



ECF Awards 2022

The following represents the citations made for the successful 2022 ECF award winners. This year has required a little more editing than normal for presentation to the Board. A number of the entries were very long and some have been edited down. All citations have been approved by the award winners. The Committee have discussed future publicity and ways to increase the number of award nominations in future years.

The Committee have agreed the following eleven awards in seven categories which the ECF Board have ratified. All winners will be presented with an engraved glass trophy recognising their achievement and, where appropriate be entitled to use the winners logo (example below)



The winners are:

President's Award for Services to Chess:

Jimmy Adams
Colin Green
Richard Freeman
Ray Pomeroy
Mick Riding

Contribution to Women's Chess

Lorin D'Costa

Contribution to Junior Chess

Dale James

Club of the Year

Gosforth Chess Club

Small Club of the Year

Holmfirth Chess Club

Congress of the Year

Durham

Contribution to Community Chess

John White and Christopher Skulte

Warwick University Chess Club

No awards were made in the categories of Contribution to Online Chess and Accessible Chess.

Next year we will ask nominations to be made in a more standardised format. This will aid the evaluation and reporting structure.

Stephen Greep

Chairman, ECF Awards Committee



President's Award for Services to Chess

Jimmy Adams

Nominated by Charlotte Adams

Jimmy Adams (FM) has devoted his life to Chess and has contributed massively to the sport. From a young age, he learned Chess without a board, from books and diagrams, he then was able to analyse the games and knew a good move from a bad one. When only around 10 he entered a BBC Radio competition in which he had to design an exciting game of Chess and was invited along with seven others (a lot older than him) to the BBC to play a GM and talk about the game he designed. This was where he met Leonard Barden...

From this, Barden got him a job working on the Fischer Spassky match in 1972, relaying the moves for the British audience. I think we both know there isn't many people who can say they were highly involved with this iconic moment in history, and sadly most of those who were, are no longer with us.

His love of Chess only grew from there, he joined many clubs, including the Islington Chess Club and the Bayswater Chess Club and in 1967 he toured around Europe, playing in tournaments. This was where he received an award from none other than Grace Kelly of Monaco, for beating the winner of the tournament in the open championship.

Jimmy eventually turned his hand to writing and editing. With no university degree, he applied to work for Chess (then owned by Maxwell) and was editing both books and the magazine. He continued with the magazine after the dissolution of the company and stayed with them for 20 years. Over the years he has written and edited over 300 books and magazines!!! Jimmy is a very modest man, so even though he edited and translated so many books from a countless amount of languages (all self taught) he hasn't put his name on many books in the past. Although he has won the Book of the Year award before and also edited another book which received the prize.

In between issues, he would travel across London teaching in schools and private tuition, and after paying travel expenses, this was not financially beneficial but he continued out of the love of his heart and for the game, seeing the children improve week after week.

As well as all this, Jimmy always finds the time to write a new book, these usually being educationally historical. His well known book 'K is for Karpov' sold very well and since then he has written tomes on Chess players from all over the world including Hungary and Estonia and this includes translating from all different languages. He has always been fascinated by Bobby Fischer and was invited to the premiere of the recent movie biopic and even got to interview the producer. He also recompiled Fischer's famous book of games and this became a bestseller all over again! He is now working on 4 books which will be released in sets, all of around 850 pages each, about the Prince of Chess, Paul Keres, who despite all efforts, never became World Champion. These will be reference books for people all over the world for years to come, as there isn't another book like it.

His previous book about Gyula Breyer also sold very well and filled a gap in chess literature.

These contributions have been widely recognised in the world of Chess and dad has always been contacted for numerous favours from players and writers all over the world, regarding advice or articles for their own books or magazines, as he has a library of books he's collected over the years, and is always happy to share his knowledge, wisdom and collection.

Despite being 75 he is still working and now works for the ACM and has been on board with them since the beginning as an editor and also a writer. He loves to keep up to date with all the Chess news from around the world and this is a great way of doing so.

Charlotte Adams and below from Sarah Hurst

Jimmy Adams is one of the hardest-working chess editors and authors in the UK and his contribution to documenting the history and culture of this country's chess scene over several decades is unparalleled. As a modest person who stays out of the spotlight his work has not achieved as much recognition as that of Ray Keene, for example, and awarding Jimmy an honour would make up for that.

Jimmy was the editor of the monthly CHESS magazine from 1981 to 2010 and editor of British Chess Magazine for a short time from 2016. He is the author of numerous books, including "Mikhail Chigorin: The Creative Genius" and "Gyula Breyer: The Chess Revolutionary". I first worked on a book with Jimmy in 1995 when he was translating a book about the famous 1935 tournament in Moscow. He asked me to translate the introduction, while he had translated hundreds of pages of games, having taught himself Russian. He also launched my career as a chess journalist by publishing my interview with Mikhail Botvinnik and encouraging me to interview other players, both Russian and British.

Jimmy has an encyclopaedic knowledge of chess and boundless devotion to the game, so he was able to inspire me and other contributors to CHESS magazine to write for the less than huge fees offered by the publisher, and provided background information to ensure I was fully briefed before doing an interview. He could talk to players of all ages, from talented young children to veterans in their 90s remembering the golden era of great chess events in Hastings and London's Metropolitan Club. He promoted the work of British chess photographer Mark Huba, regularly featuring his portraits of players on the front page of the magazine as well as inside. Jimmy also introduced tabloid-style punning headlines and lively fonts to CHESS magazine to make it appealing to a wide range of readers.

Jimmy's research has contributed an enormous amount to chess history, and he has helped to preserve the legacy of British chess historian Ken Whyld through his participation in the Ken Whyld Association, including hosting members from Europe on a tour of London's historic chess venues. Jimmy and I visited the late Ken Whyld together in Lincolnshire in the 1990s and spent hours discussing his trove of historical chess documents and books. Jimmy also introduced me to top British grandmasters and helped me to interview them to preserve the history of the game in this country. The interviews were published in CHESS magazine and in my book "Curse of Kirsan: Adventures in the Chess Underworld," which was published in the United States.

Now that most publishing is online and ephemeral, Jimmy may be one of the last generation to dedicate themselves to serious print journalism and books. His work is invaluable and he continues to do research and writing at the age of 74 despite ill health. He has been working on a book about the great Estonian player Paul Keres. Any future historian wanting to understand British chess will inevitably look at the work of Jimmy Adams. I hope that you will give him this honour.

Colin Green

Nominated by Hok Yin Stephen Chiu, Dave Thomas, Barry Evans, and Aoise Evans.

This nomination for ECF President's Award for Services to Chess, is dedicated to Colin Green, Immediate Past-Chairman of the Coventry & District Chess League, and current Team Manager for Nuneaton Chess Club. We put together this nomination, in recognition of Colin's work, to (1) the District League, (2) his home club, and (3) the wider chess community. This section of the nomination details Colin's dedicated work across the last three years, which has been a particularly testing time for local chess. Through this time, Colin took the lead to ensure that local chess would weather the Covid-19 pandemic. He recognised the importance of the league providing chess (as best as possible) during the lockdown, such that players would not give up playing chess, especially on Tuesdays when the League would have normally run its regular match nights. In the summer of 2020, he organised the League's first online league - a trial involving six teams. Through this, he refined the running of the online league, and subsequently launched the CDCL Autumn Online League (October-December) for the 2020-21 Season. [Eighteen teams](#) from across the historic Warwickshire area played, in two Divisions, including Nuneaton, Kenilworth, Coventry, Shirley & Wythall, Sutton Coldfield, the University of Warwick, the University of Birmingham, Rugby, Coventry University, Stratford, and Rugby Club Juniors.



Following the success of the CDCL Autumn Online League, Colin worked with Ben Graff (Chairman, Leamington & District Chess League) to provide online chess across historic Warwickshire for the second half of the 2020-21 Season, under the auspices of the Coventry & Leamington Online Chess League. Thirty teams from both the CDCL, and LDCL entered, including six junior teams from Rugby School, Champion School (Leamington), and Rugby Club Juniors, and six teams from three local universities. At the time, this was one of the [largest online chess leagues](#) in the country. Concurrently, educational chess resources were provided to all the Junior teams partaking in the online League.

As the pandemic subsided, the online league was wound down, and Colin offered to serve one more year as Chairman of the Coventry League, to see the league through the 2021-22 Season, as over-the-board chess made a return. We were delighted to see the return of three Divisions in the League, and the Divisional, and Knock-out Cup competitions. Colin also organised an over-the-board 10-Minute [Individual Tournament](#), open to members of every club in the Coventry League, just before the Christmas 2021. It was a hugely successful event, and marked the first time everyone had come back together, since the 2019 Coventry Rapidplay. There were over sixty participants and spectators.

Throughout this time, Colin has provided the calm, level-headed, and thoughtful leadership that the League needed, and always acting impartially, with an open mind, and with initiative. Whether it has

been taking action to set up a trial online League, before delivering a full season, to collaborating with the Leamington League, to handling issues of fairplay, to running a post-Covid over-the-board individual tournament, Colin has been exceptional.

As the author of this first section, it is my view that the impact of Colin's work across the pandemic period, ensuring chess was being provided to local clubs, Universities (Birmingham, Warwick, Coventry), and junior clubs, merits recognition alone. We note that Colin's contribution to the League, his club (Nuneaton), and the wider chess community, is - of course - far more extensive than just the three-year period mentioned above. Colleagues will be able to elaborate, in the following sections of this nomination.

Hok Yin Stephen Chiu, Chairman (Interim), Coventry & District Chess League

For many years in the nineteen-eighties and early nineties, Colin was Warwickshire's Junior Chess Organiser. This involved running an extremely well-attended and successful Junior Championship and entering Warwickshire teams in Midland and National junior team competitions, on several occasions winning such events. His contribution helped to nurture a generation of young players several of whom are still active strong players in the local and national chess scene. He was also involved, admittedly usually in more of a supporting role, in organising adult events. He was twice instrumental in reviving the Warwickshire Championships after they had lapsed for a few years, once in the early 80's and again in the mid-nineties. In addition, he played a leading role in assisting Roy Woodcock to run the Nuneaton Rapidplay tournaments which were a regular and extremely popular feature of the local chess calendar for many years until Roy's death.

Dave Thomas, President. Warwickshire Chess Association

I moved to the West Midlands in 2009 when my eldest daughter, Aoise, was ten years old, and expressing an interest in playing chess. I found the Nuneaton Chess Club online and rang the supplied number. I spoke to a gentleman called Colin Green and explained that I was not sure about introducing my daughter into something overly competitive, as I had seen a lot of worrying articles about chess and the weird people who played it. Mr Green was friendly and invited us to come to the club's next meeting the following Monday with no charges or strings attached. We did, and thirteen years later we know all of the people we met that night, as friends and important people in our life, particularly Colin himself.

I am a professional coach, IT project manager, and management consultant. I have watched with awe, and a degree of envy, as Colin displays skills and personal attributes that would make my job redundant in an instant if senior managers practised them as naturally and with as much integrity and dedication. I came along as an accompanying parent, and through Colin's enthusiasm for chess, and free lessons so that I could play Aoise at home, I fell for the game and joined the club myself. I am not a great player. Barely adequate would describe me. Colin put as much time into coaching me as if I were the club star player. As long as you are playing chess to the best of your ability Colin is happy. He treats every member of the club, whether they have won every game and brought the cup to the club, or lost every single one that season, with the same respect and dignity. I even found myself involved with the running of the club as independent auditor of the accounts. I had no intention of getting involved when I rang that evening in 2009, but Colin pressed me into service for the good of the club, as he has done with so many other of his many fans. I doubt anyone but Colin could have persuaded me to join the club, participate in league games, and participate in club and league meetings. His passion for, and dedication to the game is infectious and inspiring.

This is what it is essential to communicate about Colin. He asks and gives no quarter when it comes to the good of chess and the good of the club. He coaches everyone, from the youngest to the oldest members, from the weakest to the strongest players, adapting and giving selflessly and tirelessly. He encourages potential members, and parents of junior members, to be involved. He puts a chess board

in front of everyone and makes sure cliques do not form, by arranging games between different players and levels of players. He seems to wade through disorganisation leaving order in his wake. He introduces those new to the game to basic opening knowledge and endgame arithmetic. He loans his personal books and materials. He visits sick and infirm members at home and in hospital. He gives and arranges lifts. He advises and trains captains in etiquette and theory. He organises venues and deals quietly and calmly with endless practical issues without ever a word of complaint or self praise. He creates atmospheres of friendly competition with other clubs (even going so far as to review games and advise our opponents after matches if they ask).

Rereading this it would be easy to suggest I am exaggerating. I am not. If anything I have left out 90% of what he does and has done for the club over the years. He does not advertise himself and is, in person, a shy and diffident man who chairs meetings with authority, and who never rules on anything unless absolutely sure he is being fair. He takes suggestions, and polls opinions, regularly. His respect for the game of chess is legendary in the club. He was already legendary when I joined. Many of the older members reminisce about a very young Colin participating loyally, learning from his predecessors, and always being a great ambassador for the game. Whenever I ask these experienced campaigners, I get a long list of competitions, tournaments, and innovations he introduced to promote chess and the club over the decades.

If I could attach an image to this, it would be the sight I saw a few years ago as I walked toward the club venue in the rain. Colin's car pulled up and Colin got out. He proceeded to unload a wheelchair and to lift an elderly club member into it. The occupant of the wheelchair had been the record secretary for the Coventry and District Chess League for many years but was then suffering dementia and was being cared for in a care home. We all witnessed this beloved club member come back to himself over a chess board. Colin regularly took responsibility by signing him out and providing transport and care to and from club meetings. This is far from an isolated event. Colin is dedicated to providing access to chess for young and old, all genders, all cultures, all levels of ability, and overcoming peoples health or disability issues to get them "over the board" and playing. He is always arranging something to do with chess, and always just coming off the phone or the internet with someone about chess.

It is said that chess has endured for so long and inspires such dedication because it does not rely on chance and because both players see everything on the board. If chess were a person it would be Colin Green. He leaves nothing to chance in his care for the club and its members. What you see is what you get, everything is above board. We hear about National Treasures all the time. Colin is a Chess Treasure, whose life has been dedicated to the game. He promotes its values of fair play and relentless logic for all to see. I feel strongly that any of those named National Treasures would have a thing or two to learn from him. I find it hard to believe that there is anyone more deserving, in any sport, of recognition than Colin. Our biggest fear is that we might someday have to do without him. One octogenarian member of the club recently told me that Colin is 'pure magic' and that nobody could replace him. This leads me to my final point – he has made sure that many members of the club could replace him. He has been showing us for all these years, not only how chess is played by a good sport, but how a club is run for the good of all the members, every single one.

Barry Evans, Member, and Club Accounts' Auditor. Nuneaton Chess Club

Richard Freeman

Nominated by John Wickham

One constant since the founding of the East Anglian Chess Union over 39 years ago has been Richard Freeman as Secretary and Treasurer for most of the period together with other roles. For someone to hold positions in an organisation for over 39 years is a rare and great achievement but to hold several constantly over that length of time is a special achievement. Over his period in post the EACU has thrived and much of its success is down to Richard's hard work. Richard is the last surviving of the three founders of EACU in 1983.

Richard has always performed his roles in an efficient, effective, and professional manner. Both roles of Secretary and Treasurer are, I feel, often undervalued but are vital to the smooth efficient running of any organisation. When, as in Richard's case, the roles are performed so well that no issues arise then most chess players are probably unaware of the work done. However, Richard will pass on to his successor(s) a legacy that will enable them to easily step into his shoes and continue where he has left off.

In addition to the two roles Richard has been the organiser of the popular EACU Congress held in Newmarket for several years. This is now a FIDE rated event and had a record attendance the last time it was held. He also set up another congress, the EACU Closed Championships, which has been running for 5 years.

Outside of EACU Richard was a County Captain for a few years, and a team captain at his local Club for several years. He plays regularly for Milton Keynes in the Bedfordshire Chess League and in the 4NCL as well as for the Bedfordshire County team.

Richard is standing down this year from his EACU roles as he is moving from Bedfordshire to Cheltenham. His work for EACU and within East Anglia has been invaluable and I feel that the President's Award is an excellent way to recognise his achievements

Supporting Statement from Adrian Elwood

I have known Richard for over 35 years and can confirm and support the nomination.

In addition, I would add that Richard has been an ever-present in the Bedfordshire Chess community for almost 50 years. He has captained the Bedfordshire County team to wins in the EACU County Championship and the national Minor Counties competition.

At club level, he has captained teams in the Bedfordshire League, winning the league on several occasions with at least 3 different clubs. He has also held the position of Club Secretary at Milton Keynes.

Ray Pomeroy

Nominated by Kevin J Thurlow

As a representative of the London Hostels Association Sports & Social Committee Ray Pomeroy was on the committee that founded the Monck Street Civil Service Sports & Social Club in the late 1960s. Ray has played water polo and cricket, played and refereed rugby, and is also interested in bird-watching. Ray started organizing chess in 1961 at school and has continued ever since.

He joined Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD) in 1963 and played for Credex. He ran the Civil Service Team Correspondence Chess League from 1973 to 1978 and in his second year he built

the number of teams which played from 12 to 47. Ray was the Civil Service Correspondence Chess Individual Tournament Organizer from 1973 to 1980.

Ray started organising the Civil Service teams in the British Correspondence Chess League in 1973 and he continues to this day! He has been the Civil Service Correspondence Chess Team Captain since 1973, at one stage running ten teams.

He was also the Civil Service match captain in OTB matches from 1973/4 to 1976/7. Over and above these valuable contributions, he was also an OTB League Recorder from 1980 to 1988.

Ray Pomeroy was elected as a Vice-President of the Civil Service Chess Association (CSCA) and the London Civil Service, Post Office and Municipal Chess League (LCSP&MCL) in 1993 for his outstanding services to Civil Service chess.

Ray has also been the controller of division 2 of the British Correspondence Chess League, as well as a member of the Macclesfield Chess Club, Lytham & St. Annes Chess Club, the National Correspondence Chess Club, and the Social Correspondence Chess Association where he was the tournament controller

Ray Pomeroy's contribution to chess for over fifty years is quite outstanding! He has carried out these duties despite periods of serious ill-health. It is well known how difficult it is to find people willing to carry out committee work. That Ray has carried out all of his responsibilities to a significantly high standard for the benefit of so many chess players throughout the United Kingdom testifies to his determination and his commitment which few equal. Without Ray's excellent work, correspondence chess in particular within various Bodies including the CSCA would likely to have ceased.

Mick Riding

Nominated by Mike Truran

Mick first came to prominence as an organiser as editor of the Northumberland Chess Bulletin, which received the ECF's Magazine of the Year award in 2019 - an excellent magazine with over 100 subscribers and covering all imaginable facets of Northumberland chess whether modern and historical including players' off the board talents.

The editor role was one of a number that Mick has filled on behalf of club and county, including Gosforth and (until recently) Northumberland's Chair, Durham County treasurer and organiser of the Durham and Northumberland weekend congresses.

The 'heroic failure' of the 2020 Northumberland Chess weekender again brought Mick to prominence when with only a week to go before the start of the event it was (rightly) cancelled as Covid started to tighten its grip. All the same the effort dedicated to getting so close, with engagement of council, police, health officials and other subject matter experts was a laudable effort which appreciated by many.

Undeterred, Mick turned his attention to online activity, ensuring that his own



Typing up lessons learned at Durham Congress

club, Gosforth, continued to function as reasonably as possible with a weekly Lichess club night and Zoom call to ensure that as many members were engaged as possible. This weekly ‘club night’ ran throughout lockdown and was supplemented by email updates to club members and calls to various individuals. Non-club members were invited to the Gosforth Lichess events, and Mick also produced a schedule for all local NCA online activity to ensure that as many players as possible were engaged. In addition, Mick ran three Gosforth teams in Tim Wall’s Northumberland Chess Association Online League.

On a wider front Mick then fronted the Northumberland entry to ECF Online County Championships. The 2020 event saw Northumberland emerge as Open champions, whilst the U1825 team fell in their semi-final. Available players often exceeded 30, enabling the county to either play matches with extra boards or to support the ECF’s ‘All Stars’ matches for spare players.

As an acknowledgement for his and Northumberland’s contribution to this inaugural ECF event Mick was invited to captain the North in the (online) resurrection of the North v South challenge match last played (over the board) in 1894. The match was played over 108 boards and won by the North.

2021 was more of the same, with the difference that Northumberland entered all three sections of the ECF Championships. Across the board there were fewer entries, with counties struggling to maintain their enthusiasm under the challenge of Covid regulations. Yet in Northumberland there were more enrolled players than ever, all fully committed to furthering their county’s reputation. Remarkably Northumberland won all three competitions.

Following the easing of Covid restrictions Mick’s attention has turned back to over the board chess. Lockdown months were spent planning the rebuild of Gosforth Chess Club and currently both adult and junior clubs are flourishing. The club is known within its local community through a multi-media awareness campaign including a programme of summer outdoor events and special club night events. The Northumberland and Durham congresses have resumed with (I believe) record numbers and positive feedback.

Throughout the above there has been one common thread – that of unstinting service to his local and county chess communities. That is why I am delighted to nominate Mick for the ECF’s 2022 President’s Award for Services to Chess.



Contribution to Women's Chess

Lorin D'Costa

Nominated by Rebecca Bellars

I am writing to nominate Lorin D'Costa for his contribution to women's chess. He is absolutely dedicated to supporting women and girls, and we continue to see rewards reaped from his hard work. Given the guidance note has set out the range of areas you would like to hear about, I have put these in a table below. However given the vast number of activities he takes forward, its fair that they each fit into every box – so its simply structured in this way for the form.

Topic	Evidence
Promoting chess to women and girls	<p>Lorin works extremely hard to successfully promote chess with women and girls. He offers free weekly and online training tournaments which bring in girls from across the UK – not just London where he is physically based.</p> <p>In April 2022 he authored a book on women's chess called 'She Plays To Win', with all funds made going to support women's chess, including 10% of Sales to SPTW.</p> <p>He has also created positive and exciting events for them to partake. This includes hosting a simul with a former women's World champion for 29 girls of primary and secondary level. He brings in female role models to his work, to ensure they have the very best support to continue engaging in chess.</p> <p>As a professional, Lorin works hard to make sure girls enjoy themselves, have a supportive and comfortable environment to learn the game, and makes chess fun. He also has a strong focus on supporting girls with different backgrounds, including socio-economic, race.</p> <p>For example his work received International exposure with attending FC Bayern Munichs 'Red against racism' and 'World children's day' online events and tournaments.</p>
Providing a welcoming environment for women and girls to learn and play chess	<p>The online classes he provides are extremely welcoming, and we continue to receive very positive feedback from children, young women and their parents.</p> <p>He is absolutely non-judgemental, open, and friendly, which really help girls and women feel comfortable in the learning environment</p>

	<p>and drives their dedication and focus.</p> <p>Through She Plays to Win and other activities, we know the children he teaches adore him, but he also makes sure there are a range of teachers, support staff and role models to ensure there is a lovely and positive atmosphere at his events.</p> <p>As well as running the charity to help more girls play chess he has also:</p> <p>Established a half termly schools league, over 100 girls from across the UK appearing each event.</p> <p>Hosted a starter live girls tournament in Essex, 28 girls attended. Free coaching for top SPTW girls by Dutch Grandmaster Ivan Sokolov in Jan 22.</p>
Helping to coach and develop women players to play at national and international level	<p>Lorin achieves this in bounds. The list includes</p> <p>Arranging the WIM event to offer chances for WIM norms for our strongest girls.</p> <p>Live blitz event for 8 top females against 'Rocket Experience Team' in Jan 22</p> <p>Offering free training for the Euro female stars for girls online, over 60 girls attended.</p> <p>December 2020 entered a SPTW team into the European women's online Club Cup, taking on the best European females and teams and helping them level up</p>
Organising women only clubs and events – both online and over the board	<p>We have described the numerous events that Lorin has held already. She plays to win being an important girls and young women's only charity, as well as the free online classes he provides.</p>
Special provision for women's chess in non women's only events	<p>Lorin continues to train and girls and women for large scale and mixed sex events and competitions. We've highlighted a number of these already but includes:</p> <p>Secondary Girls squad attending the golders green rapid play events in Dec 21 and Feb 22. Free entry for the girls, games and mentoring given free by Lorin.</p>
Engaging with girls in schools and promoting scholastic chess	<p>Lorin's personal focus is on supporting girls and young women in schools. He has helped support:</p> <p>Online matches and coaching with a SPTW girls team taking on Essex, Suffolk and Sussex County junior teams</p> <p>Beth Harmon 'Queens Gambit' free class online to sixth form girls to inspire take up of chess with older girls</p>
Quotes we've received about	<p>Following the simul, women's world champion Antoaneta</p>

<p>the opportunities Lorin has provided</p>	<p>Stefanova said: <i>"It was great to be here, and a rare opportunity to play with each of these talented young women and girls. I loved every moment of it, and it's great to see the support given specifically to girls in chess."</i></p> <p>One of the youngest players following the Simul said: <i>I think it's really important [that girls play chess], for the past couple of 100 years, only men have been known to win titles and now women are becoming more known which over the past few years has been in everything. Its really good for chess as well.</i> Anon girl, aged 13, London</p> <p><i>It's a really enjoyable game and you don't have to be a grandmaster to find it fun.</i> <i>I found it good because I've never played someone so good before, I've been playing for six years.</i> Anon girl, aged 9, Kent</p>
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Contribution to Junior Chess

Dale James

Nominated by Alan Burke

Dale began playing chess at junior school and, after joining 3Cs Chess Club in Oldham, became the first junior player from that club to win a British Championship when he was successful at the 1984 British under-14s' competition. However, prior to that, in 1982, Dale, then aged just 12, became the youngest-ever winner of the Lloyds Bank under-14s' Junior Invitational Championships and was also the first black player to win a major chess tournament at any level in Britain. Rated as one of the strongest juniors at that time, Dale was also invited to travel to London to play Czech Grandmaster Vlastimil Hort who was hosting a simultaneous exhibition against some of the country's leading young players.

Although Dale continued playing with 3Cs (and still does), he became more involved with the coaching of other up-and-coming young players and currently visits nine schools every week to teach chess. Dale then identifies players who might have good future prospects and recommends them to join 3Cs, where they can be given more advanced tuition and hopefully take a long-lasting interest in the game. Therefore, while the 3Cs' club has itself proved to be a highly successful production line of young chess talent over many years – 22 British Champions, 39 Internationals and a Grandmaster – it is Dale who begins the process with his dedication to the game and those hours he spends week-in, week-out, teaching the very basics to those youngsters who it is hoped will become the next generation of chess enthusiasts.

For many years Dale has also organised and coached the Oldham primary schools' town-teams at both under-9s' and under-11s' levels and who, due to Dale's efforts, have become strong enough to compete themselves under the town's name rather than combine with the rest of the county. As with many people who do work "behind the scenes", Dale's efforts go unnoticed by many, yet he is certainly well-respected at 3Cs and by both the children and parents for the work he does on their behalf. Therefore, it would certainly be appropriate for Dale's work to be recognised by a wider audience and hence this nomination for one of the ECF Annual Awards.



An independent view of Dale James.....

Dale has been teaching chess at our local primary school for many years. Since September our son has

attended after school chess club with Dale and has benefited in so many ways. The children are given the opportunity to learn the game but also develop some key skills, such as basic maths, logical and strategic thinking and patience!

Having been invited to 3Cs and continued the chess with Dale, our son has developed into a really good player. He is having fun and meeting new people at 3Cs and getting the most out of it. We have seen a new level of maturity from him too.

It is a privilege to have someone like Dale, who uses so much of his time to develop the next generation of chess players and keep the game alive. I hadn't played since I was as young as our son and being reintroduced to it through our son is a real joy.

Rose Kaliski



Club of the Year

Gosforth

Nominated by Mark McKay

INTRODUCTION

This nomination is predicated on the achievements of Gosforth Chess Club in the last calendar year and in particular our recovery from lockdown. As this submission is being drafted some bare statistical facts are Saturday 25th June, 2022 – 20 attendees at junior club, Monday 27th June, 2022 – 45 attendees at our adult club, suggesting our efforts are very much bearing fruit.

OUR CLUB

Philosophy

Walk in happy, walk out happier. Winning is not paramount, just a reward for playing well. Whether you are here for social chess or striving to improve, you are welcome. All members are valued and communication and engagement are key.

Infrastructure

Since June 2021 Gosforth Chess Club has put in place a range of artefacts important to growing the club such as a Club Management Pack, a clear physical identity, social media presence, a development strategy and plan. Delivery of these has been tightly managed by a focused committee.

Growth

Growth activity has included distribution of GCC posters across community notice boards, schools and distribution of business cards through club members (including juniors).

We have run a full summer activity schedule encompassing measurable improvement at all levels, take up of ECF membership, an introduction to competitive chess, integration of junior and adult players and three summer outdoor events in local parks.

A designated club steward meets and greets newcomers, ensures nobody is left sat without a game, maintains the standard of behaviour and announces key updates/points prior to the start of formal games..

An electronic notice board summaries recent and future activities.

Chess based scratch cards are a fun fund raiser.

Ex-members remain on our mail updates unless they request otherwise.

2021/2 TEAM SUCCESSES

Quite unexpectedly this season our Regents team achieved promotion to Division 2 but were surely bettered by our Centurions - promoted to Division 3 with a team made up completely from newcomers who had never played competitive chess before this season!

All players of our promoted teams will receive individually engraved medals celebrating their success at our 2022 AGM.

OUR ADULTS

Arriving at Gosforth Chess Club as a newcomer on a Monday night you will be greeted by a steward or member aware of your pending arrival. If there is an organised event tables will be set up and ready, boards numbered. An electronic notice board will advise you of news and coming events. You will be paired with a club member for games.

Immediately before quarter past seven the Steward will make key announcements and advise formal matches to start. After this, minimal 'noise pollution' is tolerated. After your game/s you may venture downstairs where the lounge area of the club is reserved for chess. You can play through a game, have a beer, learn more about the club and it's members. A large TV is switched on, connected to a laptop via HDMI cable and games replayed, typically in MOTD style by one of our stronger members.

There might already be people downstairs – some of these will be beginners getting coaching. This way the discussion will not affect the formal matches/games in progress. A third room is also available, the (host) club's committee room for juniors to analyse games, club rules do not permit them being downstairs.

And you go home. During the week you will be mailed an update to remind everybody of forthcoming activities. On subsequent nights you will attend and until such time as you are comfortable the delegated steward will be watching to ensure you have somebody to play.



OUR JUNIORS

Our Saturday (every except Christmas week) two-hour junior sessions are more regimented in order to satisfy the conflicting demand of social engagement and chess improvement. Teaching sessions are 20 – 30 minutes to mitigate any boredom setting in. Juniors are split into two groups reflecting ability.

Parents have to register on turning up and a child can only leave with the parent who dropped him/her off unless we are otherwise advised.

Volunteer coaches are DBS checked coaches working on a rota basis working co-operatively to provide focused and balanced sessions of games, puzzles or specific facets of chess (Rook on 7th, h7 sacrifice etc)

Juniors are encouraged to feedback directly or via their parents (who are engaged anyway) with regard to what's good and what's not.

Merit prizes are awarded for performance such as doing well in a local competition or a noticeable improvement in performance/contribution.

The club will use funds collected from junior club to support children entering local competitions if required e.g. the local ECF Regional Megafinal and beyond. N.B This also applies to adult activities that benefit the game e.g. Arbiter qualification, coaching

OUR COMPETITIONS

Local League

During the Winter months Gosforth Chess Club competes in the Northumberland Chess Association (NCA) league. We ran with five teams (of four players) for the season 2021-2. The coming season will see us move to seven teams, perhaps eight – one a juniors specific.

Summer Schedule

This summer we are running our own schedule of Mega Matches – members sign up and are paired with a like strength opponent for a classical game, Blitz - a four event grand prix with rating prizes and Park Events – outdoor events to engage the wider public and find new players. Members from other clubs are invited to these events subject to space and on the understanding we do not poach.

Our first outdoor event cost nothing save time and effort – tables, chairs, a gazebo, garden size sets, were all borrowed from supporters.

Club Trophies

We currently have five in total and everybody has a chance to win something. We have a seeded Stage 1 after which players compete for the title of Club Champion - winners of Stage 1 groups, Club Plate - second placed and Challengers - U1400s from each group qualify for the Challengers, but not before playing off against four junior qualifiers.

We run a Rapid Play competition where players can play as many 25 minutes games as they like - but no more than two against the same opponent – and the person who accumulates most points wins the trophy.

Finally we have a Most Improved award, based on an individual's rating performance from September to August but with some latitude for new players.

Prior to the start of the 2022/3 season we will revisit the above to establish whether our trophies cover all bases and the basis for winning any is sound. In particular we know we need to look at junior specific awards.

AMBITIONS

The upturn of our club's fortunes in the last 12 months has been astonishing. We have plans in place to consolidate this whilst continuing to build, perhaps extending to adult coaching sessions, wider (ECF, NCCU) competitions, more teams, further engagement of local schools, special events with guest presenters and – regardless of 2022 outcome – bid to be the ECF Club of the Year 2023.

CONCLUSION

We are all very proud of our progress this last 12 months, hence this submission. But if our submission is bettered by another club then great – because it means somebody somewhere is doing a very good job on behalf of our game and we will applaud them. Thank you.





Small Club of the Year

Holmfirth

Nominated by Steve Westmoreland

Who are Holmfirth?

We are a relatively new club of five years, situated in Holmfirth at the Stumble Inn on the edge of West Yorkshire. Within the area we are unique in that when we set up, there were only two members from established clubs. Over the years we have attracted people back into chess and developed new.

The Pandemic and keeping together

When the pandemic struck, we were just about to complete our first season. We kept going throughout the lockdowns using Lichess and Skype to share screens. This also included some junior events and training sessions.



Innovation to play over the board

Between lockdowns and when the law allowed us to meet, we continued to hold training nights and open this to the other clubs that had lost their venues. Members were relieved to have social contact and it proved to be much needed. We even created 'POD Chess' with 3 person teams and appropriate distancing, which was rather predictive as the 'Rule of 6' came in later.

Socially distanced chess

The POD chess worked well and we used the ECF LMS to run flexible teams between lockdowns and into Christmas 2021, as players returned to chess or became ill. Holmfirth was front and centre in organising this within the Huddersfield League.

Post lockdown

We have used the LMS to make teams flexible, increasing and decreasing sizes as people become available. It has been particularly useful in fielding juniors in the teams and loaning them to other clubs as their numbers were impacted by COVID. As the only club in the area running junior sessions it was great to see the likes of Belgrave, Huddersfield and Honley wanting to field our kids.

Juniors

The pandemic effectively decimated our young junior section, with parents keeping their children away and a lack of enthusiasm for the majority to do regular online sessions. However, advertising on Facebook and word of mouth created a new cohort of juniors from Secondary School. Primarily

from years 7 and 8, with a subsequent growing number of primary school children. This season we have successfully fielded five juniors in adult standard play, with a new standard play competition just launching within the club. Seven have played in Yorkshire Junior Chess rapid play events since September and two have played in the Yorkshire u1650 and u1450 teams.

Supporting Yorkshire

Holmfirth have fully participated in the Yorkshire League events and strongly supported the County teams post pandemic. We have had nine club members play in the County Championship, one member stepping in as Captain for the u1650s and Open team on occasions and take on the u1450s (supporting junior development). Our Treasurer and Saturday team Captain is now the new Vice President of the Yorkshire Chess Association.



Growing membership

Post pandemic and from the Queen's Gambit series, there has been a huge upsurge in interest that has increased the size of our social night from six per night to between 10 and 14 for adults and 10 per junior session.

The loss of our venue temporarily, led to the club going into a series of new venues and picking up further juniors and adults. On two occasions we have gone passed 18 attending our social nights. New and experienced players appreciate our focus on training, especially from Andrew Drabble who regularly provides feedback and advice. Members are actively supporting a new club developing at the Geek Retreat in Huddersfield on a Saturday.

Charity work

Recently our Club Secretary, Rob Mitchell, held two Macmillan's fund-raising events at the club, with simuls held for both junior and adults. This was alongside cake and various savouries. This raised over £600 for the cause.

In summary

Holmfirth is a smashing chess club, supporting adults and juniors in the area. It is a source of pride for the surrounding area and locals (particularly at our home ground of the Stumble Inn) like us and the juniors there. We have supporting not only ourselves but surrounding clubs during the pandemic, providing a home for chess in our small part of the world and massively pitching in at county level.



Congress of the Year

Durham

Nominated by Bryan Bainbridge

The Durham County Chess Association has run an annual chess congress since 1980, until 2018 when due to lack of entries and subsequently lock-down it disappeared from the English Chess calendar. May 2022 witnessed a resurrection of the congress on a scale beyond our expectations. The congress boasted –

- A first class spacious accommodation with all the amenities required to facilitate playing good chess such as –
 - Personal space
 - Quiet
 - Excellent lighting,
 - Adherence to government accessibility requirements
 - Accommodation that provided many social amenities such as swimming, bowling, gym, bar and excellent bistro
 - A location that was very accessible by road or rail
 - Being on the edge of a large shopping area there are a large number of fast-food outlets, cafes and restaurants, something for everyone
 - Sponsorship from three separate sources

Additionally -

- Darlington itself had never hosted a chess congress. To this end the Mayor was invited to an opening ceremony alongside Lady Brenda Hale – widow of the late Julian Farrand who supported the congress with a financial donation. This ‘old style’ opening ceremony – which included Ken Neat, a much loved stalwart of Durham chess for many years, was well received by all and set the scene for a wonderful weekend ahead. A poignant moment reminded us all of friends past and present, some of whom were featured on the tournament hall walls – and most importantly why we were all here – to play a game of chess.
- We had been entrusted with the NCCU Individual Championship awards for 2022
- Two new awards in memory on departed friend both with solid links to Durham County chess, Fred Stobbart and Gary Hewitt. The trophies would be awarded for best performance – Senior and Junior respectively where ‘best performance’ was relative to an individual’s achievement in relation to their rating, so could be won by a score of 3/5 in the Minor Section as much as a score of 4/5 in the Open.
- Free entry was offered to any Ukrainian’s resident in the UK as a consequence of their country’s invasion



The congress was subsequently rewarded with

- 159 entries from the length and breadth of the UK as well as players affiliated with Cyprus, France, Canada, Greece Nigeria, Spain, Mexico and most pointedly Ukraine chess associations
- Eight woman entries
- An (entry) age bandwidth ranging from 8 to 85
- A FIDE rated Open section attracting 59 entries of who 23 were rated over 2000.
- Significant press coverage mainly (to be fair) as a result of an eight year old Ukrainian boy winning his (minor) section with a score of 5/5.
- chess prize four days after arrival in UK | Metro News

I was in regular contact with the organiser throughout the build up to the congress and immediately after. Leading up to the congress the effort entailed in finding then evaluating candidate venues was quite remarkable and the ‘we have to get this right so people want to come back’ was at the forefront throughout – and amply rewarded by the outcome – in particular I know the Organiser received some 20+ unsolicited positive responses from competitors.

So, as President of the DCCA for many years, you will not be surprised that I am proud to nominate our 2022 congress for this prestigious award and hope the ECF awards committee sees fit to agree with me.

Reference Links

Opening Ceremony

<https://1drv.ms/u/s!ApJgqCIPJioLzTVzw4HNQ4xZlsV?e=OwAhGS>

Brendan O’Gorman Gallery

<https://brendanogorman.smugmug.com/Chess/2022/Darlington-May-2022>

The Dolphin Centre Darlington

Healthy Darlington - Healthy Darlington

Postscript

On the back of the DCCA event the Dolphin Centre is hosting the 2022 ECF County Chess Open Championship final between Northumberland and Yorkshire



Contribution to Community Chess

John White and Christopher Skulte

Nominated by Christopher Skulte

We have always felt that Chess deserved more in this country, and were both of a firm belief that to move our sport in this direction, we needed to take action to show what was possible, a beacon to those who run clubs across the country to reflect on what is possible.

No one person will change our sport, it's up to everyone involved to demand that what we have today isn't good enough, and that we deserve more. After spending hundreds of hours of our spare time, learning about how projects have failed in the past, and meeting like minded people throughout the chess world. We were able to work with other similar communities in Bridge & Go, to finally realise a vision to create a space where our sports can play at extremely competitive rates. It was always going to be hard to be the first; it always is, though we can see now how having a great venue transforms our sport. To name a few examples:

- The growth of Hammersmith Chess Club
- A much cheaper venue for the London League
- Various Norm tournaments (the first Woman's norm event!) who advised us they can now have a premium location at a fraction of the cost of other venues in the area. We also have numerous comments from women and parents who advised that this is a space they feel comfortable. Its bright, safe, they have their own bathrooms, its clean, and easy to access.

Though our vision is only beginning, its taking the first step on a journey that is often the hardest. We are only just getting started!

I include an excerpt from an article written by John White, highlighting where our sport is today, and why now was the time to make the change:

Club chess in the UK today, in my experience, feels a bit like football did in the 1970's and early 1980's. The game for a start was run on a shoestring. Hardly any marketing or branding ideas. At the time the fan and player experience were pretty dismal – the grounds were old and crumbling, the pitches were mud-baths, there was a large hooligan problem and the organisation of the sport was in the hands of the FA. The horrors of Heysel and Hillsborough were yet to come. The sport needed to change. And it did. I think chess has to make the same changes.

Overwhelmingly, the venues I play chess at – this includes the Middlesex and Thames Valley Leagues, as well as the London League – are pubs, dingy community halls, or in some cases an even worse venue.

My point is, these venues are not attractive to women, young players (and their parents) or new people wanting to play chess. The London League venue is held in a central London hotel room, in which 100-plus players are crammed in, with no room for your scoresheet and making a mockery of any social distancing. We need thirty odd nights at this venue to complete the League each season.

I know for a lot of members of chess clubs, the venues are fine. However, I throw this challenge at you – the club is not yours, per se. You are merely the custodians of it. Your responsibility is to run it efficiently and hand it on in rude health to the next generation of chess players. Part of the reason for your existence is to help promote chess to new people. Is it coincidence that the Netflix mini-series “Queens Gambit” has produced a sudden media interest in our sport or a jump in membership enquiries that Hammersmith Chess Club has received over the last few months?

My personal view is that chess, along with Bridge and Go, have to attain ‘sports’ status in the UK to help facilitate the evolution of our sports.

Why has chess achieved sports status in so many countries, but only has activity status here? There have been numerous articles on the benefits of Mindsports in pupil performance, mental health generally and even physical well-being. My partner Karen is a Cognitive Behaviour Therapist working in the NHS in South London – the avalanche of mental health issues that Covid-19 has brought to the forefront in the past eight months is potentially cataclysmic. The imperative for Mindsports has never been higher.



The concept of having a place that helps promote, teach and give a venue worth playing our wonderful game in can only help raise the profile of chess and its status. In other words – it is time to take chess from the Combined Counties League to the Premier League. The possibilities are enormous with chess leagues being based there, national and international competitions, a learning and teaching centre resource and a highly visible demonstration of the ambition of Chess, Bridge and Go.



Contribution to Community Chess

Warwick University Chess Club

Nominated by Meghana Mohan

The University of Warwick Chess Society has had a ground-breaking year, rebuilding from Covid-19 and hitting many more new firsts!

We achieved a record 250 members (with 220 joining within the first twenty days of Term 1). This allowed us to field six teams in the local League, and eight teams to the 2022 British Universities' Chess Championships – also winning the BUCA Championships for the 4th time!

Our usual events, from the Summer Barbeque, the Freshers' Tournament, the Leamington Bar Crawl, the Christmas Meal, to the Skool Dayz Chess Circle, continued to be roaring social occasions. Chess-wise, the Don't Stress Play Chess outdoor chess sessions, the Freshers' Tournament, and the simultaneous Display with GM Keith Arkell were a hit, along with the usual trips to the Birmingham, and Coventry Rapidplays.

We've been delighted to introduce the new Warwick Autumn Open, herald a post-pandemic return of the 4th Warwick FIDE & ECF Rapidplay Tournament, and introduce our first Warwick Chess XI Football Team.



On inclusion, diversity, and widening participation, the Society has made brand new steps, with (1) new weekly Warwick Womens' Club nights, (2) new fortnightly Warwick 2200+ Club nights for the strongest players, and (3) a re-established Warwick Chess in Schools team. We held our first public 24-hour Charity Chess Marathon, fundraising for Care Education Trust. Final year members and alumni, can now look forward to joining the new Warwick Chess Alumni Association – set up this year!

Big thanks goes to all our members, the 2021-22 Executive Team, and our sponsor Optiver, for making all these achievements possible!

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN NOTE: This submission ran to 21 pages. The above is a yearly summary of the clubs activity. The committee made the award on the basis of the clubs outreach contributions.