



ECF Awards 2024

This year saw many strong entries and the Awards committee took on a tough task in reviewing and voting on them all. I was delighted to find that clear winners emerged across all the categories, and I did not have to use my casting vote.

The following information covers the citations made for the successful 2024 ECF award winners. Other than standardising fonts (where possible) and some light editing, these remain essentially as submitted.

n.b. Each nomination also had supporting evidence from a third party and many citations were supplemented by further supporting documentation, including photos, media news articles and video clips. For simplicity these have not been reproduced here. All the documentation submitted as a part of the nomination process was, however, considered by the Awards Committee.

Each winner will soon receive a glass trophy, £250 to support their club or organisation (with the exception of the Presidents Awards) courtesy of the Chess Trust and be entitled to make use of the appropriate ECF Award Winner's logo.

As Chair of the Awards committee, I would like to formally thank the committee members (Julie Denning, Sarah Longson, Natasha Regan, Jack Rudd, Nigel Towers and Peter Wells), for their hard work in reviewing a high number of nominations (55 in total)

The ECF also thanks the Chess Trust, yet again, for its generous sponsorship of the ECF Awards scheme.

Keith Gregory
ECF Awards Committee Chair
19th August 2024

The 2024 ECF Award winners are:

President's Award for Services to Chess:

John F Wheeler
Malcolm Pein

Contribution to Junior Chess

Paul Lam

Contribution to Women's Chess

The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls Chess Academy

Contribution to Chess in the Community

Jonathan Arnott

Contribution to Accessible Chess

Voldi Gailans

Online Chess Contribution of the year

James Connors

Club of the Year

3Cs Chess Club

Small Club of the Year

Radcliffe and Bingham Chess Club

n.b. No award was made for the Congress of the Year category



President's Award for Services to Chess (2 Awards)

John F Wheeler

Nominated by Graham Stuart

In 1998 the Hampshire Chess Association had one of those catastrophic events where all the officers suddenly resigned. Hampshire had to turn to a Devon County player, living in Hampshire to come forward as a temporary HCA Secretary. This person was John Wheeler and in 2023 he finally stepped down from this "temporary" role. In 25 years as HCA Secretary John worked with 10 Hampshire Presidents, but safe to say everything that went through Hampshire Chess was steered by John, making excellent, pragmatic decisions, to ensure the smooth running of the organisation. Among his successes was ensuring the HCA Congress, including the Hampshire Individual Championship was held each year until the pandemic, and helping build this from a 25-player tournament, to a full three-section sold out congress in the centre of Fareham. As well as supporting the Congress in person by assisting the arbiter, John has also supported the Congress in other ways, to ensure it was held every year. As with the best organisers, members are unaware of the work which is completed behind the scenes. When players arrive at County Matches, or the Congress they are playing in, they will not think about the work to book the venue and arbiter, and other activities to allow the smooth running of the event. John was the person who completed this for 25 years, bringing the HCA committee together, but also welcoming suggestions and improvements to be made in this time. Although John was at the helm of the HCA for 25 years, his involvement in the Portsmouth and District Chess League is even longer. He was elected Hon. Secretary of the PDCL in September 1981, stepping down in September 2021, a remarkable 40-year stint! To put this into context John was the PDCL secretary for more than 50% of its history. John also brought his excellent administration abilities to the West of England Chess Union (WECU), where he held the various officer roles including Secretary, President and Vice President over 25+ years. Despite all these administration duties, John has continued to play chess at a very high level, representing England at Senior events and playing in the British Chess Championship. John also beat a young Michael Adams on board one for Devon against Cornwall in the WECU. John is also currently in the top 15 players in the +85 age category in England. John is a very private person, but I cannot think of many other candidates who are more deserving of the ECF's President's Award for Services to Chess. Although this nomination has been raised by the Hampshire Chess Association current committee, this has been supported by the PDCL Secretary and WECU committee, to honour John for the work he has completed running and supporting chess in Hampshire, and the West of England.

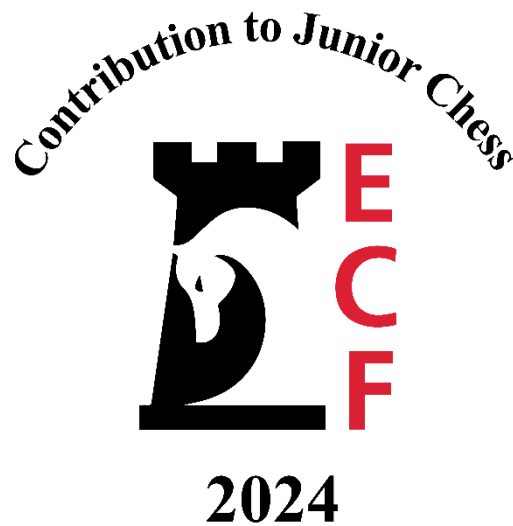
Malcolm Pein

Nominated by Agnieszka Milewska

- *Malcolm lifetime input into English chess.*
- *Being captain of the Olympiad team.*
- *Organiser of the biggest chess events in England.*
- *FIDE representative.*
- *Applying for government support to support local clubs, parks, etc.*
- *CEO of Chess charity helping state schools to get chess lessons.*
- *Organizing lessons for prisoners.*

3rd Party supporting statement (from Dominic Lawson)

Malcolm Pein has been an influential figure in British chess for over thirty years, in the roles of player, coach, journalist, publisher, organizer, and fundraiser. But I personally wish to honour the extraordinary efforts he made over the last year in co-ordinating with DCMS after the Prime Minister agreed to my request that the department, finally, gives government financial support to the ECF. While I got the nod from Number 10, Malcolm did all the hard work necessary afterwards.



Contribution to Junior Chess

Paul Lam

Nominated by Bernard Charnley

Paul Lam is the organiser of a unique chess coaching project for schoolchildren, the Coventry Chess Academy (CCA), which he conceived 11 years ago. A former England junior international, the scarcity of chess coaching for juniors in Coventry and the surrounding area gave birth in his mind to the idea of a dedicated project for juniors.

Coventry Chess Academy

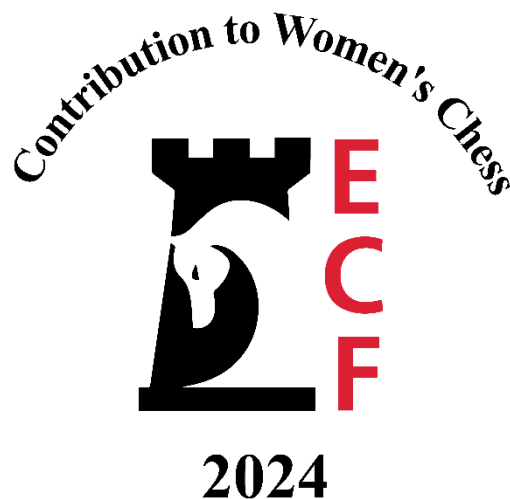
Paul envisioned this project as both a chess training programme and a mission to provide skills and qualities that would empower members for life. A key ethos is safe participation across class, gender and ethnicity. The unique ambition of this approach has been recognised by the University of Warwick, UnLtd and HEFCE who provided funding for the nascent CCA as a social enterprise.

With the help of volunteer coaches and junior helpers, some of whom assist as part of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, the CCA has become a successful presence in the city. Hundreds of children have come through its doors. It meets every Saturday throughout school term time with 35–45 attendees. Paul's training programme combines fun with progressive instruction organised by ability groups. All members are encouraged to compete in local and national events. Many compete at elite levels with consistent success, due in no small part to an inclusive approach with financial support for attendance, travel and personal coaching.

Paul is first to arrive at the CCA to set up and last to leave. He plans sessions, manages finances and maintains a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/CoventryChessAcademy> with 1.1k followers. He recruits and trains coaches. He has promoted junior chess in the local press, radio and on the BBC Breakfast Show. He established a fund to support members from underprivileged backgrounds. He has organised internal ECF-rated games, an annual Rapid play, trips to the London Chess Classic and to the Menorca Chess Open, and simultaneous displays delivered by chess masters such as Anish Giri.

A Wider Brief

Paul's energy and commitment to junior chess development extends well beyond the CCA. Engagement of members in local leagues, establishing Elite Chess as a coaching initiative for emerging talent, coaching the county junior squad, assisting with Warwickshire junior tournaments, teaching chess in local schools, linking with ChessKid and LIChess for online instruction, establishing a chess library – Paul excels in all these and more. He has been a key link between the Warwickshire Junior Squad and the Warwickshire Select 4NCL teams who are now represented by numerous juniors.



Contribution to Women's Chess

The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls Chess Academy

Nominated by Hong Zhou

I am honoured to nominate the Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls (EWS) Chess Academy for the Contribution to Women's Chess Award, recognizing their dedication to the promotion and development of women's chess. The Chess Academy has integrated chess programs into the school, and created a popular chess culture in lunchtime clubs and after school sessions. Currently there are 30 students in the after school chess training sessions, over 50 students attending lunchtime chess club, and over 60 students signed up for the first EWS chess championship on 8th July.

The EWS Chess Academy has worked to create a thriving and inclusive environment for girls by offering 30 after school chess sessions FREE of charge, and taking part in numerous ECF organised regional and national chess tournaments.

They relentlessly advocate women's chess, striving to increase female participation at all levels. They offer FREE chess tournaments to primary school girls all the way to university graduates, and have organised simultaneous chess with British Woman's champion Harriet Hunt, Susan Lilac and French national champion Sophie Milliet. The EWS Chess Academy is at the forefront of inspiring young girls and women to take up the game. They collaborate with the Ealing Council press, local new outlets and their MP to promote chess and raise awareness about the benefits of chess for women and girls.

The EWS Chess Academy staff are dedicated to coaching and mentoring female players, helping them achieve their potential and compete at local and national levels. Their personalized approach and commitment help the girls feel comfortable and valued in the school community. They have created safe spaces for girls to learn and play chess, fostering a sense of belonging and encouragement.

The EWS has organized women-only free events, including masterclasses with Mr Lorin D'Costa, and girls only chess tournaments. These initiatives have provided opportunities for female players to compete, network, and develop their skills in a supportive environment. In addition, the EWS Chess Academy has hosted mixed tournaments: the first Ealing Secondary school tournament, ensuring equal number of male and female participants in the tournament. They encourage female players to participate online in mixed tournaments such as ECF Inter school battles, and support them in broader competitive settings. In summary, the EWS Chess Academy have created a nurturing and empowering environment that will benefit future generations of female players. It is with great admiration and respect that I wholeheartedly support the Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls Chess Academy for the Contribution to Women's Chess Award. The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls (EWS) Chess Academy aims to coach students to improve their level of play, and prepare them for local and national competitive chess tournaments. It provides the following opportunities to the students completely free of charge in 2023-24:

- 30 chess coaching sessions delivered by Mr Mark Robinson Tuesdays (3:15- 4:20pm).*
- 3 Chess Masterclasses with Mr Lorin D'Costa (IM).*
- Free online chess tournaments.*
- Free entry to national and international chess competitions.*
- Priority to attend special events at the Chessfest in Trafalgar Square.*
- Priority to attend special events at the London Chess Classic.*

Students who attend the Academy have participated in a range of tournaments below. The Chess Academy registers students and pays for all tournament entries:

Online tournaments:

- Half termly 'She Plays To Win' (SPTW) national Secondary girl school tournament.*
- Every fortnight English Chess Federation (ECF) National Inter School team (Secondary).*
- Weekly EWS internal Academy tournament.*
- FIDE rated international chess tournament: The Queen's Online Chess Festival in March.*

Over the board tournaments:

- Ealing Secondary school chess tournament at EWS in December, hosted by the EWS Chess Academy.*
- Flagship 'She Plays To Win' girls chess tournament at EWS in June, hosted by the EWS Chess Academy.*
- CSC Chess Grand prix at UCL in September, October, November and April.*
- ECF Secondary School Rapidplay Chess Tournament in October at Eton College.*
- ECF National secondary school team chess championship qualifier (Year 7-13) in November.*
- ECF National Schools Girls' Chess Championships Semi-Finals, St Catherine's School, Bramley in January.*
- ECF Pupil Blitz tournament (Year 7 and 8 only) at the Harrow school in January.*
- ECF National secondary school team chess championship qualifier (Year 7 and 8 only) in February.*



Contribution to Chess in the Community

Jonathan Arnott

Nominated by Tabitha Woozeer

CM and FIDE Instructor Jonathan Arnott has been a pivotal figure in the Sheffield chess community for over two decades. In 2023, Jonathan identified a critical need for a dedicated chess venue in Sheffield. He spearheaded the creation of the Sheffield Chess Centre, a place where chess enthusiasts could gather, play, and learn. The centre quickly became a hub for local players, hosting regular tournaments, casual sessions, and educational workshops. Since it's opening 12 months ago, around 700 unique people have used the chess centre. Jonathan's contributions to chess include:

FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF SHEFFIELD CHESS CENTRE: The centre has become a cornerstone of the local chess community. It provides a dedicated space for chess activities and a sense of belonging and continuity among players.

The chess centre has a dedicated match room with 12 live boards. Games played on these boards can be watched on the large TV screens in the centre's own café. This enables commentary and adds interest. Some individuals visit the centre weekly, specifically to watch the live board games. The cafe facilities have even led to an increase in parents playing chess.

The centre is also utilised by organisations such as "Chess in Schools and Communities" and by other teams within the Yorkshire league. It is regularly used as a neutral match venue, providing buffets for Yorkshire County Championship matches, as well as catering for other counties/teams.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Jonathan works tirelessly to make chess accessible to all sectors of the community. He has partnered with local schools to introduce chess to new audiences,

tutored in disadvantaged areas for “Chess in Schools and Communities”, and has vast SEND knowledge and experience. His initiatives have included after-school chess clubs, public exhibitions, and educational sessions. Often focusing on underserved communities, Jonathan deliberately established Sheffield Chess Centre in a deprived area. The venue’s location makes it easily accessible; many of the centre’s regular members are from neighbouring towns. Jonathan has trialled female only chess sessions and he spends his free time trying to secure funding to ensure ongoing inclusion. Jonathan has brought strong, titled players to the chess centre, including Gawain Jones, Keith Arkell and Richard Palliser, which created variety in the educational offering of the Chess Centre. Jonathan also successfully uses casual ways to encourage people to become involved with chess, such as social pizza nights and pancake events. Overall, by establishing a permanent chess venue, Jonathan has introduced chess to a wide audience, including disadvantaged groups who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to engage with the game.

CHESS COACH AND MENTOR: As well as being the author of several chess books, Jonathan is also a Chessable course author. He has dedicated countless hours to coaching young players, instilling a passion for the game. Jonathan is an ECF level 3 coach, his coaching at the chess centre has produced a high number of juniors competing at league level, representing Yorkshire, and winning national events such as the EJCOA. Since the opening of the chess centre, SASCA chess club’s numbers have increased to approximately 60 and 5 league trophies have been won.

EVENT ORGANISER: Over the year, Jonathan has managed numerous rated events, providing high-quality competitive opportunities for players and contributing to the overall growth of the chess community.

There have been 3 rapid tournaments (each with an average of 50 participants), 3 junior rapid play tournaments (average 40+ participants), an international Masters tournament (which attracted 46 participants from across the country) and countless blitz events

.ADMINISTRATION ROLES: Jonathan holds several key administrative positions where he is instrumental in shaping policies and programmes. He is the chair of SASCA chess club, a member of the executive committee of the Sheffield Chess Association and Deputy President of the Yorkshire Chess Association. Jonathan is responsible for organising local league competitions, organising the 4NCL Chessable White Rose team and organising Sheffield junior teams in the Yorkshire league. Prior to this, Jonathan was Yorkshire Captain (from 2002–2004).

On a personal level, the Chess Centre has made a profound difference in the life of my child. My son is home-educated, which limits his opportunities for regular interaction with peers. The Chess Centre has provided a vital source of routine and structure in his life. Within a year, he has gone from learning how the pieces move, to achieving a FIDE rating of 1629. This incredible progress is largely due to the supportive, inclusive and fun environment that Jonathan has created at Sheffield Chess Centre.

Contribution to Accessible Chess



2024

Contribution to Accessible Chess

Voldi Gailans

Nominated by Bill Armstrong

The Braille Chess Association (BCA) committee would unanimously like to nominate Voldi Gailans for the 2024 ECF Contribution to Accessible Chess award in recognition of his tremendous contribution to enabling and encouraging visually impaired people to play chess. In March 2024, Voldi stepped down from the BCA committee, where he had served for a decade, often holding two posts concurrently. He had also served as a highly respected trustee of our chess charity for ten years. We feel this is a good time to celebrate his work. You will not find a more passionate advocate for visually impaired chess than Voldi, who is himself blind, and he puts his words into action!

During Voldi's time on the committee he wrote an introductory leaflet to explain to visually impaired beginners how blind and partially sighted people play chess, for example, pointing out the special features of adapted chess sets. Some years ago, Voldi recorded two long books for our Audio Library and one of these is still sent out by our Audio Librarian to new members who are beginners. For many years he ran a chess club for visually impaired players in Bromley-by-Bow, where he actively encouraged people to try out chess, explaining to them how visually impaired people play by using a board each and calling their moves out to each other. Some members of Voldi's club eventually became BCA members and took part in tournaments, proving the value of his work. He was also very active in making new members feel welcome by offering them friendly games and supporting members who wished to improve their chess ability by seeking out coaches for them. On top of all that, he made time to organise some BCA over the board tournaments, which was greatly appreciated by all who took part.

Despite relinquishing his committee and trustee responsibilities this year, Voldi continues to

support BCA members by facilitating monthly online group coaching sessions, which are hugely popular. He is also advising an Oxford based group that hopes to set up their own chess club for visually impaired players. For new members who are beginners, he still offers coaching over the phone. In pre-pandemic times he used to visit them in person wherever possible.

Voldi has been a BCA member and loyal supporter for more than 40 years, but he is also a great believer in visually impaired players participating in mainstream chess. He leads by example by playing for his local club, Wanstead. He has also taken part in many mainstream congresses. These activities help to raise the profile of accessible chess, not as a separate entity, but as one that is integrated into the wider chess community.

Voldi goes about all his work promoting chess for visually impaired people in a modest and humble way and would be the very last person to consider himself deserving of an award. However, the BCA committee feels that Voldi would be a most worthy recipient of this award because, in summary, it is due to his outreach work and dedication that so many blind and partially sighted people have learnt chess, enhanced their chess skills or found the courage to take part in a tournament.

BCA Committee

(Bill Armstrong, Chairman; Guy Whitehouse, Secretary; Tristram Cole, Treasurer; Julie Leonard, Gazette Editor; Abi Baker, Publicity Officer and Junior Development Officer; Paul Benson, Correspondence Chess Director; Mark Kirkham, Audio Librarian; Gary Wickett, Membership Secretary; John Fullwood, Tournament Subcommittee Chair.)



Online Chess Contribution of the Year

James Connors

Nominated by Peter Hornsby

To whom it may concern,

As the Founder and Tournament Director of the World Chess League, I would like to nominate James Connors for this award because of his outstanding dedication to Chess for universities. James set up the UK Universities League on his own initiative as the sole organizer running several installments across several divisions across the academic years, bringing joy for students across the UK. You can see examples of these tournaments that he set up below:

<https://results.sorchapp.co.uk/t/OUKUCL22-Div1/overview>

<https://results.sorchapp.co.uk/t/OUKUCL22-Div2/overview>

<https://results.sorchapp.co.uk/t/OUKUCL22-Div3/overview>

<https://results.sorchapp.co.uk/t/OUKUCL22-4thDivision/overview>

He has engaged successfully with new online platforms such as SCORCH which makes following the tournaments all the more exciting to follow, and he has also arranged commentary and commentated himself on Twitch attracting thousands of viewers as you can see in the attachment

It was James Connor's idea for the World Chess League to launch the 'Summer Friendly League' for teams that had not qualified for the play-offs, which has been a success with over a dozen teams signing up:

<https://results.sorchapp.co.uk/t/5e5d57f/overview>

<https://results.sorchapp.co.uk/t/57dcbdf/overview>

Meanwhile at Reading University he has set-up several friendlies against teams from across the world whilst managing their team, and their alumni team in the World Chess League:

<https://www.chess.com/clubs/pastevents/reading-university-chess-club>

<https://www.chess.com/clubs/events/reading-whiteknights>

The university team had their best ever performance scoring 5/7, narrowly missing out on the play-offs:

<https://results.sorchapp.co.uk/t/WCLL24D/standings/7>

James' attitude has always impressed me – on several occasions he picked an overall weaker team so more players could be involved.

Therefore I believe, among with many others from the online chess community that he is worthy of consideration for this award for his contribution this year and across previous years (most notably during the pandemic) as well.

Club of the Year



2024

Club of the Year

3Cs chess club

Nominated by Alan Burke

The latter part of 2023 saw 3Cs celebrate its 45th anniversary having been formed in 1978 and it therefore seems fitting that, despite many previous honours having come its way, the past twelve months are probably the club's most successful, not only in respect of achievements over the board but probably more so due to the national publicity it generated, not just for itself but for the game of chess as a whole.

Last October saw the culmination of over six years of determined efforts by 3Cs to promote chess to a wider audience when they were chosen to feature on the BBC 1 primetime television programme "The One Show". 3Cs were not just selected at random for the programme but had communicated with the BBC since 2017 to convince them that chess was a worthy item to include on the programme watched by millions and that 3Cs were indeed the ideal club to promote the game, especially to any youngsters considering playing. Despite several setbacks throughout that time, 3Cs continued to push the cause which then eventually came to fruition.

3Cs' record of producing young talent since its inception would be hard to equal, having provided 39 England junior Internationals as well as 28 National Champions. Indeed, during the past year Alannah Ashton won the British Girls under-12s title while both Alannah and Kyle Pelling have added further to their list of England appearances at youth level.

Another success of the 3Cs' junior academy this year was the promotion to Candidate Master of Edward Jackson (having also played in the World Schools Championships) therefore joining seven other titled 3Cs players who all began at the club during their school years and of whom at the top of the tree is Grandmaster Stephen Gordon.

The weekly 3Cs junior coaching sessions still regularly attract 40+ youngsters of all backgrounds, with new faces constantly welcomed due to the efforts of club members themselves going into local schools to teach chess and then inviting those interested to attend the club nights and further their chess ability.

Such efforts to continually encourage a constant supply of young newcomers to chess brought 3Cs further national recognition during the past year when the club were chosen as winners of the prestigious "British Chess Educational Trust Award" while yet another countrywide honour came it way in October – this time over the board – when 3Cs became the National Club Champions ... and was again achieved with a full team of genuine 3Cs players, all of whom had come through the club's own youth set-up.

One blip in the past year saw the club's first team relinquish its hold on the Manchester League Championship it had held for the previous eight seasons (they ONLY finished runners-up this time) although other trophies were lifted to take the club's League total to 90.. twenty-five more than their nearest rival despite the latter having been competing for almost 100 years more. However, despite all the tough opposition in the top section, another 3Cs teenager, Kyle Pelling, won the first division's "Player of the Year" award.

However, probably the most prestigious individual award for 3Cs in the past year went to its founder, Steve Rigby, who is still the club's main organiser and was recognised for his efforts, not only by the chess world, but by the Prime Minister himself who personally selected him to receive a "National Points of Light Award" which the Premier presents to those who have made a significant difference to their community on a voluntary level over many years. Steve, therefore, became the first person to ever receive the honour for services to chess.

To summarise the past twelve months for 3Cs...

45th Anniversary

Featured on BBC1's "The One Show"

40+ junior members at its weekly coaching session

Ongoing junior coaching in local schools

British Junior Champion

2 England Junior Internationals

Small Club of the Year



2024

Small Club of the Year

Radcliffe and Bingham Chess Club

Nominated by Stuart Humphreys

In 2023/24 Radcliffe and Bingham Chess Club (RBCC), a small chess club based in the south-east corner of Nottinghamshire, celebrated its 50th anniversary with probably the most successful year in its history.

STRONG GROWTH IN MEMBERSHIP

During the year RBCC's fully paid membership increased from 12 to 20 thanks to local advertising, an updated website and word-of-mouth. We have been pleased to welcome several new members from other clubs who appreciate our friendly, enthusiastic and supportive environment; they now consider it "home".

To promote diversity and to acknowledge the cost of living, we also have four members on discounted membership rates.

CLUB NIGHTS EXTENDED TO ALL YEAR-ROUND

Traditionally club nights were held only during the league season; however, since 2022 we now continue to meet during the summer 'off-season'. This has attracted new members and supports our host venue, the Royal British Legion social club, an important part of the local community in Radcliffe-on-Trent.

ALL-INCLUSIVE CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

We run our club championship on a time control handicap basis. This boosts participation

and usually results in a different winner each year.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL COMPETITIONS

We like to 'punch above our weight' in competitions organised by the Nottinghamshire Chess Association (NCA). At the Nottingham Rapidplay in February 2024 we fielded 16 players, almost 10% of the total entry. We also contributed an arbiter to the event. Likewise, at the recent Nottinghamshire County Championship RBCC members comprised almost one-fifth of the total number of participants. Pleasingly, strong representation is occasionally matched with success over the board, e.g. with Marcel Taylor winning the Notts Under-1850 Championship.

During the 2023/24 season we entered five teams in the NCA league, one more than the previous season. Only one club, Gambit, fields more teams.

Further afield, we compete in the end-of-season Anstey Jamboree with clubs from Leicestershire and Derbyshire and during the pandemic we played online matches against clubs from around the country.

PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHESS IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

The club makes a vital contribution to the promotion and development of chess in the city of Nottingham and its county. Two of our members, Nick London and Stuart Humphreys, are tutors for Chess in Schools and Communities, teaching chess to over 100 children across five inner city and rural primary schools; in fact, they are the charity's only tutors in the county.

In July 2023, to help mark the Centenary of the NCA, members of the club played a leading role in organising the first-ever ChessFest in Nottingham city centre that attracted over 500 members of the public.

In November 2023, under the auspices of the NCA, RBCC's chairperson, Nick London, organised the Nottingham GM Invitational and Junior Invitational tournaments.

Club members have been prominent in donating prize money and providing loss guarantees to tournaments run by the NCA. Further, Nick and Marcel are trustees of the Nottinghamshire Chess Foundation, a charitable organisation providing financial support and grants to develop and improve chess participation and achievement in the area.

VIBRANT JUNIOR SECTION

During the league season RBCC runs a Junior Section in the early evening before the main club night. Local schoolchildren receive group and individual coaching for a nominal fee of £1 per session. In 2023/24 these sessions raised over £350, up 50% on the previous year. The funds are reinvested to enter the juniors in the Delancey UK Chess Challenge and to subsidise their travel to the annual ChessFest in London.

We were particularly pleased that in February 2024 one of our juniors, Harry Stanley, won the Nottinghamshire County Under-9 Championship.

LAUNCH OF NEWSLETTER TO EDUCATE AND ENTERTAIN MEMBERS

In October 2023 the club launched its first-ever newsletter, 'En passant', issued fortnightly during the league season. It supplements team captains' match reports and features positions, annotated games and curios from the world of elite GM chess. 'En passant' uses

affectionate nicknames to help hide members' blushes at their blunders and to contain their egos when their masterpieces are featured.

The newsletter serves an important role in providing educational content and, together with RBCC's WhatsApp group, creates a community spirit within the club.

Examples of 'En passant' and a match report are attached to this submission.

To round off the year, RBCC's annual dinner was held in the Wheatsheaf Inn, Bingham, the venue where the club first met. We were delighted to be able to make a Special Award for Outstanding Contribution to former club captain Stephen Morley, who has been a member ever since on that very first club night 50 years ago.