checked. Perhaps Standard Clearance for those who wouldn't expect to be in one-to-one contact with juniors, with Enhanced Clearance for those who might be expected to have such contact. Steve agreed to investigate this matter further.

The meeting discussed the possibility of utilising a portion of the Mike O'Hara legacy to provide bursaries enabling juniors to apply for financial support to play in prestigious events, such as the British Championships or the Blackpool Conference. Such monies would be targeted at juniors who support Lancashire events and play in Lancashire teams. The LCA junior organisers would decide the recipients and the coaches should define the section to be entered. It was agreed that £1500 should be put aside for this purpose, i.e. £100 per year for 15 years. Steve and Dave agreed to draw up the criteria.

Bill briefed the meeting on issues around the Holooid Plastics initiative to provide 250,000 free chess sets for schools in England and the Chess for Schools paper by Robert Richmond that is to be discussed at a special ECF council meeting on 26th July. It is hoped that 20000 of these sets (6000 for Lancashire) can be transported to a storage site in the North for onward distribution by volunteers to schools in Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales and Cumbria.

10 Report from Website Editor

Steve reported that every effort was being made to update the website regularly and promptly. A new section has been added providing a page for each club's basic details but it is disappointing that so few clubs have taken advantage of this opportunity for free publicity. Bill said he will chase up each club for this year.

11 Reports from Lancashire Leagues and Clubs

The Blackpool & Fylde League continues to comprise three divisions, although there has been a decline in the number of teams (Blackpool '1' dropping out last year). On the positive side the players remaining were said to be the most keen and pleasant to play against!

The Central Lancashire League is likely to expand in the coming season with an extra team from Heywood and a new club, Knights United, applying to enter for the first time. The league continues to be solid and sociable.

No specific news was available from the East Lancashire League but Dave reported that the likely entry of two Knights United teams (comprising mainly juniors) had been welcomed by Peter Dickinson.

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Dave reported on the thriving primary schools league in Blackburn and it is hoped that these players begin to feed into our junior congresses next season.

It was noted that once again Lancashire clubs were well represented in the final stages of the NCCU Club Championships. Preston and Heywood will contest the Open final; Atherton will contest the Major final, possibly against Heywood; Skelmersdale are in the semi-final of the Intermediate.

12 Election of Officers

The following officers were elected:

President		Bill O’Rourke
Minutes Secretary		Steve Fanning
Treasurer		Simon Woodcock
Team Captains	Open	Mike Conroy ¹
	U175	John Cooper
	U150	Bill O’Rourke
	U125	Phil Raynor
	U100	Mike Horne
Correspondence Organiser		Andrew Clarkson
Junior Coordinator		Steve Fanning
Junior Team Managers	U18	TBA ²
	U16	TBA ²
	U14	TBA ²
	U12	TBA ²
	U11	Dave Gaston
	U9	Dave Gaston
	Girls	Ian Hughes
Congress Director		Simon Woodcock
Grading Coordinator		Geoff Jones
ECF Representative		Bill O’Rourke ³
NCCU Representatives		Simon Woodcock / Jim Tennant-Smith
Web Authors		Steve Fanning / Carl Tillotson
Auditor		Peter Howarth

Notes:

- [1] It was suggested that LCA purchase a low-cost laptop to simplify the Open captain’s task. Dave agreed to investigate.
- [2] Steve agreed to approach suitable parents to fill the vacant manager roles for the secondary school age teams.
- [3] It was agreed that normal practice would be for Lancashire to assign their proxy votes to someone deemed trustworthy (e.g. a fellow North West NCCU chess association). Only if a meeting agenda includes items of specific interest would Lancashire’s ECF Representative expect to attend in person.

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13 Appointment of Auditor

Peter Howarth was re-elected, see Section 12 above.

14 Subscriptions Proposal for 2009

It was agreed that club subscriptions should remain at £15 for small clubs (14 or less members) and £20 for larger clubs (15 or more members).

It was further agreed that individuals who are not members of a Lancashire club could affiliate for £1.

The benefits of being a recognised member of Lancashire were stressed:

- Eligibility for Lancashire Champion trophies and prize money.
- Eligibility to play for Lancashire county teams.
- Registered Lancashire players are eligible for entry fee discounts at certain congresses.
- Affiliated clubs are able to compete in the NCCU Club Championships.
- Free publicity for your club in the Year Book and on the LCA website.

15 Membership Schemes

It was agreed that Lancashire will again join the NCCU MO scheme next season, with Bill co-ordinating for Lancashire.

Geoff stated his understanding the NCCU MO scheme does cover players who wish to play in FIDE rated competitions.

16 Any Other Business

16.1 History of Lancashire Chess

This is currently being proof-read and the intention is to donate a copy to each affiliated club. Extra copies will be available on request, with the price set to cover costs.

17 Date of Next AGM

It was agreed that next year's AGM should be held on Tuesday 21st July 2009 at the same venue (St Richard's Parish Club in Atherton).