



CITATIONS FOR AWARD WINNERS 2020

The following represents the citations made for the successful 2020 ECF award winners. Other than standardising fonts (where possible) and some light editing these remain as submitted. The citation for Scorch Chess was originally in the form of a power point presentation

Dr Stephen Greep
Chairman
ECF Awards Committee

03/09/2020



Club of the Year

Oxford University Chess Club

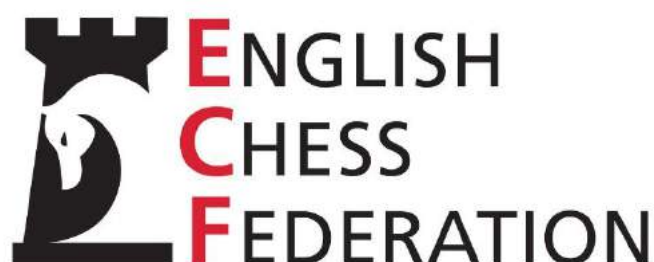
(nominated by Aloysius Lip)

and

Small Club of the Year

Bude Chess Club

(nominated by John Constable)





**Oxford University
Chess Club
ECF Nomination
Club of the Year
Report 2019-20**



MARKING NEW MILESTONES AFTER 150 YEARS

Since our foundation in 1869, one might say the OUCC has "seen it all". Yet this year, we found new ways to achieve new firsts for the club, include more players than ever before, and achieve unprecedented successes. It truly is the most exciting time for the OUCC.

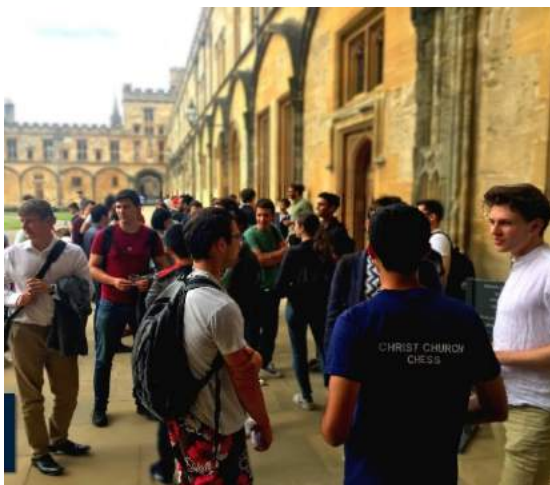
COMMITTEE 2019-20

Andrew Rogozinski • George Dumitrescu • Filip Mihov • Aloysius Lip • Daniel Abbas • Kevin Henbest • Boris Gusev • Daniel Sutton • Ben Greenbury • Victor Văsiesiu • Alexandre Warr-Esser



COMMITTEE 2020-21

Aloysius Lip • Benjamin Greenbury • Akshaya Kalaiyalahan • Callum Evans • Victor Văsiesiu • Daniel Sutton • Jack Virgin • George Dumitrescu • Kevin Henbest • Süleyman Selim • Rachel Wong • Andrew Rogozinski

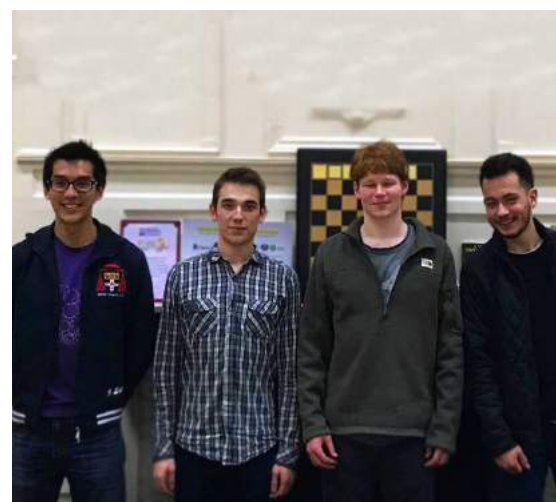


OUR SPONSORS

We are grateful to our sponsors

- The University of Oxford
- Jane Street Europe
- Chess & Bridge Store

The support we secured this year was critical to all our achievements.



HIGHLIGHTS

516 recorded members (June 2020)

- Largest of any British university society
- Largest in the OUCC's history
- 76 new members (2019-20)
- Largest annual increase in OUCC's history

Oxfordshire District Chess League

- 3 teams, involving over 30 players
- 2 teams in knockout tournament, Frank Wood Shield
- 1st in Frank Wood Shield (2019)
- 'A' team winners of ODCL Division 1 (2019)
- 'A' team placed 1st and declared winners, Division 1 (2020)
- 'B' team placed 1st at end of season, Division 2 (2020)
- 'C' team placed 1st at end of season, Division 4 (2020)
- 'A' team captain awarded best player, Division 1 (2019)
- President (2018) awarded best player, Division 1 (2020)

BUCA Division 1 Champions (2020)

- Finishing with a perfect score
- Representing TeamGB at EUSA chess

137th Varsity Match vs Cambridge (2019)

- Winners, longest running friendly match in chess history

2020 Chess League

- Midlands regional qualifier Champions (2020)
- Stage 2: 2= / 84 international teams (2020)
- Donated over £150 to Oxfam, including prize money

Valentines Cup Match vs Imperial College London (2019)

- Winners, re-established annual friendly match

Other achievements

- Restarted weekly Wednesday evening club nights
- Started weekly Friday evening teaching
- Started weekly Saturday evening Bughouse
- Bi-termly 'Pub Chess' socials with 100+ turnout
- Held 2 GM simuls with:
 - GM WGM Hou Yifan
 - GM Keith Arkell
 - GM Jon Speelman (postponed due to COVID-19)
- Launched Chess in Schools initiative
- Launched new University Inter-College Cuppers League with over 50 participants from 10 different colleges
- Raised over £4,000 in sponsorship money
- Received over 80 sets, boards, and clocks via partnerships

Truly the biggest year in our history.





NEW INITIATIVES

EMBRACING OUR HISTORY

This year we revisited our long-standing history as the UK's oldest university chess club by moving to the aesthetic college of Christ Church for weekly club nights, holding simuls in Wadham College's Old Library, Christ Church's Upper Library and scheduling events in Oxford's Old Bodleian. The extra dedication has resulted in the biggest rise in membership of any year (76).

As well as our hugely popular 'Pub Chess' events which would stretch on for 5 hours or more until closing time and often descend into spans of bughouse, we have held several high-profile GM simultaneous exhibitions. These include:

- GM WGM Hou Yifan, 3-time Women's World Champion and Women's World #1
- GM Keith Arkell
- GM Jon Speelman, Oxford alum (postponed)

Each of our simuls sought to be an extremely inclusive affair, with more than 20 boards at each of them. One of our first-time participants called the Arkell simul "the highlight of my chess career". With support from our sponsors and overwhelming demand, we will continue to hold these events in years to come.

[Top to bottom] college teams face off in our re-inaugurated Inter-College League; GM WGM Hou holds a simul; GM Arkell holds a simul; OUCC plays chess in a pub.



British Universities' Chess Association

Championship Winners 2020-21



COMPETITIVE CHESS

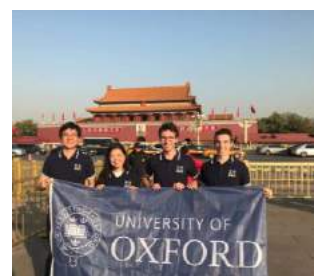
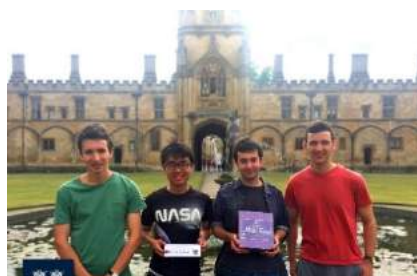
A SEASON OF SUCCESSES

Expanding club membership and emphasising inclusivity helped foster a culture of strength and commitment throughout the year. We sent three teams into our local Oxfordshire District Chess League (ODCL), each of which finished 1st of their respective divisions at the close of the tournament. We won the division trophy for best individual player in Division 1 both years, firstly to our Division 1 captain Filip Mihov, (who achieved **further success** in the Witney Congress and Cowley Blitz tournaments) and in 2020 to former president Joris Gerlagh.

Not content with our regional competition, we sent our teams out to conquer the nation. Our team at this year's BUCA championships finished with a perfect score, reclaiming the title of national champions not seen by our club for 9 years. Our team qualified to represent GBR in the EUSA (European Universities Chess Championship). We were further honoured to participate in the World Prestigious Universities chess invitational tournament 2019 held in Nankai, China where we finished in the world top 10.

As a club, we sought to bolster university chess across the country. We took the initiative, reaching out to other universities to play friendly matches, something we hope to make an annual tradition. We re-commemorated and won a historic trophy at a match with Imperial College London. We undertook extraordinary efforts with the 2020 Chess League, winning the Midlands qualifier and donating the prize money to Oxfam. We have continually submitted teams to its online seasons and helped promote it internationally, whilst still enjoying rivalries with our fellow English clubs.

Awards at: [Left to right] 2020 qualifiers; ODCL Division 1; friendly Imperial (Valentines) match; Inter-College Cuppers League; Cowley Blitz; Nankai invitational. [Above] BUCA.



OUTREACH & TEACHING

We restarted initiatives in both outreach and teaching, seen only before in the pages of OUCC history books. Both projects continue to grow, unhindered by the pandemic response.

We focused on engagement with local schools, led by a new Outreach Officer, Daniel Sutton. We are convinced that – especially in an area with such vast educational inequalities as Oxford – we have a duty to give back to the local community through chess. Before the lockdown, we were able to match student tutors with three schools in the local area, on a voluntary or school-offer basis. In partnership with Chess in Schools and Communities, we hope to get more of our members volunteering and teaching next year.

In summer, we organised a chess challenge project in collaboration with the Bodleian Libraries to set up boards and run drop-in events in the public gallery of the Weston Library for tourists, members of the public and the student body. This has been postponed, but we hope it will increase engagement with the club across the city. This has also been the first year we made all of our events, from GM simuls to pub chess nights, open to anyone from the public, rather than limiting it only to members or university students. We have greatly enjoyed the keen players we have met from our neighbouring business schools, Oxford Brookes, and local city and Cowley chess clubs as a result. To top it all off, we increased our social media presence, creating a new [Facebook page](#), a [Twitter account](#), a [YouTube channel](#) for our weekly tutorials, and a [news blog](#) on our website.

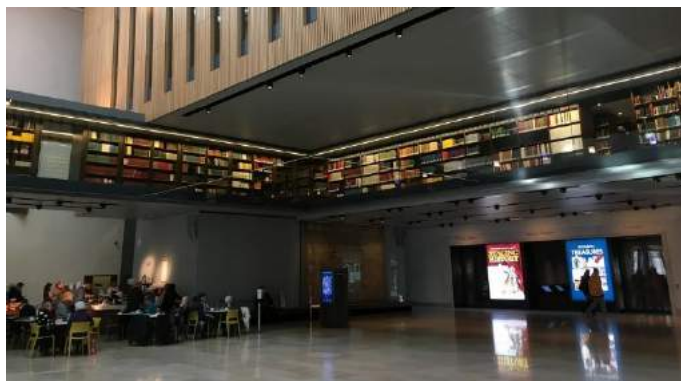
The tutorials were created as part of our teaching initiative. Some of our strongest players, including FM Victor Vasiesiu, Filip Mihov, and Daniel Sutton, volunteered to teach in a series of weekly lessons, catering for beginner and intermediate standards of chess.

Adapting to COVID-19

We adapted to the constraints of lockdown by continuing these lessons online and sharing them with the public via YouTube, inviting schools across the world to view it as a free learning resource. The lessons have been immensely popular amongst attendees and viewers.

OUCC has also been providing impetus for online chess across university communities. We organised over 10 Lichess.org 'Team Battles', from inter-college tournament, to an international 'UK vs US unis' match, to a new online Varsity match against Cambridge. As long as there are keen players, we'll keep playing strong chess.

[Top to bottom] The Weston library, the site of our collaborative outreach initiatives; Filip Mihov teaching a class in the college of Christ Church; FM Victor Vasiesiu leading an 'Advanced Tactics' class; Our new YouTube channel; A beginners' lesson on Zoom.



Bude Chess Club

Bude Chess Club was formed in September 2012 and has varying numbers of members in the adult club, with 10 members at any one time being the maximum. However, this has not stopped it from entering teams in Division 1 and 2 of the Cornwall League, the Cornwall Rapidplay competition and a knockout competition. Bude won the Roger Grime U135 Knockout cup in 2018 and 2019, and were to play in the final in 2020 when coronavirus ended over the board chess. They are looking forward to defending their title when this situation changes. When the 2020 over the board season was curtailed Bude were lying 4th out of 8 teams in the County Shield (Division 1) with 2 games in hand; 6th out of 9 teams in the Roberts Cup (Division 2 grading limited) with 3 games in hand; and 1st in the Eastern Division of the 500 League (rapidplay with grading limit). These results are based on a small core of players who wish to play competitive chess and are willing to travel up to 2 hours for a match.

Bude Chess Club welcomes members of all ages and abilities. To this end there have been a number of players who 'pop along' irregularly for a friendly game. They have also encouraged those who want to improve and have one member who plays for and has captained teams, having joined as a beginner a couple of years ago. Although a small club, their regular teams consist of 2 female players, one of whom captains the 500 League team.

Bude Chess runs a junior club which regularly has an attendance of 8-10 players. This includes players who have educational statements. Any juniors who join who do not know how to play are given small group or one to one instruction until they are confident to play against the other juniors. A typical junior session consists of a group lesson for 15-20 minutes, followed by games. There is generally an even number of males and females in the group. Last year Bude Chess ran the Cornwall Megafinal of the UK Chess Challenge, and would have done again this year if it hadn't been for coronavirus. As part of their junior chess outreach, members of the club have been involved in assemblies in a local junior school and visited another junior school chess club. A 12 year old from the junior club has moved up to the senior club this year.

Bude Chess runs 2 chess congresses a year, helped by the fact that 2 of their members are the only ECF Level 2 arbiters in Cornwall. The Peter and Peggy Clarke Memorial Congress in Bude and the Simon Bartlett Memorial Congress in Torquay. The former is a one-day rapidplay which is organised in conjunction with one of Peter and Peggy's daughters. It includes a special women's prize in memory of Peggy Clarke as well as the main prize and grading prizes. Simon Bartlett was a founder member of Bude Chess and congress regular, who unfortunately died of a brain tumour. The congress in his honour is a 5 round weekend tournament held in January with 80 -100 entrants. As well as sectional and grading prizes, it also includes 'The Loudest Shirt' competition on the Saturday, as Simon was known for his loud, Hawaiian shirts.

Bude Chess regularly has articles published in the local press and this has had a positive effect on people joining the club. In the past they have also raised money for Bude Sea Pool with a Grandmaster simul, local charities by running stalls at local fetes and held an open air simul in the centre of Bude where members of the public challenged our then top player.

Since Covid-19 ended over the board chess, Bude has risen to the challenge of continuing to play online. The club meets weekly for an all-play-all 45 mins plus 15 sec increment match. They have also entered teams in the 4NCL online tournament, the ECF National Club Championship and the online Cornwall League. The juniors have been encouraged to continue with chess via the CSC website and the UK Chess Challenge website. Parents have been contacted via social media, email and a zoom meeting has been set up.

Although a small club, based in a small town in the North East corner of Cornwall, Bude Chess has striven for excellence in all that they do. They encourage all chess, regardless of ability, and are keen to see chess develop further in the town. They were especially encouraged when GM Dr John Nunn purchased a house in the town in 2019 and started to attend the club, going through members games, running coaching sessions and playing for the club.



Online Contribution to Chess

Aloysius Lip (Scorch Chess)

(Nominated by Peter Hornsby and eight others)

and

4NCL Online

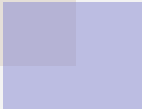

(nominated by Mike Truran)



SCORCHCHESS

ECF 'Online Chess Contribution of the Year'
Aloysius Lip | proposed Peter Hornsby





What is ScorchChess and
why was it created?



1. STORY

IMPETUS

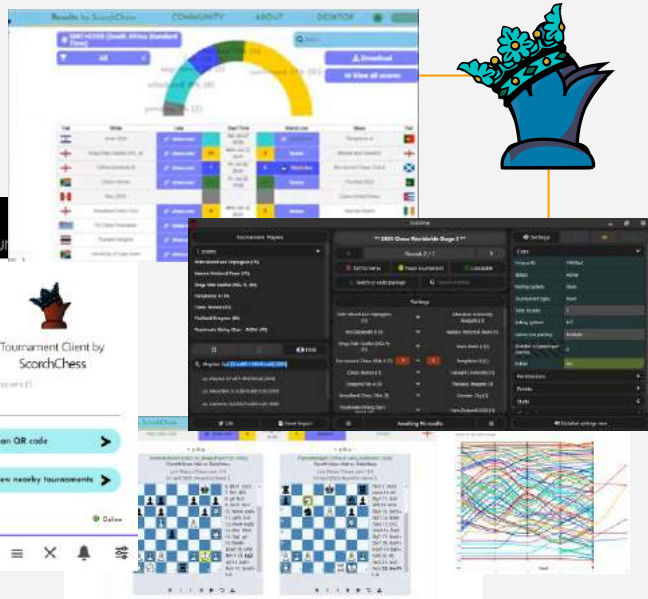
When I first joined my club at uni, we tried to resurrect the annual amateur intercollege rapid-play tournament. Picture it – around 100 anxious undergraduates, keen to return back to their revision notes, stuck inside on a hot summer's day. All because they were keen chess players attending their one outlet to play over the course of the term. The competition was nearly derailed by slow pairing times. We'd scoured the web and couldn't find a single program that could handle individual players, teams, and a Swiss system that was accessible to use.

There is so much technology available to us and it is all so powerful. Those kind enough to organise amazing playing opportunities should never have to be bogged down in logistics that distract from the incredible game of chess.

ScorchChess was built during the UK lockdown from January to April 2020. It is a software that takes care of all the arduous management. Originally envisioned for in-person tournaments, it grew rapidly to cater for the community transitioning online and developed ground-breaking integrations with Lichess.org, Chess.com, and ECF online services. It modernises organisation and makes the process easy and enjoyable. The platform is intuitive, filled with features, and innovative. Chess players shouldn't have to settle for anything less.



WHAT IS SCORCHCHESS?



ScorchChess is a software suite for managing chess tournaments. It was created this year in COVID-19 lockdown and designed for both in-person and online tournaments. It has three components: ScorchApp, ScorchResults, and ScorchMobile.

SCORCHAPP

<https://beta.scorchapp.co.uk>

ScorchApp is the 'director' part of the software. It is a cross-platform and web app giving total control over managing tournaments. On just one screen, directors manage their players, pairings, settings, public view, and sync to national databases – ECF included.

There are also specialised import, settings, and pairings views for detailed work. It prioritises customisability.

SCORCHMOBILE

ScorchMobile is the companion for physical tournaments. The app is downloaded by players. Directors can instantly send announcements, round times, and pairings, support messages and so on to any and all players.

SCORCHRESULTS

<https://results.scorchapp.co.uk>

ScorchResults is for the players. Participants navigate pairings, standings, stats, team pages, individual score trackers and so much more.

ScorchResults possesses several cutting-edge features. It 'syncs' – rather than chase up and type, results are automatically 'pulled' from online games. There is also in-built support for live commentary whilst players simultaneously track ongoing match results. This has helped to foster tournament 'communities' who gather to follow live games.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS



<https://scorchapp.co.uk>



[/scorchchess](https://www.facebook.com/scorchchess)



[@scorchchess](https://twitter.com/scorchchess)

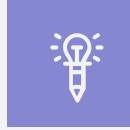
CORE VALUES



1. EFFICIENCY

The primary aim of ScorchChess is to eliminate all tiresome logistical work from the role of chess tournament directors. It permits organisation with minimal delay. It frees directors to focus on helping players enjoy themselves.

ScorchChess anticipates ideas tournament directors might have and performs the work necessary for them, offering them limitless creativity.



2. INTUITIVITY

ScorchChess offers all the features imaginable and lets tournament directors immediately know how to use them. Directors and players alike know exactly where to click and how to create. We hope this allows a new focus on enjoying the game.

In doing so, they create the perfect tournaments they envision, with no compromises necessary.





3. INCLUSIVITY

Inclusivity comes 3rd because it is a consequence of the other two, but by far the proudest achievement.


ScorchChess seeks to grow the chess community wherever possible and make running tournaments accessible to non-professionals.

It is further committed to upholding social justice wherever possible throughout its activities.

The following set of slides hope to demonstrate all the ways we have achieved these values and why we think ScorchChess is worthy of being named online chess contribution of the year



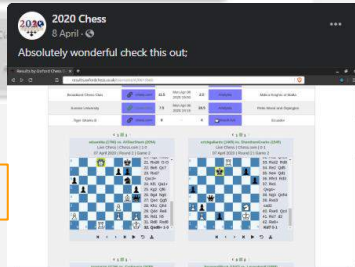
Here are all the ways ScorchChess has been used since its founding and why we think it is worthy of being named online chess contribution of the year



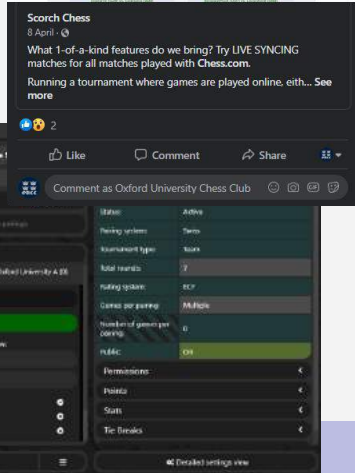
2. IMPACT



ScorchChess on 2020 social media



2020 Chess' ScorchApp controller



THE 2020 CHESS INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE

The online 2020 Chess International League is a huge, multi-round tournament featuring many highly ranked players and GMs. It is a charity tournament raising money for Oxfam, UK.

ScorchChess has given 2020 Chess a professional and attractive platform to flourish. Its tournaments have involved over 1000 players and 100 teams across the world. It has uniquely utilised:

- Multiple language support
- Automatic online results syncing with Chess.com and Lichess.org
- Individual standings tables

Comments by Peter Hornsby, tournament director

It's in a different league to anything else out there, and the potential for further development is frighteningly exciting, really look forward to be following its journey and using the platform along the way!

UK UNIVERSITIES CHESS LEAGUE

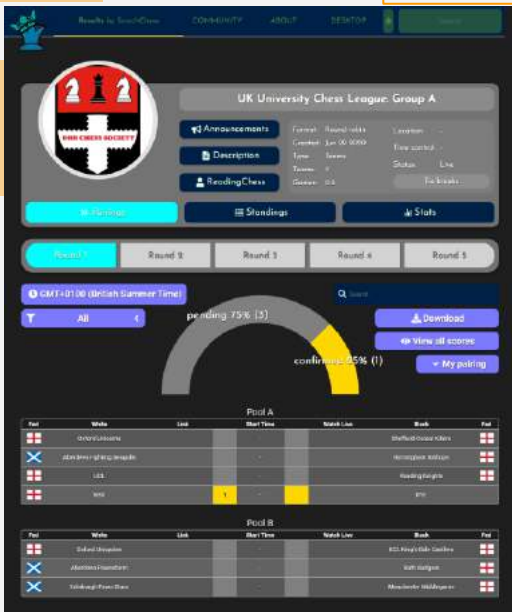
ScorchChess is helping to establish an new universities league which is being played online during lockdown. The fledgling league involves at least 10 universities and multiple teams. The aim is to keep young and talented chess players across the country enthused with chess. It also provides an outlet for developing players to find challenges.

The league uniquely makes use of the ScorchChess features:

- Round-Robin pairings
- Pairing 'pools'
- ECF player import and grading sheet export

James Connors, founder | readinguniversitychesssociety@gmail.com

Incredibly visually appealing with lots of information making the ideal platform for both organising and reviewing games. It's my favourite chess online tool, At a time like this - ScorchChess is exactly what we've all needed!



Adding new players from the ECF database on ScorchApp



BLACK MOVES FIRST // AFRICAN CHESS LOUNGE



The Black Moves
First extension
by ScorchChess



ACL's regular 'Chess@Home'
tournaments, which are
migrating over to ScorchChess



Black Moves First is a series of tournaments serving as a silent Chess awareness campaign against racism and violence. Games played operate under the rule that black has the first move, a symbolic measure to show that conditions are a social construct and we have the power to change them. Its long-term commitment is to bring together children and adults from different socio-economic backgrounds and abilities. The tournaments are being organised by the African Chess Lounge, a South African chess school.

ScorchChess helped coordinate and wrote the Lichess.org modification to permit black to move first. ScorchChess is making preparations to run a series of tournaments for African Chess Lounge involving over 1000 children participants from various schools in the region. We hope this will permit ACL to reach out and encourage chess playing amongst more juniors than ever before.

Reuben Salimu, organiser | salimu@africanchesslounge.org

Olimpiáda de Ajedrez Cubano VS COVID-19

Cuban Chess Olympiad vs COVID-19

ScorchChess has been made the platform of choice of the independent Cuban Chess Olympiad, an online tournament featuring over 100 players, of which 72 are titled. The Olympiad is for the Cuban community. We have been proud to work with it promoting inclusivity, as it:

- Permits entry to all Cuban players around the globe, rather than using restrictions based on political standings or migratory status
- Aids poor Cuban communities by raising funds to purchase products contributing to COVID-19 relief.

ScorchChess is used for the organisation of its public league.

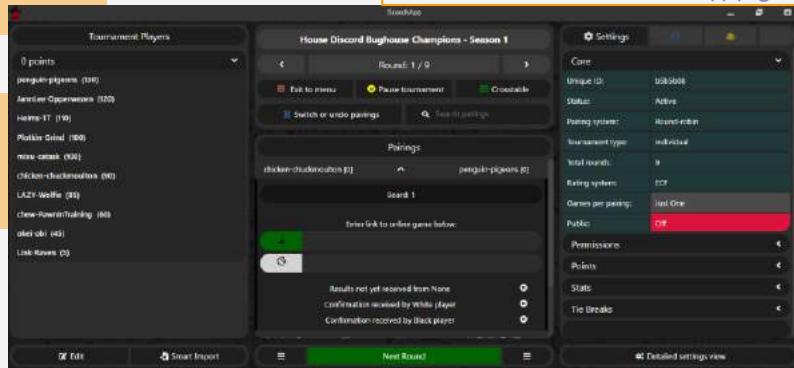
Jimmy Barroso, tournament director | jimmybarroso9311@gmail.com

The best pairing and management software I have seen of its kind. I have never seen such quality in a tournament management platform.



A match between
two prolific players
in the Olympiad





HOUSE DISCORD BUGHOUSE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The House is the largest online community for chess variants players. Amongst all chess players, variants players are the most marginalised, accounting for 2% of games on Lichess.org.



Amongst variants players, Bughouse players (exchange, swap, doubles chess) are the most marginalised. Departing from the traditional 2-person set up, Bughouse sees players compete in teams, trading pieces to each other on capture. Bughouse does not see support on Lichess.org and its features on Chess.com are limited. It is nonetheless a favourite of many and a consistent post-tournament relaxer.

ScorchChess has hosted the first league for the Bughouse players of The House, overcoming a problem that has been unsurmountable for years. Bughouse players finally have a chance to compete in tournaments, an opportunity that has been available to every other variant's community including standard chess.

The House Discord admins | <https://dscrd.me/housechessvariants>



The House, an online community of nearly 2000 members



Here's some other information about
ScorchChess that might be of interest
to support this nomination



3. ABOUT

SCREENSHOTS OF SCORCHAPP



MAIN VIEW

- Shows a breakdown of players in standings order, searchable and expandable pairings for the round, and touch-to-toggle settings neatly categorised.
- Comes with an intuitive 'Switch Pairings' mode, player profiles
- Allows adding players straight from national database (ECF and FIDE), for easy import and easy grading.

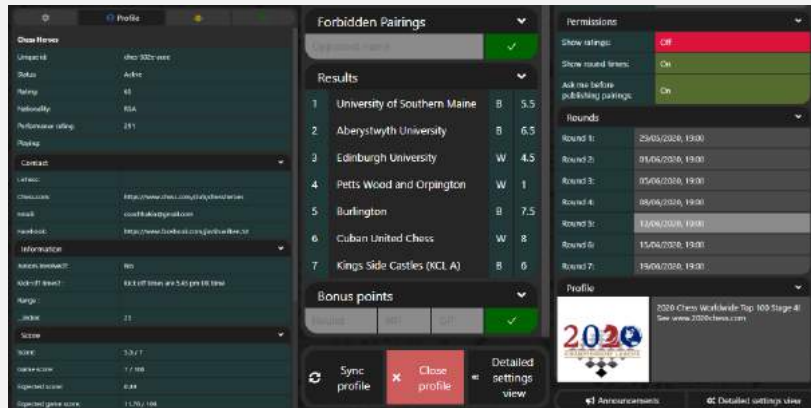
INNOVATIVE 'SMART IMPORT' FEATURES

- Permits bulk adding of players via spreadsheet.
- Automatically detects column data and intelligently assigns it labels which are customisable.
- Built-in data validation and error detection.



PROFILE / SETTINGS VIEW

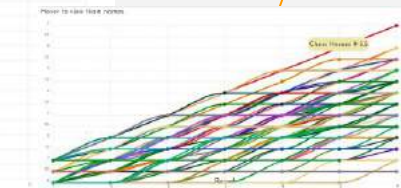
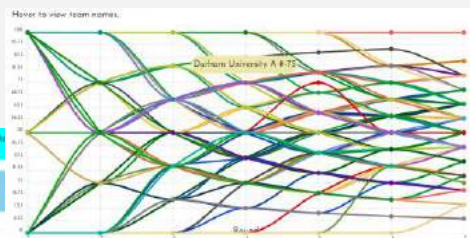
- Detailed player panes with useful stats, forbidden pairings, match history, and half-point byes.
- 'Public' controller viewer offering customisation with logo, rules, and round times amongst others.
- Information can be synced with national databases and online (Lichess.org / Chess.com).



SCREENSHOTS OF SCORCHRESULTS



Rank	Player	Team	Score
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8



PAIRINGS AND RESULTS

- An aesthetic tournament info page with links to rules, tie-breaks, and description, plus relevant tournament stats.
- ScorchResults' iconic "rainbow" arc of pairings that track progress for game completion. Viewers also have filtering and search options.
- Each pairing also comes with an individual breakdown and game links.

STANDINGS AND COMMENTARY

- ScorchChess breaks down standings by team and individual scores.
- Live games have results updated in real time. Players can follow these with an integrated commentary view.

Rank	Team	Score	Other Stats
1
2
3
4

Rank	Player	Score	Other Stats
1
2
3
4

STATS

- ScorchChess features unique and beautiful flow diagrams to visually convey progress.
- Ranking graphs offer progress over time whereas raw points show incredible trends.

COST

OPERATION

ScorchChess is run as a SaaS, meaning its primary beneficiaries, tournament directors, purchase a license to use its features. It offers a free month trial to begin and unlimited, dedicated support.

There have been no complaints so far from any of its directors or players.

USERS

ScorchChess is free to all its players in its tournaments and it always will be. Players are invited to create accounts, view results, pairings, and stats without any sort of limitation.

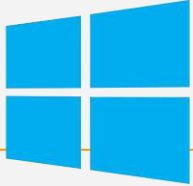
ScorchChess furthermore does not inflict ads on its users.



PRICING

ScorchChess has run at cost. This has been from a combination of offering support to tournament directors limited due to COVID-19 restrictions and to promote its tenant of inclusivity in reaching as many players as possible.

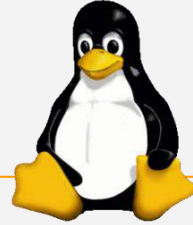
ACCESSIBILITY



WINDOWS



macOS



LINUX

ScorchChess is available on the three most widely-used operating systems so that its directors and users aren't forced to do something a way they don't want.



DESKTOP



WEB APP



MOBILE

ScorchChess comes on Desktop, as a web app, and a mobile app to suit any situation. Whether playing out in a real-life tournament or online, ScorchChess has been created to manage the situation.

- In addition, ScorchChess is built with full support for the colour-blind.
- ScorchResults comes in Light, Dark, or Custom Background modes for adjustment to any reading conditions.
- ScorchChess is also available in multiple languages.



JIMMY BARROSO, PLAYER & ORGANISER, CUBAN CHESS OLYMPIAD

I have tried several platforms that are sold as "the best" for tournament organisation, management, and publicity. I was never satisfied with any of them and always went back to the basics. Then

I found this project and I have to say I have never seen such quality in a tournament management platform.

Connectivity to the main playing platforms, with FIDE, amazing interface, the developer's assistance is insanely quick and effective. I recommended this amazing platform to my federation and I have no doubt that it will change the dynamics in tournament management.



JAMES CONNORS, TREASURER & CAPTAIN, READING UNIVERSITY

ScorchChess is a very user-friendly tool. The large variety of features makes it ideal for any club. It appeals strongly to both a tournament organiser and to participants!

As a team captain, I have found the results interface to be incredibly visually appealing with lots of information making it ideal. It's my favourite chess online tool, At a time like this - ScorchChess is exactly what we've all needed!



REVIEWS

DANIEL HARDMAN, TREASURER, BUCA

Incredibly intuitive and very user friendly, you don't need to be a computer expert to use it.



CHRISTIAN SCHIØLER HANSEN, PRESIDENT, LSE CHESS CLUB

ScorchChess is aesthetic, intuitive and well-integrated across platforms. It is full of handy features that make it easy to tailor tournaments to the needs of the organiser and is miles ahead of its competitors.

A highlight is the integration with Chess.com and Lichess. ScorchChess addresses the shortcomings of tournament and pairing features on both sites, providing exciting and brand-new opportunities for tournament organisers.



Having shown the range of achievements, the capabilities demonstrated, and values upheld by ScorchChess, we are proud to submit it for consideration as ECF's Online Chess Contribution of the Year.

For any further information or questions about the software, please email the creator, Aloysius Lip, at alloysius.lip@gmail.com

<https://scorchapp.co.uk>

Many thanks to all involved who have been invaluable every step of the way in testing, suggesting, and having patience.

- Presentation template by Slidesgo
- Icons by Flaticon, Google
- Infographics by Freepik

4NCL Online and Junior 4NCL Online

The 4NCL would like to nominate its 4NCL Online and 4NCL Junior Online national leagues for the Online Chess Contribution of the Year Award.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused huge problems for over the board chess, with all events effectively cancelled from the moment of HM Government's announcement of a strict lockdown on 23 March. One silver lining to this particular cloud, however, has been the boost it has given to online chess, and the 4NCL wasted no time in setting up the two online competitions above; round 1 of 4NCL Online took place on 7 April, little more than two weeks after HM Government's announcement, a remarkable achievement given the complexity of what was involved.

The sheer number of team entries (184 teams in 4NCL Online, 142 teams in Junior 4NCL Online) shows how much this initiative has been welcomed as a means of playing friendly but competitive chess at a time when every over the board chess competition and club activity has been suspended. No fewer than 1,820 players in total have participated in both leagues, with 23 GMs/WGMs and 34 IMs/WIMs also joining in the fun. Three aspects have been particularly encouraging:

- The number of girls (111, 15.4% of all players) who have played in 4NCL Junior Online.
- The participation of so many teams from far-flung communities in the British Isles who have hitherto found the distances and costs involved in playing in the over the board 4NCL national league to be insuperable obstacles.
- The huge support given to Junior 4NCL Online by junior team captains and organisers across the British Isles.

Not everything has been plain sailing. It has become clear over the course of the season that our fair play guidelines could have been improved. In retrospective this was unsurprising given that as 'early adopters' we were to a large extent always going to be in uncharted territory, but we have worked hard to address this for our second season, which will begin in the second half of 2020. What has been very pleasing is how well representatives from the 4NCL, the ECF and Chess Scotland have worked together to learn from the 4NCL's experiences in order to develop what we believe are robust and workable fair play guidelines that can be adopted by all organisations in the British Isles that wish to run online chess competitions.

Now that the heavy lifting of putting the infrastructure for the two leagues has been put in place we are very much looking forward to our second season, and are confident that we already have sufficient critical mass to ensure that our new venture will continue to prosper even when over the board chess returns.





Presidents Awards for Services to Chess

Graham Bromley

(nominated by John Carleton)

Ian George

(nominated by David Jenkins)

Peter Hornsby

(nominated by Aloysius Lip)

Harry Lamb

(nominated by Nick Burrow)

Nigel Towers and Alex Holowczak

(nominated by Mike Truran)



PRESIDENTS AWARDS FOR SERVICES TO CHESS

Graham Bromley

Graham is a lifelong Chester Chess Club member with a passion for our game. For many years he was a typical Club member supporting the Club by playing and helping the Club in administrative positions, but prioritising family and work needs.

Then, in 2002, Graham became president of the Club and, with time available following retirement, made it his priority to re-open a junior section which had successfully provided encouragement and support for children wishing to play chess over an earlier period of some 12 years. By 2003 the junior club had been shut for 3 years but, having made contact with potential players and having put arrangements in place for a suitable venue, Graham re-opened the club.

The early days and years saw tough problems overcome in meeting those two ostensibly simple but actually moving targets and in a real sense the rest is history. Just a few of the memorable aspects of that history follow: Graham and the team of helpers he had brought together oversaw gradual growth and improvement such that Chester entered a junior team in the then lowest division [3] of the [adult] Wirral League in 2008. Until this time, there had been occasional friendly matches against other junior clubs and the regular Friday evening meetings. The format of the club nights consisted, as it does today, of a half-hour coaching session on the demonstration board followed by a one-hour period of playing chess. Around this time, the first group of club members was gradually being replaced by a new generation which included emerging talent that showed interest, enthusiasm and commitment at a new level for Chester Juniors. The top team worked its way up the divisions of the Wirral League and survived until its 4th season in division 1. That team was disbanded at the end of last season when university beckoned for most of the players but during their stay in the league these young players showcased the junior talent available in Chester. Throughout this team's adventures, Chester also had 4[and occasionally 5] other junior teams in the bottom division [now division 4] plus a few other junior players in intermediate divisions of the league. Over the years Chester players dominated the county junior teams and this has been a major factor in the successes of Cheshire and North Wales teams during this time. Chester juniors proved to be most adept at winning age-group titles at county level. In addition, four of the trail-blazing squad represented England and two won national titles. When two of these players took part in an England junior squad event in Gibraltar in August 2017, Graham helped them prepare by arranging matches against himself and other strong Chester players. Although there have always been more boys than girls in the junior club the girls have their fair share of county titles. Girls from Chester also have gained recognition at national level. In the years around 2012 one of Chester's girls represented Wales in various age-group teams. Last summer in Bratislava saw Chester's top girl player as England's representative in the 9 round Girls' U14 European Championships where she scored 50% despite being the lowest rated of 98 players. Even during the corona virus pause in activities, two of the girls Graham was teaching joined the Lichess on-line England Women's Team.

Graham stood down as Club president after 15 years at the end of 2017 but his junior effort has remained undiminished. His coaching sessions continued until the shut down and he was present at all the evening junior matches as well as having checked the players' availability and found replacements when needed. In the early days Graham was aided in his endeavours by the interest and help freely given by the Senior Club members in the coaching sessions and felt encouraged to coach at home on occasion. Later he established coaching on a regular basis on Saturday afternoons, which, as mentioned above has continued over the years

ceasing only with the corona virus lock-down. Other sessions also took place on a Thursday evening for a couple of seasons. Parents, where able, have also willingly helped with the internal organization of the Club. Graham has that precious ability to bring talents to the table to help with his vision of chess targets. I must confess to have been a victim/ beneficiary of Graham's charms. Some 10 years ago, four friends and I had fallen out with our chess club, so Graham approached us with the offer of good chess in the two leagues in which Chester competed. We accepted with alacrity. Over the next few years, it became apparent that whereas Graham was clearly pleased to have us on board taking on Chester's local rivals, he would also appreciate my help on the coaching side. I thought highly of my early experiences of the Junior Club and was delighted to join this aspect of the Chester cause. It should not be thought that the activity on behalf of juniors was always an inward-looking process. In recent years, Graham and Chester Club members have been prominent in organising several congresses in Chester for the benefit of Cheshire, North Wales and Wirral Juniors. Graham served on the Cheshire and North Wales [an entity devoted to Junior chess in the regions] committee for many years including a stint as chairman. This was matched by his work over many years in the broader chess community by service on the Chester and District Chess League including those as president from 2004-2007. In recent years Graham has been a strong and experienced presence for action to facilitate the growth of junior chess in both this league and the Wirral Chess League. Graham's extraordinary efforts a few years ago in helping set up a chess club and to provide coaching in a local primary school will surprise no-one who is familiar with his energy and love of the game.

It is natural that many will see the Junior Club as Graham's lasting legacy. There were 34 juniors out of a total membership of 91 at the start of 2019-20. The junior membership remains close to a historic high level. Graham's own words at the end of his report on the history of the Junior Club in 2017 reflect his affection for and his many years of selfless dedication to the junior section, " There is no doubt anyone reading this account will conclude that Chester Junior Club has been and still is a very strong and also successful club. However, it would be a mistake to overlook all those children who have not been as successful as those mentioned. A great many of them have played an equally important part in creating a chess club which has had, over the years, that indefinable quality, an ethos, and an atmosphere which has made the club, for many, including myself, an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Without this, the Club would be greatly diminished".

However, I have to stress that that Graham's energies within Chester Chess Club were not limited to junior activities. He ensured that those within the Club with disability or injury were able to participate by arranging for people to play them at their homes. This practice continues to this day. I recall Graham, seeing how exhausting the [aided] trips up and down the stairs were for one of our team players, immediately sanctioned the hiring of another venue for matches, confident of resolving the financial implications. Graham does not prevaricate when action is required. Further, the Club has many teams, and Graham has frequently filled in when a captain was missing through work or illness, on occasion for the best part of a season. Graham has also taken up important posts such as treasurer and tournament controller when needed. All this is, of course, in addition to his ongoing commitments to the multiple junior teams under his guidance.

I count myself fortunate to have Graham as a friend and to have worked alongside him, but very much following his footsteps. Graham has a passion for chess and has willingly shared and continues to share his joy of chess and expertise with all of Chester Chess Club and beyond. I urge that you support this request to give Graham due recognition by granting him the President's Award for Services to Chess 2020.

Ian George

As President of the Cornwall Chess Association and on behalf of its Management Committee I have pleasure in proposing Ian George for an ECF President's Award for Services to Chess.

Ian has been a stalwart of Cornish chess for many years. Our county secretary for over thirty years, during the whole of this time he has doubled up as county grader and principal organizer of our annual Congress. Over the last ten years he has served as CCA's treasurer and league secretary. His administrative flair has frequently seen him responding to the needs of the chess community at the expense of his playing. Although outright Cornish champion in 1985 and 1990 and West of England champion in 1995, he stopped competing in 1999 to take over the less glamorous role of Controller.

Although Ian is a fine and imaginative player¹ and one of the top boards for the county team, this citation concentrates on his work in establishing then maintaining Cornwall's online presence. The Chess Cornwall website was developed latterly into a highly successful instrument to support our local chess community through the Covid-19 pandemic. Ian performed a number of associated administrative with grace and distinction.

Before marshalling the supportive evidence, I feel it appropriate to offer some comments that will give you some sense of Ian the man.

For many years Ian George has been at the heart of Cornish chess and has served its Association and his home club Camborne with admirable verve and efficiency. He has been a strong supporter of junior chess in the county and has done the pairings for a variety of local and nationally-sponsored tournaments. A notably courteous and somewhat shy man, Ian is not one to trumpet his own achievements but his persistent quiet influence has been profound, particularly in inculcating the deep values he has brought to the local chess scene, supporting chess as a community asset, a leveller, a civilising influence and an educational tool. Before his retirement he was the in-house senior accountant for a local property firm. As County secretary and treasurer, he has admirably calmed a number of minor disputes, while his handling of the finances has been efficient, sure-footed and on occasion responsive to individuals needing discreet support. Overall, Ian's judgement is hugely trusted by his chess colleagues. His dedication to chess is perhaps best expressed in his admirable response over recent years to difficult domestic circumstances that required him to be a full-time carer. During this period Ian elected to withdraw largely from playing chess competitively but to redouble his efforts on the administrative side, which he could manage from home. Thankfully, the situation has eased to some extent and it is good to see him back and playing well. I appreciate that it is not the role of the President's Award for Services to Chess to reward virtue, but Ian is widely recognised as that rarity, a lovely man.

As indicated above, my argument will focus mainly on the work of Ian George as leader of the Cornish Chess Association's online operation and designer and webmaster of its website. It has served local chess players well, many elderly and several in self-imposed isolation through the pandemic. This has been seen, by common consent, as a spectacularly successful initiative.

The revamped Chess Cornwall website

In the early 2000's Ian designed and maintained the first version of the website but had to put it aside for three years because of pressing family responsibilities and work commitment. In

¹ See for example his annotated games on the Chess Cornwall website. Ian has also been the leading light behind the annual Camborne Open 'Gambit Tournament' in which every round begins with the opening moves of a randomly chosen gambit.

the summer of 2013, he completely revamped the design of the website from scratch without reference to the previous edition. The chess blog Keverel Chess was among those commenting favourably on 'Ian George's excellent website'.

The objective was twofold: to provide a source of all the information that players would need to facilitate their enjoyment of and participation in chess in Cornwall and to preserve as much information as possible about the history of Cornish chess.

It is anticipated at this point that the ECF Awards Committee will have direct access to the website (www.cornwallchess.org.uk) and will explore its architecture for themselves.

Nevertheless, there are a number of features it may be useful to draw to your attention.

1. The design is simple and uncluttered with consistency of layout and identical banner and links bar on each page. There is a 3-column layout for index pages, enabling presentation of a large amount of information in a clean format
2. The navigation system makes it as easy as possible for visitors to find their way around the site, with bars at top and bottom of each page. In 'league tables', for example, there are links to the detailed results of each club. For 'individual competitions', there are links to full results and standings where available. For 'county matches' the links include full board scores and captains' reports where available.
3. A search function enables visitors to locate specific information in the site. The Go Duck Go search function is embedded on the front page to produce results from the site only, in part to increase privacy for site users. Go Duck Go claims not to track user searches for the purpose of selling user data to commercial advertisers, an attractive feature.
4. Ian George as webmaster is committed to the speedy presentation of up-to-date results, tables and fixtures/pairings for competitions in the county, particularly leagues, individual events (including the congress and various club championships), and county matches. This arduous ongoing task has been flawlessly performed and is much appreciated. Latest league results are shown on the front page
5. A 'mini-site' has been created for the online operation.
6. Current ECF grades and more recently fluctuating Lichess grades are also available on the site, essential for captains who are selecting teams for grade-restricted tournaments.
7. A section is dedicated to the announcement of forthcoming events. Including those not run by the Cornwall County Association.
8. There are contact details for both clubs and county, including meeting venues and schedules.
9. The website is also a repository of basic information on the CCA constitution, its competition rules, the minutes of the AGM and committee meetings so that decisions affecting the players are easily accessible.
10. A diary is presented for each season, bringing together all material published on the site about each season as it occurs. This information is transferred to the archive at the end of the season.
11. Information on chess activity not organised by the Association is also featured, e.g. groups meeting informally, charity events for the Petroc Trust, etc.
12. Each club has been given a dedicated page. These brings together the information on the club scattered around the site, including contacts, venue, fixtures and results, club championships (if any), and club diaries for current and past seasons. Clubs are also invited to contribute their own material about themselves. Although outside the terms of this citation, virtually all clubs have parallel Facebook pages and many have clearly been inspired by the County site and copied some of its features.
13. One of the most successful innovations has been the featured games by local players, often with reflective commentary attached. These are playable in the browser using the pgnforweb site and format. There is a downloadable pgn file of all the games

featured (199 and counting). It is becoming increasingly common for local players to research their opponents prior to matches.

14. The historical archive is an important feature, offering lists of Emigrant Cup (county championship), Falmouth Cup (grade restricted) and local League winners from 1904, as well as county matches from 1972. In all cases, links to more detailed information is offered where available, as are links to other chess websites of interest.
15. The site presents items of general chess journalism with a number of articles of interest, some about relatively arcane matters like the psychology of the 'simul' or narrative texts about and/or by local players, past and present. The site is also possibly unique in featuring a resident cartoonist.

Supporting Cornwall chess online during the pandemic

This was the finely-tuned instrument at Ian George's disposal when Cornwall Chess was hit by Covid-19. It became immediately obvious, even before the formal lockdown, that it would be inappropriate for face-to-face chess to continue in Cornwall and the CCA Management Committee suspended all league and cup competitions and cancelled the annual Congress. But, proverbially, when the going gets tough, the tough get going, and with the support of valued colleagues like Robin Kneebone, Ian George led the concerted response to the pandemic that informs a significant part of this citation.

Following the suspension of OTB play in March, Ian George in collaboration with Robin Kneebone set up an online club for 'Cornwall' on the Lichess platform to allow active players to continue to compete and stay in contact with their chess associates. This was only possible because the local online platform was already 'fit for purpose'. The first venture was entry in the newly-established ECF National Online League and our small county was proud that sufficient players volunteered for Cornwall to put forward four 'squads' of up to eight players from which four would be selected for any specific game in the ten-week competition. The results were mixed, as we would expect at this level, but Falmouth and Truro came third in Division 3 and East Cornwall Killers third in Division 4. We commend the 4NCL/Lichess initiative, which proved most enjoyable and instructive.

This experience turbo-charged Ian George to follow up the format with a variety of spin-offs. At the time of writing, the Cornwall Chess Association online operation is hosting a series of events catering for a variety of tastes and preferences to the delight of local players and the strengthening of the local chess community. The organisational burden falling on Ian has been huge, but coped with admirably.

The online provision has currently settled at three different types of offering per week on different evenings, with feedback suggesting that this is the optimal number. In any week there will be Arena tournaments (including Team Battles), Swiss and team events. There is usually one blitz, one rapid tournament and one 'classical' event (usually a team league) at 45 mins plus 15 second increment. A Cornwall Online League has been established with nine teams with weekly rounds at classical time controls. When this finished it will be replaced by a couple of eight player all-play-all tournaments and a 7 round Swiss for all the players with the Association offering donated prizes. This will be followed by a knock-out tournament, probably involving short matches at a faster time limit. At some point a second season of the 4NCL online league will start and once again we will be contenders.

The feedback from our members has been excellent, with much favourable appreciative comment on Ian's management of his Herculean task. Although it was Covid-19 that provided the spark, our online activity will continue when OTB chess is resumed. Ian sees online chess as potentially offering a 'bridge' to face-to-face club chess both for 'returners' and 'newcomers' once 'normal' life returns. There is already clear evidence that this objective is being met.

In proposing Ian George for this award, it is perhaps appropriate to borrow the language of the pandemic itself. Ian's response has not been to let Covid-19 'flatten the curve' of chess

activity in Cornwall but rather to engineer an unexpected dramatic surge. As an experienced and highly competent administrator, he was fully aware from the start the onerousness of the task he was taking on, one which he is performing beautifully. Those who know him well were not surprised. As suggested above, it is all of a piece with his long selfless dedication to chess in Cornwall.

Peter Hornsby

In March 2020, as a result of the challenges we all now face, Peter set up one of the world's most successful and inclusive online Chess tournaments, the 2020 Chess Championship League (2020 League). The league takes place wholly online, a successor to a highly popular English clubs and universities over-the-board tournament and can be found at www.2020chess.com. The tournament is open to everyone and free. Matches take place on Monday and Friday evenings spanning three-week periods. It is currently on its fourth instalment.

The 2020 League is proud of the variety in its participants, seeing entrants from junior schools such as College and charity schools such as Grassy Park, South Africa, as well as academies, universities, including Oxford, Harvard, MIT, Melbourne, and clubs, such as Tiger Sharks, former 4NCL Rapid Play champions. Inclusivity is championed as one of its tenants; its many internationally recognised players, including GM-titled players from all demographics, compete amongst each other and amateurs alike, all in one division. Its outreach is widespread; teams from right across the UK, Australia, Oxford University, South Africa, Italy, India, Brazil, USA, Germany, Russia, Thailand, Liberia, Chile, India, and the Trinidad and Tobago national team compete directly against each other. And the initiative is growing fast. There are 100 teams in the competition with over 1000 participants, double its participation in the first two weeks. It continues to grow even further.

The league's efforts have produced results in other fields important to chess achievement, including the world of chess streaming. The tournament has nurtured a commentary channel at www.twitch/chessheroes.com and maintained a strong social media presence bringing together players and captains right across the country. The result has been new rivalries and new collaboration. The league's efforts have been endorsed by Chess.com, who have kindly facilitated the tournament by use of their platform. The Tournament Director Peter Hornsby has already been interviewed by the BBC and featured in the Times Newspaper for his work introducing chess into keyworker schools during this pandemic.

Most importantly, the tournament is being used as means to raise money for charity. Last season 2020 Chess managed to raise £1100 in over the board tournaments and is on track to repeat that effort over the course of this lockdown period via its giving page, <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/2020chess>.

The 2020 League is the relentless work of Peter Hornsby. He has engaged a team of volunteers to grow the League's successes across the UK since its founding in 2015. It has flourished, not declined, by the pandemic restrictions that have stifled so many. It represents the culmination of dedication towards chess. I would therefore like to highly recommend and nominate him for this award.

Appendix 1: The Times interview with Peter Hornsby



<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/eton-launches-100m-drive-to-help-teach-poorer-children-62mbzsdkj>

Harry Lamb

Harry is a lifelong player with a peak Fide Rating of 2285. He has been the Chairman of Bolton Chess Club for 56 years. Harry has been a team captain in both the Bolton League and Manchester League. Greater Manchester team county player. Was the Founder of the Bolton District Chess League. Wrote chess articles in the local Bolton Evening News paper for a number of years. One of the founder members of the Manchester Chess Federation. President of the Manchester Chess Federation for 2 years 1973-1975. Became an International Chess Arbiter in 1984. Coached many Bolton juniors at Bolton Chess Club in his 56 years at the club. Is the current Chief Arbiter at the Bolton Easter and Bolton Rapidplay Chess Congress and has been for many years. He is the current Congress director of the Manchester Chess Federation Congress, where he has overseen the following rise in entrants.

2016 - 124 players took part In the Manchester Summer Chess Congress

2017 - 138 players took part part in the Manchester Summer Congress

2018 - 151 players took part in the Manchester Summer Congress

2019 - 160 players took part in the Manchester Summer chess Congress

Nigel Towers and Alex Holowczak

I should like to nominate Nigel Towers and Alex Holowczak for the President's Award for Services to Chess. I should be grateful if the Awards Committee would please either accept or reject both nominations; to my mind both candidates are equally worthy recipients for their work in the same field (online chess) and it would be invidious to give the award to one but not to the other.

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a complete cessation in over the board since March, with no sign yet of any resumption in the short to medium term. This, although in many ways something of a disaster for English chess, has presented an unprecedented opportunity to develop online chess into a credible alternative to over the board chess. Exploiting the opportunity has, however, required a huge amount of time and effort to incredibly tight timescales on the part of a handful of individuals, with Nigel and Alex at the forefront of initiatives to develop both the ECF's and the 4NCL's online presence. Nigel and Alex have worked closely both with each other and with other hard-working volunteers to put the ECF's and the 4NCL's online infrastructure and capability in place; in International Director Malcolm Pein's words, 'Nigel is one of the ECF's best people, without whom I think it's no exaggeration to say that the ECF would have lapsed into temporary irrelevance'. I would make exactly the same observation about Alex and his work for the 4NCL.

Major pieces of work that Nigel and Alex have either led or been closely involved in include the following:

- Setting up 4NCL Online and Junior 4NCL online in little more than two weeks from HM Government's announcement of a strict lockdown on 23 March. 184 teams and 142 teams entered 4NCL Online and Junior 4NCL Online respectively, and no fewer than 1,820 players in total have participated in both leagues. Alex has also been closely involved in setting up the arrangements for the 4NCL's first online congress in July, which is intended to replicate closely the structure and format of the 4NCL over the board congresses and to provide a template for future online congresses. (AH)
- Setting up ECF Online Clubs from a standing start. Online members have already reached impressive levels:

chess.com ECF members:	889
chess.com ECF open:	3,399
lichess English players:	595
lichess England women:	224
lichess England juniors:	347 (NT)
- Implementing at short notice a comprehensive monthly rating system for online chess which has been very well received. (NT)
- Putting in place a programme of ECF online events to replace their over the board equivalents such as the National Online Clubs Championships, the Online County Championships, the English Online Blitz Championships and the English Youth Online Championships. (NT, AH)
- Creating, in partnership with representatives of Chess Scotland, detailed and comprehensive online chess fair play guidelines for both organisations that achieve a sensible compromise between correctly identifying players using engine or other assistance and wrongly identifying innocent players. It is likely that other organisations in England and indeed the British Isles as a whole will use these guidelines as a template for their own fair play guidelines. (NT, AH)

This nomination is being put forward because of the outstanding way in which both Nigel and Alex have stepped up to the plate since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, their sterling work in the online chess space should also be seen in the context of their wider commitment to and efforts on behalf of the English chess community:

- At the national level, Alex served with distinction for a number of years as the ECF's Director of Home Chess, and is currently the ECF's Director of Junior Chess; he is also an International Arbiter and plays a prominent role in organising and officiating at the London Chess Classic, and his increasing influence within FIDE is reflected in his position as Secretary to the FIDE's Qualification Commission. The fact that FIDE appointed Alex as the Chief Arbiter of the FIDE Grand Swiss in the Isle of Man last autumn shows the respect in which he is held by international colleagues.

Alex also took the lead in resurrecting the British Universities Chess Association and ensuring that the annual championships were put under proper organisation and once again became a regular feature of the calendar. Nigel, although a more recent recruit to the rank of ECF volunteers, has already made his mark, taking on the role of Secretary to the Board and bringing much-needed order and structure to Board proceedings, and also being appointed to the role of Manager of Online Chess, in which role, as illustrated above, he has already made a great impact.

- Finally, both Nigel and Alex are very active at the local level. Alex has been Chairman of the Birmingham League's Rapidplay Committee since 2011, and has been the main organiser of junior chess for Warwickshire for several years. Nigel established and manages the West Midlands Area Online League, established and runs the Alvechurch Saturday Morning Library Club, is Warwickshire County Association Treasurer, and plays an important role in helping to run Redditch Chess Club.



Congress of the Year

Hull 4NCL International Congress

(nominated by Mike Truran and Douglas Vleeshhouwer)

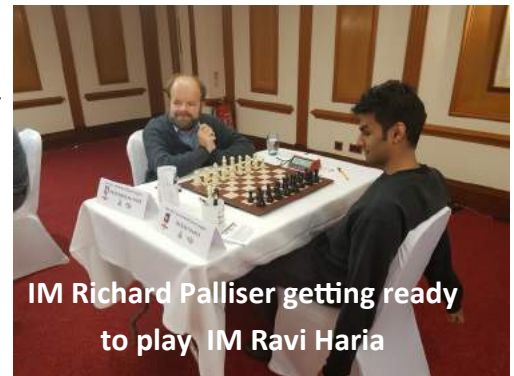




Hull 4NCL INTERNATIONAL CHESS CONGRESS



There has been a weekend congress at Hull for 55 years, but in recent years it has been in decline. In 2018 there were only 89 participants. Following on from a successful British Championships in Hull, Hull and District Chess Association approached 4NCL to enter into a joint partnership and an integrated event incorporating the 56th Hull congress. The result was the Hull 4NCL International congress, a new venture for both organisations. It was clear that we needed something a bit different to a 'normal' Hull or 4NCL event.—so we devised a rather different programme; a ten player, five day Grand Master norm event and a weekend, five round, three day congress. Alongside this there were three days (pre congress) of free junior coaching, led by FM Charlie Storey, free junior and female places, extra junior and local prizes, a social programme and a bookstall provided by Chess Direct. The whole event took place in several chandelier lit rooms at the plush Royal Hotel, Hull, situated right in the heart of Hull at Hull Central railway station.



IM Richard Palliser getting ready to play IM Ravi Haria

The GM norm event, (average grade of 2458) was spearheaded by GM's Vojtech Plat (Czech Republic), Laszlo Gonda (Hungary) and Matthew Turner (Scotland). While only one GM norm was obtained.... by an existing GM Vojtech Plat (who won the event with 6.5/9) the one FM in the field, Marcus Harvey, obtained an IM norm with 4.5/9 by drawing with GM Matthew Turner in the final round. Games were projected live at the venue for spectators as well as on chess24.com and via the 4NCL web site. They were also picked-up and broadcast by Follow Chess (<https://live.followchess.com/#!hull-4ncl-gm-2019>). The full cross table for the event is below and may be found, together with all the games and pgn files at:

www.4ncl.co.uk/fide/information_gmnorm_event_hull_2019.htm

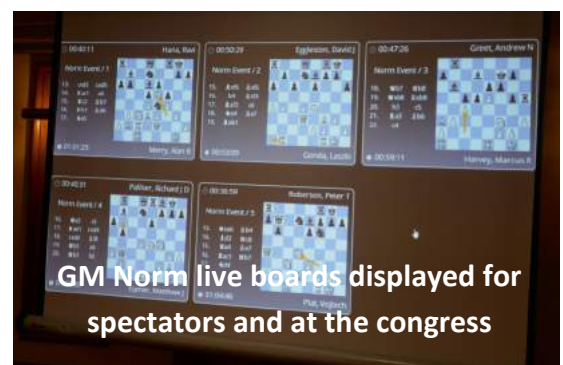
<http://chess-results.com/tnr477622.aspx?lan=1&art=2&flag=30>

Rk.		Name	Rtg	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts.
1	GM	Plat, Vojtech	2573		0	1	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	6½
2	GM	Turner, Matthew J	2519	1		½	½	½	1	½	½	0	1	5½
3	IM	Greet, Andrew N	2414	0	½		½	0	1	½	½	1	1	5
4	GM	Gonda, Laszlo	2541	½	½	½		½	½	½	½	½	½	4½
	FM	Harvey, Marcus R *	2405	½	½	1	½		0	½	½	0	1	4½
6	IM	Eggleston, David J	2394	0	0	0	½	1		½	1	1	½	4½
	IM	Haria, Ravi	2463	0	½	½	½	½	½		½	1	1	4½
8	IM	Roberson, Peter T	2437	0	½	½	½	½	0	½		1	½	4
9	IM	Merry, Alan B	2426	½	1	0	½	1	0	½	0		0	3½
10	IM	Palliser, Richard J D	2413	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	1		2½

* FM Marcus Harvey obtained IM norm.

The last four rounds of the norm event were played in the same room as the weekend congress, giving an added bonus to players in the congress. Games from the event attracted significant post event coverage on the web e.g. <https://en.chessbase.com/post/the-weekly-show-with-lawrence-trent-2019-45>

Moving on to the actual congress weekend. There were three sections, a FIDE rated Open and U2000 and U135 sections. This was the largest weekend congress ever played in Hull, with 160 players fitting easily into the Royal Suite in good playing conditions and plenty of space. The quality of players was a very significant improvement on Hull's normal attendance with 19 titled players (including five GM's) from 11 different FIDE Federations and 23 players graded over 2150.



GM Norm live boards displayed for spectators and at the congress



Congress view—before play

With a total of £3,400 in prize money, 39 players entered the open event (played on live boards and covered on chess24.com) with GM Daniel Gormally (Alnwick) winning first prize. Peter Wood (Lewisham) and John Thackray (St Andrews, Hull) both on 4.5/5 shared first prize in the U2000 event which had 50 competitors; Neal Fisher (Peterborough) headed the 59 entries in the U135 event with 4.5/5. A full list of all the prize winners can be found at :

www.4ncl.co.uk/fide/prizewinners_hull_2019.htm and on the chess-results.com link above.

More congress achievements were:

- IM norm for Marcus Harvey, the only FM in the GM norm event.
- Three arbiter norms for local arbiters - level three (FIDE arbiter) for Douglas. Vleeshouwer (his third) and level two for Tom Hackett and Bryan Hesler (their second). Assessment was by Alex McFarlane who led the arbiter team.
- Two players qualified for the British Championships, based on their performance at the congress. John Richardson (Hendon) and Samuel Milson (Sheffield Nomads).

Immediately before the weekend congress there were three days of coaching for juniors led by FM Charlie Storey. This was able to use live games from the actual congress and juniors were able to spectate games live during breaks. The coaching was funded by the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust who gave £1,600 towards the coaching, free places for juniors and additional junior prizes. In addition to the junior free places the ECF funded free places for female players.

Apart from the live boards and post congress match analysis of games noted above, the congress received unprecedented external coverage. Reports on the event appeared in the ECF Newsletter and on the ECF and 4NCL web sites. A summary was published in Chess Magazine. There were regular facebook and tweets on the ECF social media sites throughout the event.



Junior Coaching with Charlie Storey

For the whole event we were fortunate to receive nearly £6,000 in sponsorship—from Hull Culture and Leisure, John Robinson Youth Chess Trust, Friends of Chess and the English Chess Federation. This helped us to ‘personalise’ the event with congress mugs, pens, board numbers and scoresheets. There was a wine reception on the Saturday evening ‘meet the masters’ where players had the opportunity to talk to all the players in the GM norm event. Finally, the three congress cakes were well received with the congress cake (raspberry) competition being won by Gary Clarke (Gosforth) who correctly guessed black’s move 18 of Byrne v Fisher, New York 1956 (interestingly there were 7 different moves suggested; 18/25 were correct).

Why should our Congress win this award.? It was an innovative joint venture by two different organisations. It saved an ailing weekend congress and made it into one of the highlights of the congress year (as evidenced by feedback); it delivered on the three ECF priorities –with a big junior element, free places for female competitors and through the live broadcasting of the GM norm and top 39 boards in the congress it achieved a significant community element. Hull went from a drafty, isolated, sports hall in 2018 (left) to a splendid, centrally located, fine hotel in one go. Or, as one seasoned congress-goer said.. *Simply the best congress I have ever been to.*



Hull Congress 2018, Intermediate, Round Five. Ned Carmichael (white) v Alec Grice (black).



Congress view