



THE BRAILLE CHESS ASSOCIATION (Founded 1932)

Registered Charity no. 263049

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

TRUSTEES REPORT 1st October 2017 - 30th September 2018

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 2016/17 were again signed off unconditionally by the accountant and were approved unanimously at our AGM in March 2018. 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 adapted chess sets and clocks, 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 2018, we hold reserves of £95,942, of which £4,381 is in restricted funds (allocated to specific projects).

What's been happening?

During 2017-2018 we have run a busy programme, participating in three overseas events and staging our usual domestic tournaments which offer opportunities for players of all levels of ability.

The highlight of the year must be the performance of our team in the World Cup held in Sofia, Bulgaria from 20 to 31 July 2018. We had earned the right to participate due to our excellent performance in the 2017 Olympiad.

Our team consisted of Chris Ross (Northampton), Steve Hilton (Greenock), Paul Benson (Runcorn), team captain Bill Armstrong (Leek) and Graham Pennington (Leigh). Paul was returning to international play after a long period of absence. Graham's wife Kathleen and Bill's wife Pat travelled with the party as guides. International Master Chris Beaumont and Grandmaster Neil McDonald provided coaching and also helped out as guides.

Our team finished 13th out of 16, equal with our seeding. All of our players had their moments of success, but Chris Ross played particularly well with Chris actually winning a medal for his performance on top board and Paul scored over 50 per cent with five points out of nine. The World Cup is a particularly tough competition and our team deserves to be congratulated on its performance.

Despite the 'beast from the east', we managed to send a team to the Netherlands to participate in the biennial Six Nations tournament held in Ermelo at the end of February 2018. Our strongest players were not available and the team was further hit by the fact that Steve Hilton could not join us because the airport in Glasgow was closed due to the bad weather. Consequently only three UK players were able to travel, namely Graham Pennington, Guy Whitehouse (Leicester) and Mark Hague (London). Fortunately a reserve player from the Netherlands agreed to field board 3 for us meaning we could put forward a full team of four.

Graham and Guy were playing on boards which were above their natural level. We finished fifth overall. Mark, playing in his first ever international event, enjoyed a win in our opening match against France, and Graham notched up a win against Switzerland. Guy won a medal for his performance on board 2.

We'd like to thank Graham's wife, Kathleen, and Mike Murphy of Gillingham for acting as guides. Difficult travel arrangements and the knowledge that we were not putting out our strongest team meant it was in some ways a tough trip, but we all enjoyed ourselves (a trip out to a local brewery was pleasant!) and we are proud of the fact we overcame the odds just to get to the event.

The other overseas event was the annual friendly chess tournament in Haaksbergen, the Netherlands, held in April 2018. Members of the association who participated include Gary Wickett (Birmingham), Mike Murphy and Steve Hilton;

once again Tanvi Muir of Loughborough travelled with the party even though she hadn't entered the tournament which is in keeping with the friendly nature of this event. Steve Hilton, playing on the top table, won the tournament outright. Thanks go to Mike for helping out as guide and to Guy Whitehouse and Gill Smith for looking after the party's travel arrangements.

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

Our International Autumn Tournament was held in October 2017 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Solihull. Chris Ross won the Open and Efe Shimwell (Tunbridge Wells) won the Challengers. Our thanks go to Voldi Gailans (Romford) for organising the event.

Our AGM congress was held at the Hallmark Hotel, Derby in March 2018. In the open Chris Ross took first place and George Phillips (Kingston-upon-Thames) and Dan Rugman (London) shared first place in the Challengers. It was good to see Efe Shimwell, having come through our junior competitions, take his place in the Open and win a grading prize, and even more gratifying when Efe agreed to become Junior Representative on the committee. We'd like to thank Steve and Hazel Burnell of North Shields for organising this event.

Our main over-the-board event was the Chairman's Cup, a week-long event, held at the Marsham Court Hotel, Bournemouth in June 2018. The tournament was dedicated to the memory of Jan Lovell, a much-valued honorary member who had recently died. Associate member Richard Murphy (Macclesfield) shared first place with full member George Phillips. There was an entertaining programme of social activities. John and Pam Jenkins (Christchurch) proved very effective organisers of this event; they have organized this event in the past and did a very good job of having to find an alternative venue. Our sincere thanks go to them for all their efforts.

Turning to correspondence chess, we ran our usual league and championship. The 2018-2019 league competition began in January 2018. The 44th BCA Correspondence Championship was won by Alec Crombie (Uppingham) with Dennis Warren (Luton) and Derek Heyes (Bolton) winning challenger groups A and B respectively. Our thanks go to Paul Benson for running these events and for all his work as Correspondence Chess Director.

Our seventh and eighth email competitions were run during the 2017-2018 season. Peter Gibbs (Hinckley) was overall winner of the seventh, with Stan Lovell (Scarborough) winning division 2; Voldi Gailans and Michael Meaney (Dublin) shared first place in division 3 and Tony Lawton of Reading won division 4. In the eighth, Peter Gibbs won division 1 while Derek Heyes, Steve Thacker (Long Eaton) and Anthony Borg (Malta) won divisions 2, 3 and 4 respectively. These email competitions continue to prove very popular with our members and Eamonn Casey

(County Westmeath) and Phil Doyle (Dublin) continue to be efficient controllers of these events; we would like to extend our thanks for the contribution they make to the association by running them.

Finally, 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 are looking into the possibility of employing a dedicated recruiter with the aim of promoting the association to younger visually impaired people. We have set up a BCA page on Facebook and we maintain a presence on Twitter. We also hope to enter the next chess website of the year competition run by our umbrella organization, the English Chess Federation.

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. 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 2017 - 2018

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