

**ENGLISH CHESS FEDERATION AGM
17 OCTOBER 2015
PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

C23.9.1

I should first of all like to apologise to Council members for the fact that work commitments have prevented me from attending the AGM. But in any case I have from the outset believed that my main use as President to members is to raise public awareness of chess and to fund raise for the game in England, rather than attend disputatious meetings.

However, one meeting I was delighted to attend was the first one held by the newly created All Party Parliamentary Group on chess, in the House of Commons. I should like to thank Chris Fegan for all his work in getting this off the ground. I also attended a meeting with the FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and the President of the Russian Chess Federation, Andrei Filatov, on their visit to London in March. We had a most interesting exchange of views.

Early in the calendar year I had the honour to present the prizes and make the closing address at the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival—the world's leading Open chess tournament-- which is held under the auspices of the ECF. At that event I entered into discussions with the chief executive of Tradewise, James Humphreys, about the problems confronting the Hastings Congress, as its very existence has been threatened by the announced withdrawal of funding from Hastings council. I am delighted to say that this initial discussion was followed in due course by Tradewise's decision to become the Hastings Congress's principal sponsor. I should like to put on the record here my gratitude to James Humphreys – and that I shall travel again to Gibraltar to attend the 2016 Chess Festival in late January.

In July I traveled to Coventry to open the 2015 British Chess Championships at the University of Warwick and to present the prizes for the winners of the various junior sections. It was a particular pleasure to see such a growing proportion of female players in those events. In this context I should mention that I have persuaded the world's strongest female chess player, Hou Yifan, to come to the UK at the end of October to deliver a talk with me at China Exchange, a charity based in the Chinatown district of London. I have also asked Hou Yifan to conduct

a small simultaneous display and will invite promising young English female players to take part.

In September I attended the 30th Crowborough Chess Congress to present the prizes in the many junior sections of that fine annual event. Again, it was a pleasure to see the growing number of young people attending—in fact the juniors outnumbered the seniors by more than two to one.

In terms of increasing the public awareness of chess, I have been fortunate to be able to take advantage of my good working relationship with the BBC. So not only was there a third series of the Across the Board series of chess interviews, but I also did separate pieces for the Today Programme and as recently as September 22nd, one for the PM programme arguing the case for chess to be considered a sport. This was linked to the Judicial Review into Sport England's refusal to meet the English Bridge Union's demand that their game be recognized as a sport. If the case is settled in the EBU's favour, it would have significant implications for us, potentially highly beneficial.

In this respect we should bear in mind that petty divisions and arguments within the ECF do nothing to help those of us who are attempting to persuade the government and sporting authorities that chess should be given enhanced status.