



THE BRAILLE CHESS ASSOCIATION (Founded 1932)

Registered Charity no. 263049

"Serving Visually Impaired Chess Players throughout the U.K."

TRUSTEES REPORT 1st October 2016 - 30th September 2017

Vision Statement

To spread and advance the playing of chess among blind and partially sighted people throughout the United Kingdom by organising tournaments and providing coaching and reference material.

Chairman – Norman Wragg OBE

Secretary – Dr Guy Whitehouse

Treasurer - Mrs Gill Smith

Fund-raising Officer - Mrs Julia Scott

Accountant - Messrs Lamin & White Accountants & Registered Auditors, Oakham, Rutland

Structure of the Braille Chess Association (BCA)

The BCA is the sole provider of chess services to blind and partially sighted people in the United Kingdom and caters for people of all ages. It is affiliated to the English Chess Federation, Chess Scotland, the English Federation for Correspondence Chess and the International Braille Chess Association.

The BCA is a registered charity and complies with the principles set out in the latest edition of the Good Governance Code for Trustees. We are also mindful of the guidance on public benefit issued by the Charity Commission. The BCA is unincorporated being administered by a board of trustees all but one of whom work on a voluntary unpaid basis. The trustees are all elected by the membership on an annual basis. The names of the individuals who have served on the board during the past twelve months are listed in Appendix 1 to this report. We are also delighted to have in the team our Fundraising Officer, Julia Scott, whose professional services continually enable us to expand services to our

membership.

The BCA is governed by written constitution. The registered address of the association is that of its secretary, Dr Guy Whitehouse: The Flat, 63 The Parade, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5BB

The Association's annual accounts for 2015/16 were again signed off unconditionally by the accountant and were approved unanimously at our AGM in March 2017. An Investment Policy is in place.

Mission Statement

To enable blind and partially sighted people to enjoy the game of chess, to improve their chess playing techniques, and to have their voice heard in the world of chess.

Services provided by the BCA

Members can take advantage of a wide range of services including:

- 1 correspondence chess in which moves are sent in Braille, on cassette or by email;
- 2 "over the board" chess tournaments held in this country and overseas;
- 3 free access to a library of chess books, periodicals and other instructional material in accessible formats;
- 4 chess coaching;
- 5 advice on all chess matters including computers and software suitable for visually impaired players.

The BCA runs a lively web site containing news, information, games, etc. (Go to www.braillechess.org.uk). We also run an email discussion list.

Reserves policy

Our reserves policy is to aim to hold 24 months unrestricted expenditure in reserve. This allows us to place bulk orders of adapted chess sets and clocks, and to plan tournament venues in advance to secure advantageous deals. At this financial year end, September 30 2017, we hold reserves of £114,363, of which £5,608 is in restricted funds (allocated to specific projects).

What's been happening?

We were delighted when in September 2017 our Gazette received the award of chess magazine of the year from the English Chess Federation. Many people contribute to the Gazette, but the award must be attributed primarily to the hard work put in by the editor, Julie Leonard (Tewkesbury). Although the Gazette is our main publication, it can easily be upstaged by the attention surrounding chess events, so we are particularly pleased that Julie's sometimes unglamorous, but highly necessary work has been rewarded in this way.

We were able to successfully stage a fourth BCA Junior Championship in April 2017 at Wallington Chess Club where the primary organiser, Owen Phillips (Carshalton) is based. We received some funding towards the event from the John Robinson Trust and Efe Shimwell (Tunbridge Wells) was the outright winner of the event. We would like to thank the John Robinson Trust for their generous support.

The feeling is that we will try a different approach for junior over-the-board events going forward, and ideas being considered include a match between some senior and junior BCA members and a rapidplay event. Our junior development officer, Voldi Gailans (Romford) will discuss these ideas with Owen. Meantime a junior email championship has started.

We always feature successes of our members in significant UK mainstream events in our annual report. We entered a team in the Intermediate section of the 2017 National Clubs Championships held at Solihull. Despite being heavily outgraded a team consisting of Steve Hilton (Greenock), Steve Burnell (North Shields), Ian Blencowe (Gloucester) and Voldi Gailans finished fifth out of six. Our participation in this event is well-received by other teams present and raises the profile of the association.

In September 2017 Owen Phillips, Voldi Gailans and Efe Shimwell participated in the 125th Southern Counties Chess Union anniversary match. This took the form of a contest between two 68-member teams representing counties situated north and south of the Thames. Owen drew his game and Efe and Voldi both won. The northern counties won the match by five points.

Meantime our usual domestic programme proceeded over the year, offering competition for players of all levels of ability.

Three over-the-board competitions have been held since the publication of the last trustees' report.

Our International Autumn Tournament was held in October 2016 at the Holiday Inn, Solihull. Chris Ross (Northampton) won the Open and our junior champion, Efe Shimwell won the Challengers. Our thanks go to Mark Hague and Lea Ryan

(London) for organising the event.

Our AGM congress was held at the Hallmark Hotel, Derby in March 2017. In the open Chris Ross took first place and George Phillips (Kingston-upon-Thames) won the Challengers. We'd like to thank Steve and Hazel Burnell of North Shields for organising this event.

Our main over-the-board event was the British Championships, a week-long event, held at the Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate in May 2017. Associate members were allowed to take part and Owen Phillips shared first place with Bill Armstrong (Leek). Thus Bill successfully defended his title of BCA Champion. There was an entertaining programme of social activities, including a trip to Slingsby Gin, and Steve and Hazel Burnell proved very effective organisers. We'd like to extend our thanks to them for acting as organisers not just of the AGM Congress but also of this event.

Turning to correspondence chess, we ran our usual league and championship. The 2016-2017 league finished ahead of its official end date of 31st October 2017. Ernie McElroy (County Meath, Republic of Ireland) won division 1, with Mike Hague (Kenilworth) and Voldi Gailans winning divisions 2 and 3 respectively.

Les Whittle (Morpeth) became the 43rd BCA Correspondence Champion. Steve Brown of Bradford (sadly deceased) won one of the challenger groups, and George Phillips and Hans Cohn (London) shared first place in the other. It seems only right to note Hans's retirement from correspondence chess. He has played in BCA events since the 1930's, but ongoing health concerns and other matters have finally led him to conclude it is time to close this particular chapter of his life.

Our thanks go to Gary Wickett (Birmingham) for running these events and for all his work as Correspondence Chess Director. We were sorry to see him stand down at the 2017 AGM, but would like to thank Paul Benson for stepping in to ensure our correspondence chess activities continue.

Email competitions have become increasingly popular with our members and our sixth email tournament finished on 31st May 2017. Peter Gibbs (Hinckley) and an overseas member in Hawaii, Rod Macdonald won division 1 and Phil Doyle of Dublin won division 2. One of our friends in the Republic of Ireland, Mike Meaney and Steve Thacker (Long Eaton) shared first place in division 3 and our Treasurer, Gill Smith (Bristol) won division 4. A new tournament started on 1st September 2017. Eamonn Casey (County Westmeath) and Phil Doyle continue to be efficient controllers of these email events and we would like to extend our thanks for the contribution they make to the association by running them.

As usual the BCA entered a team into the British Correspondence Chess League. This year there was only one division. Our team consisted of Peter

Gibbs (Hinckley), Les Whittle, Steve Burnell, Derek Heyes (Bolton), Norman Andrews (York) and Alec Crombie (Uppingham). Peter Gibbs had to withdraw from the competition due to illness, and we'd like to thank Chris Ross for stepping in as reserve at very short notice. The team scored a total of eight points out of a possible twelve.

There were two international events of note this year. We enjoyed success at the friendly IBIS event held at Haaksbergen, the Netherlands, in April 2017. The chess playing members of the party were Jim Cuthbert (Sidcup), Gary Wickett, Norman Andrews and Steve Hilton (Greenock). Tanvi Muir of Loughborough also went on the trip; this is very much in keeping with the essentially friendly and social nature of the event. All our chess players won prizes with Steve Hilton winning the tournament outright.

In June 2017 we sent a team to the IBCA Olympiad held in Macedonia. Our team consisted of Chris Ross, Steve Hilton, Bill Armstrong (team captain), Phil Gordon (Isle of Wight) and Graham Pennington (Leigh) who was playing in his first international event. Owen Phillips, International Master Chris Beaumont and Grandmaster Neil McDonald acted as coaches and guides, and Kathleen Pennington travelled with her husband Graham as a guide.

Our team performed extremely well finishing thirteenth, a couple of places above their seeded position. Chris Ross and Steve Hilton delivered fine individual performances, though all of our players had their own special moments against significantly higher graded opponents. We have earned the right to participate in the World Cup scheduled for 2018. We'd like to extend our congratulations to our players on an excellent performance and our thanks to those who acted as coaches and guides.

Once again the BCA has put some considerable effort into publicising the association, and our publicity officer, Voldi Gailans, supplies some small regular news items for the website and manages the publicity for our tournaments.

Voldi has been giving chess lessons to members of East London Vision and South-East London Vision. We are hoping that something more permanent might come of this.

We have set up a BCA page on Facebook and we maintain a presence on Twitter.

What we aim for

We in the BCA aim to bring our members competitive and friendly chess experience together with the comradeship of a close-knit Association. Catering for players of all strengths is fundamental.

Essential to this aim is the BCA's quarterly Gazette referred to earlier in this report. It is edited by Julie Leonard with Braille copies produced by the RNIB. We offer the Gazette in Braille, on CD, by email and in print and large print. It is also published on the BCA website. And talking of support, we would like to pay tribute to all friends of the BCA, be you sponsors, guides, associate members, arbiters, stewards, readers - or just plain good friends! We are truly grateful to you all!

Appendix 1: Those who have served on the Committee in 2016 - 2017

Norman Wragg - Sheffield
Gill Smith - Bristol
Chris Ross - Northampton
Guy Whitehouse - Leicester
Mark Kirkham - Sheffield
Gary Wickett - Birmingham
Voldi Gailans - Romford
Julie Leonard – Tewkesbury
Mark Hague – London
Paul Benson - Runcorn