

Oxfordshire Chess Association AGM

7.30pm on Thursday 14 September 2023

Held at Rose Hill Methodist Church

Present: Nigel Moyse (Cumnor, Chair), James Cole (Cowley), Will Burt (Cowley), Roger Thetford (Didcot), John Carter (Wantage), Gerard O'Reilly (Cowley), Nalin Kadodwala (Cumnor), Phil Hayward (Oxford City), Peter Hemmings (Wantage), Priscilla Morris (Cowley), Ben Woolf (Watlington), Mike Truran (Witney)

Abbreviations: OCA = Oxfordshire Chess Association, ECF = English Chess Federation, FWS = Frank Wood Shield, MCS = Magdalen College School.

1. Apologies for Absence: Sara Sengenberger (Cowley), Keith Freshwater (Banbury), Sam Neil (MCS), Steve Bennet (Cumnor).

2/3. Minutes of 2022 AGM/Matters Arising: approved by the meeting with no matters arising.

4. Chair's Report (Nigel Moyse)

Last season saw continued recovery after the pandemic. County champion, fifteen year old Yichen Han, won multiple titles at the British Championships. Nigel thanked the committee for their work, both those standing for re-election and those stepping down. He also thanked those willing to stand as new officers and Gerard O'Reilly for his input on various issues.

5. Secretary's Report (James Cole)

James reported close finishes in Division I (Oxford University 1 pipping Oxford City 1) and Division III where Abingdon School eclipsed Cumnor 2 on game point difference. He also announced the winners of the individual awards in each division, as well as the Lester Millin and Ray Starkie memorial prizes.

The league will expand, with the return of MCS plus new entrant Watlington. We retain three divisions but hope to increase to four soon. A brief explanation was given of the basis for the prizes awarded.

6. Treasurer's Report and Recommendations (Sara Sengenberger)

James Cole summarised Sara's report. Our financial situation is similar to last year: small deficit and substantial capital. Effects of the pandemic led to extra expenditure of around £100. The Treasurer sees no need to increase team affiliation fees. The development fund of £1,800 still remains

to be allocated.

Phil Hayward ask for clarification over this fund. It can be for any projects that develop chess in the county. Nigel Moyse suggested running events aimed at adults in Oxfordshire towns without league teams. Gerard O'Reilly mentioned interest from users of Exeter Hall (venue for the Kidlington Congress).

7. Other Officers' Reports

Nigel Moyse reported on the county team in the Chiltern Cup, noting we beat Hampshire twice but ultimately finished second to them. Nigel had stepped down as captain at the May Committee meeting, but was willing to take up the role again and a motion was passed to ratify this.

Peter Hemmings (Grading Officer) said he had nothing further to add to his report to the May Committee meeting. Local traffic problems delayed our ECF representative Mike Truran, whose report was thus deferred until his arrival.

8. Election of Officers for 2022/23

Nalin Kadodwala stood for Chair, proposed by Nigel Moyse, seconded by Gerard O'Reilly and approved by the meeting, taking the role for the rest of this meeting. He oversaw nominations and elections for other posts, none of which were contested. The following were elected:

Chair:	Nalin Kadodwala (Cumnor)
Secretary:	John Carter (Wantage)
Treasurer:	Sara Sengenberger (Cowley)
Minutes Secretary:	Will Burt (Cowley)
Fixtures Secretary:	Roger Thetford (Didcot)
Grading Officer:	Peter Hemmings (Wantage)
ECF Representative:	Mike Truran (Witney)
Junior Liaison Officer:	TO BE CONFIRMED
Webmaster:	Roger Thetford (Didcot)
County Individual Organiser:	Keith Freshwater (Banbury)
University Representative:	Tom O'Gorman (Oxford University)

The positions of Vice-Chair and Online Chess Officer remained vacant. The Oxon Schools League plans to nominate someone for the Junior Liaison post. The committee agreed we would accept this nomination. Priscilla Morris (Cowley) is in the second year of her term as our Honorary President.

9. Formation of the League for 2023/24

The current fixtures list uses the following structure:

- Division I: Banbury 1, Cowley 1, Cumnor 1, Didcot 1, MCS 1, Oxford City 1, Oxford University 1, Oxford University 2, Witney 1
- Division II: Abingdon School, Banbury 2, Cowley 2, Cowley 3, Cumnor 2, Didcot 2, Oxford City 2, Wantage 1, Witney 2
- Division III: Cowley 4, Didcot 3, MCS 2, Oxford City 3, Oxford City 4, Oxford University 3, Wantage 2, Watlington, Witney 3

This was approved, followed by some general discussion of league formation. (*Note: not long after this meeting, MCS withdrew its two teams*)

Wantage intends to run a development team to play friendly matches—some club representatives indicated they might be able to provide such opportunities.

10. Proposed Changes to OCA Rules for the 2023/24 Season

James Cole introduced these. Consideration of the first proposal was left until last.

Second proposal (amending Rule 3.3 on fixture rearrangement)

This was withdrawn after Gerard O'Reilly pointed out that the proposed changes could already be found in rule 3.2.

Third Proposal (Rule 7.9.6 on illegal board orders)

This clarifies the penalty for contravening Rule 7.9 on board orders. Some comments were made: Phil Hayward said that the monthly publication of ratings made it hard for captains to keep track, while John Carter said that, nonetheless, it was their responsibility to do so. Gerard O'Reilly enjoined fuller compliance with Rule 7.10 (team lists should include ratings) and thought the new rule might encourage captains not to point out an illegal board order, so as to benefit from the penalty applied to the other team.

Gerard and Will Burt pointed out that a rule passed at the 2021 AGM allowed captains to use the current or previous month's ratings list, but that this had not been added to the published rules. The meeting re-ratified this rule change.

Further discussion noted that the current wording penalises individual players in an illegal board order, even though the team captain is responsible. It was agreed to amend this so that the point is deducted from the offending team. The phrase "in addition to rule 5.4" was deemed to be confusing and amended to "*Cf.* Rule 5.4". With these changes the proposal was then passed.

Fourth proposal (amendment to Rule 7.11.2 on mobile phones)

This applies the penalty of a defaulted game the first time a mobile phone rings. Although there were questions of whether the game could be allowed to continue for rating purposes, the proposal was adopted unchanged by four votes to three.

Fifth proposal (loosening Rule 9.4.1 on FWS eligibility)

Eligible players would need to have played only one, rather than two, league games. Players with a strong connection to a club could be exempted from this requirement, at the League Secretary's discretion.

This rule would also not apply in the first round—it was clarified that this referred to a team's first match in the FWS. Gerard O'Reilly proposed an amended wording to accommodate this and the meeting passed the proposal.

Sixth proposal (references to "A–E" grades replaced by "A or K" grades)

This reflected the new system of rating categories introduced by the ECF. It was noted that the proposal should have referred to ratings, not grades and it was amended to reflect this, before being passed by the meeting.

First proposal (rating cap and split strength squads)

This proposed two new measures: Rule 2.4.6 specifies a rating cap, except for club's first teams, of 100 points above a team's highest rated starred player. Rule 2.4.7 allows two teams in the same division to split their strength, but the League Secretary should be informed of this in advance of the season and no player may play for both teams.

It was suggested that we could instead do more to enforce fair play guidance and maybe set up a 'fair play' subcommittee. The proposal as a whole was rejected, but a revised Rule 2.4.6 was adopted.

11. ECF Representative's Report (Mike Truran)

Mike highlighted the consultation on the ECF's membership options paper. He explained that the ECF board recommended option 1 (flat fee), while he favoured option 2 (merging gold/silver membership). Reduced price junior memberships remain in both options.

The OCA committee will pass on its views. Mike asked clubs to encourage feedback from their members, either to Mike personally or via the response form on the ECF website.

12. Formation of an Executive Committee to Look at the OCA Rules and Constitution (John Carter)

John explained that this would form a group to work on rewriting our Rules and Constitution, to improve clarity and remove errors. The aim is,

in due course, for this group to become permanent and also look at league structure and the broader chess scene in the county. It will consist of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and one other to be co-opted at this AGM. It is expected that the committee will then meet for initial ideas before Christmas and at least twice more, before reporting to the May Committee meeting.

Gerard O'Reilly asked why the proposed committee is described as "executive" when it does not have such powers, and also if it could report in advance of the May Committee, so that OCA committee members and local clubs can consider any proposals made. John responded that he hoped the new committee would acquire executive powers in due course and that it would report regularly on its deliberations.

It was agreed that the term "Executive Committee" be changed to "Working Party". As no Vice-Chair is currently in post, co-option of the rest of the working party was deferred. With these changes the motion was then passed.

13. Any Other Business: There was no further business and the meeting closed at 10.08pm.

Will Burt (Minutes Secretary)

30 October 2023