

Minutes: OCA Committee meeting: 21st May 2026

Held at Rose Hill Methodist Church

Meeting started 19.30

Present: Paul Bizzell (PB), Tony Burcham (TB), John Carter (JC), Keith Freshwater (KF), Nalin Kadodwala (NK), Julian Kennedy (JK), Gerard O'Reilly (GO), Sara Sengenberger (SS), Roger Thetford (RT)

- 1. Apologies:** Mike Truran (MT), Peter Hemmings (PH),
- 2. Previous Minutes:** Minutes from last year's meeting were accepted.
- 3. Brief Updates**
 - a) Chair (NK)** – From what I have seen games have gone well with hardly any disputes. John and Roger have done an excellent job in running the season's activities especially given the circumstances. Am looking forward to seeing how the 4 division system works in the upcoming season.
 - b) Secretary (JC)** – It's been a year since I attended a meeting, thank you to Sara and Roger for organising, stepping in, and being there when needed. The league seems to have been managed well and issues will be dealt with later on in this meeting.
 - c) Treasurer (SS)** – I'm pleased to say that everything is ticking along as normal. The only thing to say is that we have been able to make an additional disbursement from the development fund. We were approached by Wantage to recover the course fees of £40 for Ms Mirka Litwiniec to become an Arbiter. This was approved by the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer as it was below £50.
 - d) County Captains (TB)** – There have been various issues getting players to turn out for away games and I don't think we managed to put out 20 players for any away game. Hampshire and Bucks had the same problem though Berkshire did seem to be able to manage it. I am thinking of contacting the other county captains about changing the format perhaps making it more of a jamboree with 10 boards instead of 20. This is not only because of the players but also the cost. We have been changing £5 for home games but this season have also had to make a small charge for away games to offset the £100 cost for hire tea /coffee when we have few home players. The balance in the kitty has increased from £84 to £112. It was raised that TB is standing down as County Captain.
 - e) Online Activities (PB)** – After being promoted last year, we were relegated this. We have the same problem with getting enough players. There are some 32 in the club but not enough willing to play. JC suggested posting a news item about it on the Fusion website.
- 4. a) Feedback from Divisions 3 & 4** – (JC) There has been feedback from a couple of sources that some have not enjoyed the smaller number of boards in Division 4 as this resulted in fewer games being available for lower boards. One team reported that they were expecting new players for next season and were looking forward to Division 4 becoming a 6 player division again.
 - b)** It was suggested that if a division were to get down to only 6 teams that there should be a 3rd cycle of games for that division. GO asked if it was clear why teams didn't feel they were getting enough games, was this because clubs were rotating members within the lower teams? JC confirmed that this was the feedback received from clubs. SS made a related point that it seems as a consequence of having the 4 board structure in Division 4 more clubs are putting out more development teams. This has improved the enjoyment for lower rated players who are finding they are more competitive.

There followed discussion on the merits of 4 or 6 board teams in Division 4. It was suggested that captains could agree to play only 4 boards if sufficient notice was given. 48 hrs was generally agreed to be acceptable notice. It was further discussed about the number of teams in each division. This

came down to a vote on a structure of 8-8-8-6, with div. 4 having 6 teams. The further suggestion was that div.4 could have three cycles instead of 2 giving teams 15 games. A vote was taken on the league structure of 8-8-8-6 and passed with 8 votes to 1.

c) Frank Wood Shield Rapidplay –(JC) Feedback has been that this year clubs enjoyed the Rapidplay format. It is not proposed to make any further changes this year but to strive to get more clubs involved. SS gave feedback from her club FWS captain that there could be more clarity in the rules for the competition, specifically about when to use Rapid or Standard play ratings.

5. a) Juniors – (JK) This is about ratings lag for juniors and the fact that they are often improving rapidly and their current rating may not reflect the true level of their ability. The question was raised whether the current rating rule (League Rule 7.9) of 75pts tolerance should be relaxed for all juniors so that team captains could play them higher up the board order when appropriate. Some discussion followed on the various merits of keeping the rating tolerance as 75pts or if it could be increased to something like 150pts for juniors. A vote was taken on the two options of keeping the rule as is on 75pts or to increasing it for juniors to 150pts. The vote was split 4:4 so there was no recommended change.

b) Amendments to some rules regarding P ratings and tidying up of typos (JC) - This is about some general housekeeping that John and Roger have been discussing. It will involve some minor amendments to wording in the rules and cross references. These involve no intent in changing the meaning or nature of the rules in question, but simply to acknowledge that the wording needs to change to keep pace with past agreed changes.

6. Roles to be filled – (JC) There are a small number of vacancies on the committee as it stands but also a number of committee posts where the holder has been in place for nearly three years and so will be up for renewal. Tony is also standing down from his role and next year may be my final year as I (JC) will be away on business for a year. It was also discussed that certain posts should be supported by a back-up in case the sitting member was unable to fulfil their duties for whatever reason. This is particularly important with roles such as Treasurer where another signature may be vital to be able to continue with league activity. NK suggested that at the AGM we should have a list of the committee roles and select those that require back-up. SS said she would check with the bank to confirm exactly what is needed for a 2nd signature but believes this needs to be approved and minuted at the September AGM to provide acceptable evidence for them.

There followed a short discussion about reimbursing expenses for those attending the committee meetings and if members were aware this was available. This was duly noted.

7. A.O.B.

- (SS) The meeting last year was remiss in not setting a date for the AGM. JC further added that a window such as the 3rd week in September should be sufficient but also he felt strongly that all clubs should take the responsibility for hosting the AGM from time to time. GO commented that there is something to be said for meetings to be held where they are easily accessible to all attending. A provisional date of Tuesday 15th September was put forward but is to be confirmed.
- (KF) At the AGM I offered to look at how other counties were organising their championships. Paul Bizzell also offered to help with this. Attached is a summary of some 25 counties that I have gathered information on. In short there is no common process for selecting an Individual County Champion. The most common appears to be a bespoke event open only to those eligible but this has no common format. A number of counties only use a single Congress to decide their Champion, while others hold multiple events over the season.

- Junior Chess – (JK) Junior chess is pretty vibrant at the moment, We have teams that play in a number of events. U9's won a bronze medal. We also have junior teams that play online in the 4NCL junior competitions on Thursday nights. There is also an OCB 4NCL but we have had some trouble getting teams together for that with requirements for rating ranges, etc. There are quite a few events that run throughout the year including the Chess Challenge and we have a number juniors who qualify for the various finals. We also have qualifiers for the London Junior Chess Championship. There is also a qualifier for another junior competition called EJCOA (English Junior Coaches and Organisers Association) it is in effect the National Youth Championship and is a Rapidplay format not to be confused with the new ECF youth Championship that is Standard play. We also compete in the Midlands County championship and won that two years ago with the U11 team and came a close 2nd more recently.

Meeting closed 21:20

There are two attachments

- 1) Grader's Report from Peter Hemmings
- 2) Summary of 25 County Individual Championship Competitions

Oxford and District Chess League

GRADER'S REPORT 2025-2026

Results have been received and submitted to the ECF as shown. Feedback now only tells me about new players that were assigned ECF codes. The Oxford League and Chiltern Leagues were submitted on the dates shown. Results submitted to the OCA results database before those dates are included in each submission. When a submission includes new players there is a delay before the whole file is committed and the results visible (sometimes several days but usually get caught in time for the ECF monthly list).

Oxford & District League	Standard Play PHOL26	28 October	9 new players
		28 November	3
		18 December	2
		31 January	1
		27 February	3
		31 March	5
		29 April	ECF Data base failure
		2 May	1
Frank Wood Shield	Rapid Play PHFW26	6 May	
Chiltern League	Standard Play PHCL26	25 November	
		18 December	
		31 January	
		27 February	
		30 March	
		29 April	ECF Data base failure
		2 May	
Wantage Roger Davidge Swiss	Standard Play PHWC25	29 April	ECF Data base failure
		2 May	
Didcot Club Tournament	Standard Play PHDM25	17 June	25
	PHDM26	Results awaited	

At the end of April the ECF data base was affected by a major security event that affected the ECF systems. The following statement was received, "As a result, we have had to go back to the situation on 23rd April with all subsequent submissions deleted, subject to any you have already re-submitted in May."

Results from other events including Kidlington and Witney were submitted independently.

Player identification is always a key issue and clubs are reminded that it is better to give a player's given name rather than just an initial. I can cope with misprints better if there is a name to work with.

There have been several instances where the name of a player in the database differs from that in the ECF database: most commonly, shortened Christian names or extra initials. Steps have been taken to bring things into line.

Peter Hemmings 6 May 2026

Summary of Individual County Championships for some 25 Counties.

Individual Champion by County									
County	Number of events	Bespoke Event	Standard	Rapid	Blitz	Mixed	Single Champion	Men & Womens Champion	Comments
Warwickshire	3	No	Yes				Yes		Winner = Best of 2
Gloucestershire	1	No	Yes				Yes		Cotswold Congress
Wiltshire	Multiple	Yes	?				Yes		None Congress - Club level to Semi final, to Final
Hampshire	1	Yes	Yes				No	Yes	Bespoke event held over 1 weekend
Surrey	Multiple	Yes	Yes				Yes		multi-stage format throughout the season
Kent	1	No	Yes				No	Yes	The individual champion is typically decided at the Thanet Congress
Berkshire	1	No	Yes				Yes		
Dorset	1	Yes	Yes				Yes		Bespoke event held over 1 weekend
Cambridgeshire	1	Yes	Yes				Yes		Bespoke event held over 1 weekend
Yorkshire	1	Yes	Yes				Yes		Bespoke event held over 1 weekend
Lancashire	1	Yes	Yes				Yes		
Sussex	1	No	Yes				Yes		Unclear recent change
Middlesex	Multiple	No	Yes				Yes		
Norfolk	1	Yes	Yes				Yes		
Suffolk	?								individual championships for solo players
Staffordshire	1	No	Yes				Yes		
Worcestershire	1	Yes				Yes	Yes		
Herefordshire	1	Yes				Yes	Yes		Head-to-head match between the champions of the county's major chess clubs
Shropshire	7	No	Yes				Yes		7 rounds over season
Somerset	1	No	Yes				Yes		
Lincolnshire	1	Yes	Yes				Yes		
Nottinghamshire	1	Yes	Yes				Yes		Played over x2 Sundays
Bristol and District	1	No	Yes				Yes		
Northumberland	1	Yes	Yes						Played over 7 rounds typically spaced four weeks apart.
Cumbria	1	Yes	Yes						