



THE BRAILLE CHESS ASSOCIATION (Founded 1932)

Registered Charity no. 263049

"Bringing Chess to Visually Impaired People."

TRUSTEES REPORT 1st October 2019 - 30th September 2020

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 appointed a new Fundraising Officer, Linda Innes; our

previous fundraiser, Julia Scott, retired on health grounds at the end of November 2019.

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 2018/19 were examined by our new accountants Dunkley's, Bradley Stoke, Bristol, and signed off at a committee meeting held via Skype in May 2020.

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.
- 6 a new multi-format tournament in which games can be played online or by phone.

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 2020

Currently we are in a strong position financially, thanks to the work of our Fundraiser Julia Scott, who has now retired, and our new Fundraising Officer, Linda Innes.

Several years ago, we invested some funds in a Charities Investment Fund with CCLA in accordance with our investment policy. Our funds held by CCLA continue to do well. This year we received £491 in dividends from our Income Units and they increased in value by 3.6%. Our Accumulation Units increased in value by 6.9%. For comparison, the FTSE 100 index decreased by over 20% over the same time.

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 2020, we held funds, including the value of our investments, of £95,246, of which £7,795 is in restricted funds (allocated to specific projects). This means we are on track to be able to commit to maintaining stock of sets and clocks, producing our quarterly Gazette, supporting our membership with coaching and preparing for over the board tournaments as soon as they are possible.

What's been happening?

Sadly our programme of over-the-board tournaments was severely curtailed by the coronavirus. We were forced to cancel our AGM weekend congress scheduled for April 2020 and the Chairman's Cup, usually held every two years and scheduled for June 2020, had to be postponed. We hope to run this event in the summer of 2021 combining it with our British Championships.

The virus also put paid to our plans regarding participation in overseas events. We had intended to enter a team into the Six Nations tournament in Germany and to send representatives to compete in the annual friendly event in Haaksbergen and also the European Individual Championships. Sadly all of these events were cancelled or postponed till 2021.

The one domestic over-the-board tournament we did manage to hold was our autumn international tournament. This took place in Solihull in November 2019 and was dedicated to the memory of two giants of the visually impaired chess world, Hans and Stefi Cohn. Paul Benson (Runcorn) won the open section and Voldi Gailans (Romford) won the challengers event on tie-break. Our thanks go to Voldi for organising the event.

The virus did force us to be inventive and accordingly we did organise a socially distanced tournament in which people could play via Skype or over the phone with the services of a timekeeper or else by email. This event ran throughout the summer and finished just before the end of September 2020.

There were two competitions running simultaneously, one where people played for points and the other where people challenged other players for positions on a ladder. These competitions were then sub-divided by placing players with a grade

of 100 or above into an open section and the rest being placed in a challengers group. In the points competition the winner of the open was Malcolm Jones (Birmingham) with 110 points while Mark Hague (London) won the challengers with 56. Alec Crombie (Uppingham) won the ladder competition with Jermaine Raymond (London) winning the under-100 section.

This event was a great success and well-supported by members. A lot of effort went into organising and running this event and we must extend particular thanks to Julie Leonard (Tewkesbury) and Gerry Walsh (Middlesbrough) in this regard. We have every expectation of running a similar event soon.

Turning to correspondence chess, we continue to run our usual league and championship. A new league competition began in January 2020 and the 2019-2020 championship premier group was won by Guy Whitehouse (Leicester); Voldi Gailans won the challengers group. Our thanks go to Paul Benson for running these events.

Our email competitions run by Eamonn Casey (County Westmeath) and Philip Doyle (Dublin) go from strength to strength.

This year we held our 11th and 12th email tournaments. Peter Gibbs (Hinckley) was overall winner of the 11th with Colin Chambers (Cheltenham), Mark Kirkham (Sheffield) and Michael Flood (London) winning divisions 2, 3 and 4 respectively. Donna Jodhan (Toronto) and Glen Graham (Cullompton) shared first place in division 5.

Rod MacDonald (Honolulu) was overall winner of the 12th competition, with Philip Doyle winning division 2. Gill Smith (Bristol) and Mark Hague shared first place in division 3 while Malcolm Jones and Tony Lawton (Reading) finished equal first in division 4. The next email tournament is already underway and has attracted a large number of entries.

Finally we have continued to provide our usual services to members as far as the coronavirus allows. We publish our quarterly gazette, provide audio selections of articles from Chess Magazine and our new Website Coordinator, Daniel Rugman (London), has begun work on enhancing our website. There is an allowance for members who wish to develop their skills through coaching (although coaching weekends aren't possible at the moment, online coaching is offered) and we continue to plan activities hoping that we would be able to resume something like our normal programme in the spring or summer of next year. We particularly hope to revisit plans for junior development (we have made Junior Development Officer a committee post). Voldi Gailans, who took on this role did manage to visit Royal National College, Hereford before the lockdown was introduced. We also aim to start outreach to other online communities of other visually impaired people.

The effects of Covid-19

The effects on our 2019-2020 over-the-board programme have been noted above. Because many of our members are in the coronavirus high risk group and would be unlikely to be prepared to take the risk of travelling via public transport, we have not felt it right to proceed with over-the-board activities. We have also taken the decision to hold committee meetings via Skype rather than face-to-face as we used to do.

This has reduced the association's financial outgoings, but it has been an extremely difficult financial climate in which to raise funds. 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. It was to try to offset the effects of this isolation that we ran our new socially-distanced multi-format tournament. Prior to the end of the 2019-2020 year we took the decision to move our 2020 autumn international tournament online and we will use insights gathered from this event to prepare for an online 2021 weekend congress and AGM. Once the virus situation improves sufficiently, we anticipate being able to resume a normal over-the-board programme. As well as the combined Chairman's Cup and British Championships planned for June 2021, this will include the weeklong chess theme break previously run by Peter and Celia Gibbs currently scheduled for end of January 2022.

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 2019 - 2020

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 till January 2020 - Northampton
Mark Kirkham, Audio Librarian - Sheffield
Voldi Gailans, Junior Development Officer – Romford
Daniel Rugman, Publicity Officer and Webmaster from January 2020 - London
Paul Benson, Correspondence Chess Director – Runcorn