

SHROPSHIRE CHESS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting held via Zoom, Thursday 10 December 2020 at 7.30pm.

Present: Dennis Bonner, Roger Brown, John Casewell, Matthew Clark (chair), Nick Holmes, Phil Love, Toby Neal, Nat Paul, Malcolm Price, Glyn Pugh, Mark Smith, Richard Thompson, Kate Walker, John Westhead

1. **Apologies for absence** - Nick Rutter, Keith Tabner, Adrian Zdanowski
2. **Minutes** of the 2020 SGM were shared and approved.
3. **President's report** - Matthew said it was good to have the online league up and running and thanked CL for the concept of 3 divisions. Division 1 showed signs of being "Shropshire All Stars", welcoming back previous Shropshire players. Shropshire are also active nationally with Oswestry and Malpas third in the top division of Five Counties and Telepost on track for promotion from Division 2. The competition is recommended to other Shropshire clubs. 4NCL has continued online and MC thanked CL for his leadership - great to see so many Shropshire players involved. Shropshire also took part in online County events.

MC paid tribute to outgoing President Francis Best, who in his 10 years in the role oversaw a very successful and active period. The association is particularly grateful for his work with Steve Rooney on the Shropshire Congress, making it one of the top events in the region. Finals had been organised at Wrekin Housing Trust, making it "Shropshire's Wembley", and all three divisions of the league had been kept going.

MC also paid tribute to Keith Tabner, who persuaded MC to return to active play 10 years ago, and was stepping down after 17 years as website editor, having set up the site with Vinnie Crean, Graham Ives and John Casewell. It was ahead of its time and has been recognised as a model for other counties, and MC particularly enjoyed reading the extensive history section.

4. **Other officers' reports:**

A **General Secretary** - Nick didn't have much to report having only just taken on the role but confirmed that after surveying those involved physical addresses would no longer be included in contact details on the association website, in a bid to counter phishing and scams.

B **Treasurer** (including league fees for 2020-21) - Accounts had been provided and audited and Chris reported:

Profit and Loss

- Last year we made a profit of £134.60, an improvement on last year's loss of £411.78. This year's profit largely arose because of a profit from the congress this year, compared to a loss last year.
- The activities can be broken down into 5 main revenue streams.
- First the league administration fees including income from team entries and expenses on trophies and the website. Everyone paid their fees on time and without any prompting so thank you for that. This year we made £130 profit on league activities.
- The Congress is by far the largest activity. This year it made a profit of £437 compared to last year's loss of £65. The congress was profitable this year because there was a lower expenditure on titled players.
- The Shropshire individual made a small loss of £10. After COVID forced the suspension of over-the-board chess players were offered a full refund. To date no one has requested a refund.

- The minor individual broke even this year. However, after the accounts were completed 1 player requested a refund.
- The 4NCL broke even this year. The cost of entry was increased from £100 to £110. There are still 2 players subs outstanding from players outside the county which I hope to collect when 4NCL over-the-board resumes.
- Expenditure on tea/coffee in the county matches created a new expense of £16
- Finally there is a depreciation charge of £406 which must be funded by the other activities. The majority of this charge is made up of the digital clocks (£238) which had their final charge this year and so the depreciation charge in future years will be much lower unless we make any further big purchases. If there is no spend the 2020-21 charge will only be £48.

Balance Sheet

- The fall in asset value is just the depreciation charge
- Our bank balances decreased by £370 in the year and this is because £1,000 donated to this year's congress was actually paid last year but recognised in this year's accounts.
- The outstanding debt relates to the outstanding 4NCL subs as already mentioned and the creditors relate to individual prizes and trophy engravings not paid at year end.

League fees 2020-21 - Chris proposed in view of the above that the league fees remain unchanged at £10 per team. Matthew seconded and it was unanimously carried. Chris will email clubs with payment arrangements.

C **Auditor** - Richard noted that auditor AGM reports were probably not needed since the auditing process signified approval. He thanked Chris for his diligence and accuracy. The accounts were unanimously approved.

D **League Controller** - Adrian sent a written report which Matthew summarised, and which is available [here](#).

E **Rapidplay League Controller** - Chris reported that for the fourth year in a row Newport A were champions of division one, having lost only one match, against Maddocks which was notable for Adrian's draw against IM Lawrence Cooper. Telepost A were second, Maddocks B and Shrewsbury B relegated. After lockdown hit the final results were calculated by extrapolation from actual results so far. Shrewsbury A won division two ahead of Telford, who had three games in hand but slightly worse points. Jamie Hopkins had a key impact playing one match night for Shrewsbury.

F **County Individual** - Nick Rutter sent a written report:

The tournament was suspended in March and then completed online over the summer with 8 players continuing and 4 players withdrew. Congratulations to Nathanael who won the tournament 5½ out of 7. Grading prizes went to Eugene and Matthew.

This years' tournament is fully online and although it was disappointing that players like Nigel and Trevor didn't want to play online, it is good to see there are 14 entrants including a number of players who have not played in the individual before. This years' tournament has reached round 3 with Nick, Nat and Matthew joint leaders on 2 out of 2.

The trophy is currently being engraved. In fact, this is the first engraving for 10 years as there was no room on the trophy for names. The engraver has added a new tier and 10 names; I should get it back shortly and then find a way to present it to Nathanael.

G Minor County Individual - Chris reported that there were 16 entrants at the start, an increase on the previous year. When OTB was suspended in March, six players withdrew. Phil Love had a clear lead and was unbeaten at that stage but in the online phase his son Dan won his final three matches to take the title, a remarkable achievement for a junior. Richard Thompson was second and Phil, James Birch and John Casewell took the grading prizes. Entries for the new online season are open, closing on 23 December.

H Cox and Minor Trophies - Nick reported that these events had not taken place due to the pandemic and that Keith has indicated that he would like to step down from the role. Anyone interested, please contact Matthew Clark. Matthew thanked Keith for all his work on these tournaments.

I Shropshire Congress - There was no report but it had been confirmed that this year's event would not be taking place and there was some discussion of possible venues in the future. The 2019 event was won by Ameet Ghazi IM, with Nigel Ferrington, Nathanael Paul and Phillip Zabrocki the top Shropshire players in the open. Thanks were given to Francis and Steve for their excellent organisation. JC suggested the possibility of holding the congress online.

J 4NCL - Chris reported that in the OTB season Shropshire 1 were top of the table in Division 3 North but the table is deceptive as their final five matches are against the top five teams. A decision is expected from 4NCL in the new year as to whether this season will be concluded.

4NCL were very quick off the blocks after lockdown, taking only a couple of weeks to establish a competition with six divisions. Shropshire entered four teams. Shropshire 1 were in the top division alongside teams featuring grandmasters. They avoided relegation by skin of teeth. Dan Hilditch-Love and Richard Archer topped the individual performances with remarkable 93% and 92% records against very strong opposition.

In season 2 online Shropshire had five teams with 30 Shropshire players involved. We lost some players in the top team which meant everyone had to move up boards, making for a tough season. Shropshire 1, 2 and 4 were relegated, 5 finished mid-table but Shropshire 3 were joint top of their division. Mark Podlesak had a 95% record.

The third season begins in January. Chris paid tribute to how reliable all players had been, including people turning out after being phoned literally at the last minute. There were no defaults throughout the season. Chris is happy to captain the final online season but gave notice that the next OTB season will clash with Junior Chess plans (see below), so we will need a new captain at the next AGM.

The meeting, many of whom had been involved, thanked Chris for his excellent leadership of this complex event and Matthew encouraged all clubs to get involved.

K Summer Quickplay - Toby reported that this did not take place due to the pandemic but that there were plans for a January online event (see below).

L Junior Chess - Chris reported that just prior to lockdown he had secured agreement with Nerdy cafe to use their premises for free on a Saturday morning. Nerdy was flooded and then covid hit, so there was some doubt whether this would still be available, but Kate, who has contacts with Nerdy, was optimistic it would still happen. The plan is for sessions from 11am-1pm, looking to start as soon as lockdown ends to capitalise on the recent chess boom. Chris is working on child protection policies and had ordered training materials and investigated ECF courses. He is creating a Junior section for the revamped Shropshire website (see below). He will be looking for volunteers to help with the sessions but doesn't envisage substantial costs.

The hope is to progress to junior tournaments, a Shropshire megafinal and ideally a Junior 4NCL team.

JC noted that a good way to advertise will be through the education department.

M Publicity Officer - Toby reported that the online season had opened new opportunities to spectate on fixtures. He also reminded the meeting of the Colin Roberts brilliancy prize, won by Nigel Ferrington last season and now open for entries for this season. Matthew said that he particularly enjoyed the chess column which appeared regularly on the website.

N Grading Officer - Nick R provided a written report:

The ECF have moved to monthly 4 digit ratings from September. Currently, there are no over-the-board chess results - so I can't say how the new system is working.

This year I have registered the League, the Shropshire Individual and the Minor Individual for online rating. This has proved problematic as the ECF run the online ratings on a completely different system and don't accept the format of my grading files.

I have had a lot of discussions with Dave Thomas and others at the ECF about how to send the results for rating. Dave Thomas was helpful but seems very stressed by everything and he has moved in with his sister due to Covid and doesn't have access to his hard drive. None of the solutions Dave suggested worked and in the end I have had to create my own programming solution. It works fine now and I have been able to send the results each month.

Separately, Adrian had received queries as to whether ECF membership was required for the current league season. NR had confirmed that since the games were graded, membership was required and noted that a reduced £10 fee was available for online only. CL confirmed this was the case and the meeting unanimously agreed.

O Website Editor - Nick reported that work is ongoing on a redesign of the Shropshire site and a move to a new platform (Wordpress). The current software is expensive and specialist whereas the new system is free and will allow easier contributions, plus be mobile friendly and allow for easy updating and archiving. Vinnie Crean and Graham Ives are working on the technical aspects of moving the results database across. We hope to go live soon.

P MCCU delegates - Glyn had nothing to report and Roger confirmed that not much had happened other than the season competitions, though there were plans to establish a Facebook presence.

DB said that the new U120 team had come joint second and were due to play in the national finals if the competition resumed. He praised an excellent team which had not had any defaults and the meeting thanked him and congratulated the U120 team.

MC thanked those who played for the A team and said it was great that we had got county teams back up and running.

Q ECF Delegate - Nick R had noted that at the AGM of the ECF in October it was reported that around 45% of players had renewed membership. This undoubtedly caused a big financial strain on the ECF. The meeting agreed and urged all Shropshire players to renew.

5. Trophy presentation - only one trophy was present to be brandished - Telepost C's division 2 trophy (CL commented that it was a remarkable achievement for a C team to win the division.). Nick reported that most trophies were with their rightful owners but asked for Shrewsbury to see if they had the division 3 trophy and could get it to Oswestry, and similarly if Maddocks had rapid div 2 which should be with Shrewsbury.

Matthew congratulated Nat Paul on winning the County Individual and thanked Kate for her online calendar which makes it easier to follow this season's competitions. Nat in turn congratulated Dan Hilditch-Love - Newport taking the double of county individual titles.

Chris noted that the Shropshire Congress best player trophy is missing. We need to investigate with a view to replacing it if isn't found before the next congress.

6. **Election of officers** None, but note Keith's wish to stand down as Cox/Minor controller.

7. **Rapidplay proposal** - Chris explained the workings of the arena format noting that it led to high-pace exciting competitions. There was discussion of the mechanics and Mark summed up the mood in saying we should definitely give it a go. The proposal, including the time controls, was carried unanimously.

8. **Proposed Team Quickplay in January** - Chris reported that this was intended to provide continuity in tournaments. 10th January was suggested to avoid clashing with the British Championships which were taking place over the normal Shropshire Congress weekend. The logistics of issuing pairings would be the main difficulty. Again, the initiative was welcomed and unanimously agreed.

9. **Online Season 2020-21** - Adrian had sent a written report, available [here](#). The meeting unanimously agreed with Adrian's suggestion that it was sufficient for the home captain to submit the result on the website (within the stipulated 10 days) and there was no need for separate emails to him.

Matthew asked how it was going for the clubs present and there were no major issues raised. There was agreement that the format was producing some very competitive chess and it was seen as very positive. This season could be one of the closest in recent years in the top division. There was some discussion of when to submit team lists as some teams were submitting earlier than the rules required. MC commented that it was good sportsmanship to reciprocate an early team submission, CL that the rules allowed for later submission and it was a matter of tactics. JC noted that in cases of a mouse slip there was a retake button that could be used, CL commented that this was the online equivalent of the touch move rule and similar care and responsibility should be taken by players.

10. **Other online activities** - Matthew noted the Five Counties competition, encouraging more entries for the next season. Nat and Kate have entered the British Championships over Christmas. Dennis thanked Kate for her excellent interview on Radio Shropshire promoting Shropshire Chess and Matthew noted that Dennis had also done two excellent interviews.

Nick invited all Shropshire players to a Christmas simul with Nat Paul, to be hosted by Telepost Dark Knights on the Lichess platform on Wednesday 16 December at 7.30pm. Time control is 50/15 for challengers, 60/15 for Nat, colours random. Details on the website. Teamspeak will be available for Christmas banter and Chris noted that Teamspeak is available for all clubs to use if they wish.

11. **Any other business.** Chris raised GDPR which had not been dealt with despite being raised previously. Nick said that the new website included a template that could probably be adapted, MC, DB, CL and NH to address as a matter of urgency with a view to publishing on the relaunch of the website.

Meeting closed at 9pm.

NH 11/12/20