

OCA Junior Report 2015–16

Andrew Varney, September 2016

Schools League

Highlights were two newcomer schools competing in the U9 final, a split into 3 sections for the U11s for the first time, and the U18 Schools League trophy contested for the first time since 2004.

- U9 – ungraded Rapid Play, teams of 6.
10 teams entered, split into 2 ‘zones’ (geographically-based pools).
Joint winners, drawing 3-3 in the final, were New College School and Beckley PS, both having won all their games up to that point.
- U11 – ECF graded Rapid Play, teams of 6.
15 teams, split into 3 zones for the first time. Some defaults in weakest (southern) zone.
New rules to find 4th semi-finalist broke down when all play-offs improbably ended 5-1 with a single win on top board, so board count tie-break did not help! Final winners MCS A.
- U13 – ECF graded Rapid Play, teams of 6.
5 teams entered. MCS A and MCS B finalists and joint winners due to defaults by MCS A!
- U18 – ECF graded Standard Play, teams of 4.
2 teams entered. 1 match played. Cherwell winners.

A full break-down of results of all matches can be found on the OCA website.

<http://www.oxfordfusion.com/oca/Juniors.cfm?Org=1>

EPSCA Inter-Association Competitions

- U9 – Oxfordshire 7th in Zone South so did not qualify for the final.
- U11 – Oxfordshire medal-winning 2nd place in Zone South ahead of Wey Valley but behind Sussex. We were 7th in the final out of 17, on 33 points. Top-placed Barnet scored 52/60 and second Kent 51/60.
- U11 Girls – Unfortunately Oxfordshire were unable to raise a team to play in the final in Manchester. The top girls from the age group who were already playing in national tournaments were keen to play but there was not enough interest to make up a whole team. Instead a friendly was played on the same day against other southern counties in a similar position. Ironically it was some of the more able players who were unavailable for this and Oxfordshire suffered almost a whitewash.

Full results can be found on <http://www.oxfordfusion.com/epsca/#results>

SCCU U14/U130

Oxon entered two teams this year to cater for the huge amount of junior chess talent in the county. The A team won the local ‘zone’ and were overall runners-up, losing on board count after drawing with Kent 12-12 in the finals at Sevenoaks.

ECF U13/U18

It was not possible to raise any suitable U18 teams this year for the various junior county tournaments this year. A minor team only was available for a summer inter-county U13 jamboree tournament in June in Brighton.

Delancey UK Chess Challenge

As the previous regular venue had doubled their prices, making it unviable to run there, the 2016 Oxfordshire Megafinal was held at a new venue (The Marlborough School, Woodstock) on Saturday 30 April. The number of entries (251) equalled the record set in 2014. After transfers, withdrawals and no-shows on the day there were 244 participants from over 50 different schools and clubs.

Of these 77 qualified for the Southern Gigafinal, the penultimate stage of the UK Chess Challenge. Together with a few other Oxon Juniors who qualified from other counties' Megafinals, most of these took up the challenge to play in the Gigafinal on July 16th/17th weekend. Altogether I counted 60 Oxon Juniors playing on the Saturday or Sunday.

Qualifying from this event were 14 to the last stage Standard Play Terafinal tournament to be held on 20th/21st August. Over half of these were girls, underlining Oxfordshire's tradition of producing some of the country's top female chess players. A further 16 players, not quite making the Terafinal, qualified to play in the Rapid Play Silver Plate tournament which was held in September.

There were significant absences from the Terafinal due to holidays and other tournaments, but several Oxfordshire players who took part were very successful. In the main tournament, Daniel Varney took second place on 5/6, drawing to the top two seeds (both FMs) and winning all his other games. Dimitrios Zakarian also took part in the main tournament and scored 3/6. In the Challengers sections, Ross Tselos and Jonathan Fowler both came second in two of them, while Zoe Varney and Shira Parnes were among the prize winners.

Unfortunately the future of the UK Chess Challenge is in doubt as the organiser, Mike Basman, has been made bankrupt. It is not yet clear whether it may be able to continue under new management.

Other Oxon Tournaments/Events

Witney Junior Rapid Play was held in September as in previous years. It was split into a Major section (U18, no grade limit) with 35 entries and a Minor section (grade < 50) with 13 entries. The very strongest juniors tend to play in the Open 'Senior' section. In this way it caters for all ability groups above complete beginner.

Oxfordshire Junior Chess tournament took place on Sunday 29 November at Oxford Spire Academy. Over 90 children took part. In the lower age groups it was also a qualifier for the London Junior Chess Championships.

Winners of the Oxon Championship trophies were:

U18 - Zoe Varney (Headington)

U15 - Elizaveta Sheremetyeva (OHS)

U13 - Tom Shepherd (MCS)

Winners of the LJCC qualifier sections were:

U12 - Ben Headlong (Wiltshire)

U10 - Daniel Shirinyan (Cumnor PS)

U8 - Dimitrios Levon Zakarian (W Kidlington PS)

Winners of engraved chess clocks for 4 top performances from players from their schools were St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (top primary) and MCS (top secondary).

Currently there is not going to be a tournament this year as we do not have a venue nor the volunteers able to organise it.

U9 & U11 county team trials – held in January, biggest attendance since record number in 2012, more entries for U9 section than recent years. Good performances from players in years 1 and 2.

- U9 - Dimitrios Zakarian (6/6), Frida Ives (5/6), David Nebres (5/6), David Kardashyan (4.5/6)
- U11 - Hari Selvaraj (6/6), Movses Shirinyan (5/6), Freddie Beneat (4.5/6), Leonora Ives (4.5/6)

In April Wantage Chess Club held their annual tournament for players from primary schools in their locality, with prizes provided by Wantage Rotary Club. Numbers were down a little this year with 18 juniors participating.

School and Club Teams

In the final of the ECF U13 team Championships, MCS came 3rd and Summer Fields came 4th. MCS were also U14 Birmingham & District Team Champions. There were 3 Oxon school teams who were EPSCA semi-finalists – MCS U11s (who narrowly missed out on a finals place), William Fletcher U11s and SS Mary & John U9s.

Junior participation in the OCA League continues to be significant. The regular junior teams of MCS/Blackbirds, Abingdon School/City, Cumnor, St Clare's, Witney and Cowley all continued to play, with junior players also in some of the other teams such as Bicester.

Separate junior chess clubs are held at Bicester and Wantage.

The Oxfordshire Junior Squad club ("Ojays") continued to meet weekly during term time, with professional coaching most weeks. Although it is by invitation only, since it is intended only for county-level players, and membership grew during the year, with a regular attendance of about 16 to 20, mostly aged between 6 and 11 years' old.

<http://www.oxon-junior-chess-squad.org.uk/>

4NCL

As in previous years, Oxfordshire juniors featured in the three Oxford teams in the league as well as in several other teams. Amongst them, Zoe Varney played in first division Oxford 1, Ross Tselos had notable results well above his rating for the lower division Oxford teams and Pavel Asenov played as board 1 for Brown Jack Witney in division 2.

An 'Ojays' (Oxfordshire Juniors) team played in one of the Junior 4NCL weekends.

Individuals – International and British Chess Championships

Those representing England internationally during the 2015-16 season included Pavel Asenov (European Youth U18 Team Championships 2016), Zoe Varney (EYCC 2015 & Glorney/Gilbert Cup), Elizaveta Sheremetyeva (EYCC 2015) and Jake Holton (EYCC 2016).

The British Chess Championships saw a fair number of Oxfordshire juniors taking part in the relevant age-group sections. Competing in the main Championship were Pavel Asenov who scored 6/11 (including a memorable game against GM Gawain Jones which could have gone Pavel's way but for time trouble) and Zoe Varney who scored 4/11 (netting her equal 3rd place woman and equal U18 girl champion). Jake Holton competed in the Major Open and won the U150 Rapid Play. Dimitrios Zakarian was equal third in the U8 tournament.

Zoe Varney has been awarded a Sixth Form chess scholarship to study at Millfield School.