MEMBERSHIP ANALYSIS 2016

This Membership Analysis is presented to Council as a supporting document to the Budget and for comparison with the documents produced in previous years. The differences between this document template and that used last year are explained in the notes.

The demographic analyses are made using membership at 31 August 15 and, where appropriate, comparing against the August 2015 grading list. It should also be noted that these analyses treat free and paid junior silver memberships as distinct categories, but do not distinguish between paid and lifetime platinum memberships, although the majority, if not all, of the latter are honorary.

Where reference is made in the notes below to the comparable statistics for last season these are available on the ECF website at:

www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/C22.12-Membership-Analysis-March-2015-v2.pdf

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EXPLANATION and NOTES

Current Membership

This table shows the current membership as at 1 April 2016 analysed by expiry date. This is of less value than hitherto, as we have now reached the point where all paid memberships have been taken out since the introduction of the new membership scheme in September 2012. There are therefore no longer any memberships expiring on dates other than 31st August in any year.

The supplementary columns on the right-hand side of the table show the percentage of members in each category; the extreme right-hand column accumulates junior and adult members in each category. Comparison of these figures with the comparative ones for previous seasons shows slight increases in the proportions of silver and gold memberships accompanied by a corresponding fall in the number of bronze and platinum memberships. It is however, possible that the fall in platinum memberships is due primarily to members holding three-year full memberships under the old scheme becoming gold members when they first renew under the new scheme. If this is so then the drop has no long term significance.

Renewals Analysis

The first table on this page shows the overall number of members at the first of each month from September 2013 to date. I do not have accurate date for 2012-13, the first year of the new membership scheme. The primary purpose of this table is to support the projected membership figure at the end of the season which appears in the budget analysis. The detailed calculation is made on the *Workings* page of that spreadsheet.

The second table on this page show membership category at 31 August 2014 vs category at 31 August 2015 for each category of membership. This replaces the analysis in last year's report which showed renewals to date of those who

were members at the conclusion of the previous membership year. The present analysis removes any possibility of distortion due to late renewals, and therefore seems a more appropriate way of presenting the data. A figure of 25% lapsed may sound alarmingly high, but it is not too far removed from the estimate that 20% of the players active in any one season are not recorded as active the following season which first came to my notice as a graders working assumption many years ago and is borne out by an analysis of the current data.

The final table is a more detailed analysis of membership category at 31 August 2015 for members who held free junior silver membership at 31 August 2014, analysed by age of member. This is the one table in the analysis which is produced in response to a specific request from Council for the data. This was clearly for the purpose of determining the effectiveness of the free junior silver initiative. The data show a lower than average retention rate for these members, but I feel that almost regardless of its effectiveness the public relations advantages of the scheme are sufficient to justify its continuation.

Activity analysis

This page gives three tables analysing the number of games played by each category of member, one for standard play games, one for rapidplay games, and one for a notional overall activity figure where one rapidplay game is equated to half a standard play game. The bottom two rows of each table show the total number of players on the grading list in each band, and the percentage of such players who are members in one category or another.

On the standard play analysis the bands for number of games were selected when the analysis was first done to give as nearly as possible an equal number of players on the grading list in each band. The bands have, however, since been treated as fixed. In practice the distribution of players between bands remains reasonably balanced. The percentage figures suggest that we have achieved an excellent, but by no means universal, penetration of membership to the players who play enough games for it to be in their economic interest to join rather than pay Game Fee.

On the rapidplay analysis it is clear that a significant number of players have a rapidplay grade on the basis of a single event in the current year, during which they may have had a bye. There is therefore a preponderance of players with precisely six or five games, and selecting bands to balance the number of players in each band was impossible. The percentage figures here look lower, but the high proportion of juniors in the most active bands, together with the different Game Fee regulations for junior only events, must be taken into account.

The overall analysis, being based on a purely notional definition of activity level, is less easy to interpret. However, the figure of 729 members (7.2%) who player no graded games should be noted.

Grade analysis

An analysis of the median grade and upper and lower quartiles of each category of member was published last season. After due consideration I no longer feel this analysis has any great significance, and have removed it from this season's data.

Geographical analysis

This table shows the number of members in each category affiliated to each County compared to the number of active players on grading list so affiliated. County affiliation is determined by the county of the first club shown on the grading database, this in turn being taken from the club table issued with the master list. To simplify the task of analysis I have not attempted to make use of the second club or subsequent clubs where they are shown, and nor have I attempted to allocate counties to those few clubs where the grading database is silent on the matter. The most significant effect of this methodology is that a few hundred of players are omitted from this analysis because their first listed club is a 4NCL squad.

It should be noted that a percentage of graded players who are members which is greater than 100% merely records the fact that a number of inactive players in that county are members.

This data is of most value when read alongside the comparative figures for last season.

Age analysis

This table shows the age profile of the members in each category for whom a reliable date of birth can be identified. The date of birth information is taken, for preference, from the membership database and failing that from the grading master list. Even so, there are around 1650 members for whom this data is not available. I have assumed that any date of birth in the last three years in in error and excluded it from the data. For convenience of presentation I have shown the analysis for adult and junior members separately.

In the junior analysis the percentage table shows the proportion of players in each age group as a percentage of the members in that category; this is then summarised across all categories in the final column. The data to some extent bear out the trend which is a commonplace amongst junior organisers: increasing numbers during primary years, and a falling off beyond 14 when examinations become a factor. However, there is no evidence of the sharp decline in numbers at the start of secondary school. This is not to say that the drop reported by junior organisers at this age is non-existent, but probably that it is being balanced by a higher uptake of membership amongst the older children as more of them start competing in adult events.

In the adult analysis the percentage columns show the proportion of members in each category who are older than the specified age. The figures in this table are depressing. The supplementary table here summarises the average age of the members in each adult category. Of even greater concern than the actual figures is the extent to which the comparison between 2014 and 2015 suggests the problem is getting worse. Note that these are comparisons of year-end data; delays in renewal have no impact on these figures.

	Average Age	
Category	**2015**	**2014**
Bronze	55.5	55.3
Silver	54.0	53.2
Gold	50.5	49.9
Platinum	62.0	61.1
All	**53.8**	**53.3**