



THE BRAILLE CHESS ASSOCIATION (Founded 1932)

Registered Charity no. 263049

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

TRUSTEES REPORT 1st October 2018 - 30th September 2019

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.

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, governed by its constitution adopted in 1982 and last amended in March 2018. The BCA 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. The committee are also supported by sub-committees and other members of the association acting as volunteers.

The majority of our income is raised from grant-giving trusts and foundations. We have benefitted hugely from having the services of our Fundraising Officer, Julia Scott, whose professional support has enabled us to

expand services to our membership, and it is with real sadness that we note her announcement that she plans to retire at the end of November 2019 on health grounds.

The registered address of the association is that of its secretary, Dr Guy Whitehouse: 58 Earl Russell Street, Leicester, LE2 8LH

The Association's annual accounts for 2017/18 were again signed off unconditionally by the accountant and were approved unanimously at our AGM in March 2019.

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, including events not limited to blind players;
- 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.

Financial Position at 30 September 2019

Currently we are in a strong position financially, thanks to Julia's great efforts with her fundraising. We are now recruiting for a new fundraiser to have in place when Julia retires soon. As we have already received several promising applications, we are hopeful to have a new fundraiser appointed in good time.

With our investment policy in mind, several years ago we invested some

funds in a Charities Investment Fund with CCLA. Our funds held by CCLA continue to do well. This year we received £482 in dividends from our Income Units and their increase in value was nearly 6.5%. Our accumulation units increased in value by nearly 10%. For comparison, the FTSE index decreased by 1.17% over the same time period.

Our reserves policy is to aim to hold 24 months 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.

On September 30 2019, we held funds, including the value of our investments, of £91,922, of which £4,162 is in restricted funds (allocated to specific projects).

What's been happening?

During 2018-2019 we have run a busy programme, participating in two overseas events and staging our usual domestic tournaments which offer opportunities for players of all levels of ability.

We sent two players, Chris Ross (Northampton) and Bill Armstrong (Leek), to the World Individual Championships for the Visually Impaired held in Sicily during April 2019. Bill was accompanied by his wife Pat as a guide, and Chris benefitted from the services of Grandmaster Neil McDonald who acted both as his guide and coach. Chris scored 4.5 out of a possible 9 points, and Bill 3.5. These were creditable performances in what were sometimes testing playing conditions.

The other overseas event was the annual friendly chess tournament in Haaksbergen, the Netherlands, held in April 2019. Members of the association who participated include Ednun Pourtahmasbi (London), Mike Murphy (Gillingham) and Steve Hilton (Greenock); Steve Hilton, playing on the top table, won the tournament outright. Mike and Ednun were also overall winners on their tables. Thanks go to Mike for helping out as guide and to Guy Whitehouse and Gill Smith (Bristol) 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 November 2018 at the Hallmark Midland Hotel, Derby. Chris Ross won the Open and Voldi Gailans (Romford) and Dan Rugman (London) shared first place in the Challengers, with Voldi taking first prize on tie-break. Our thanks go to Voldi for organising the event.

Our AGM congress was held at the Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate, in March 2019. It was dedicated to a much-valued recently deceased member who had been a stalwart supporter of our events and represented the association in various international competitions, Les Whittle. In the open Chris Ross took first place and Gary Wickett (Birmingham) and Dan Rugman finished first in 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 Livermead Hotel, Torquay, in July 2019. The tournament was

dedicated to the memory of Geoff Patching, a longstanding and much-valued member who had recently died. We were pleased to welcome Geoff's stepson, Mike, who joined us on the final day of the tournament. We were honoured that Civic Mayor Mrs Maggi Douglas-Dunbar attended the event and made the opening move on top board in the first round.

The title of UK British visually impaired champion changed hands with Paul Benson (Runcorn) taking first prize in the Open. Tony Elbourn won the challengers. Gary Wickett and Tanvi Muir (Loughborough) did an excellent job of organizing their first tournament; everyone enjoyed the social programme they put together and it is hoped Gary and Tanvi will agree to organise tournaments in the future.

Turning to correspondence chess, we ran our usual League and Championship. The 2018-2019 League competition began in January 2018. One of our members in the Republic of Ireland, Ernie McElroy, was the overall winner; Derek Heyes (Bolton) and Guy Whitehouse (Leicester) won divisions 2 and 3 respectively. The 45th BCA Correspondence Championship began in January 2019. Our thanks go to Paul Benson for running these events and for all his work as Correspondence Chess Director.

Our ninth and tenth email competitions were run during the 2018-2019 season. An overseas member, Rod MacDonald, was overall winner of the ninth, with Voldi Gailans winning division 2 and Gill Smith taking first place in division 3 on tie-break. In the tenth, Rod repeated his success in the previous tournament, while Steve Burnell, Gill Smith and Tony Elbourn 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. Voldi Gailans 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. He has also managed to visit Royal National College in Hereford and New College, Worcester, to make chess-playing students at those colleges aware of the association and what we can offer them.

Our new Publicity Officer, Dan Rugman, is looking into the possibility of employing a dedicated recruiter with the aim of promoting the association to younger visually impaired people and also into the best way of raising our profile amongst the online visually impaired community. We have a BCA page on Facebook and we maintain a presence on Twitter. Dan also gave chess for the visually impaired a mention on the Radio 4 programme In Touch and we entered the 2019 chess website of the year competition run by our umbrella organization, the English Chess Federation.

The effects of Covid-19

While Covid-19 did not effect any of our events scheduled for the association's year ending 30th September 2019, it has had a significant impact on our 2020 programme. In accordance with the government's guidance we

cancelled our AGM congress and our week-long Chairman's Cup scheduled for April and June respectively. Three overseas events which we had planned to attend were also postponed or cancelled, specifically the Six Nations tournament in Germany, the Haaksbergen tournament in the Netherlands and the European individual championships in Serbia.

This reduced the association's financial outgoings, but it has also meant that our members have missed out on the chance to meet and socialize at our events, vital for maintaining the friendly nature of the association. To try to offset the effects of this isolation we are planning to run what we've termed a social distancing tournament in the summer, a multi-format event offering people the chance to play online or by phone. Once the government's restrictions are eased sufficiently, we anticipate being able to resume a normal over-the-board programme.

What we aim for

Chess is an excellent game for visually impaired people as it can be played against sighted opponents on an equal basis. This means that VI players can become members of sighted clubs and teams which breaks down barriers and increases social integration. Many of our visually impaired members play a full and active part in the sighted chess world.

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 2018 - 2019

Norman Wragg OBE, Chairman – Sheffield
Dr Guy Whitehouse, Secretary - Leicester
Gill Smith, Treasurer – Bristol
Julie Leonard, Gazette Editor – Tewkesbury
Mark Hague, Membership Secretary – London
Chris Ross, Webmaster - Northampton
Mark Kirkham, Audio Librarian - Sheffield
Voldi Gailans, Publicity Officer to 16/03/19 and continuing as Junior Development Officer – Romford
Daniel Rugman, Publicity Officer from 16th March - London
Paul Benson, Correspondence Chess Director – Runcorn