

**NORTHERN COUNTIES CHESS UNION**

**FOUNDED 1899**

**Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

**At the Latvian Club 5 Clifton Villas Bradford BD8 7BY**

**(taken by MB in absence of Secretary)**

**Present**

Bill O'Rourke (BO'R ( President and Lancashire rep)

George Horne (GH(Treasurer and Cumbria rep)

Mike Barrett (MB ( M'side rep)

David Mills (DM (Yorkshire rep)

Bryan Bainbridge (BB (Durham rep)

**Apologies**

Dave Cole (ill) Steve Mann (ill) Rupert Jones (holiday) Tim Wall (at London Classic) Dave Almond (holiday)

**Minutes of AGM 29<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

Having been circulated previously these were accepted.

**Matters arising not dealt with elsewhere**

None

**Officers' reports**

BO'R opened by referring to the recent deaths of Dave Welch and Keith Smith. He had been to Dave's funeral the previous day and this had been well attended by both local and national chess players and officials. Whilst Dave had been the arbiter at Blackpool and other local congresses until his illness, he was also a national and indeed international arbiter of note whose assistance and influence would be sorely missed. Keith was more regional in his service but was just getting the NCCU website updated and relevant and his death was a big blow. BB would make enquiries on possible progress and by whom this could be continued. In the meantime the services of both to NCCU activity was recorded and if possible eulogies on other websites might be copied on to that of the NCCU..

On the various issues raised in previous meetings and on which he had taken action BO'R said that only Southern Counties and East Anglia had replied. It appeared that other than The South East the Unions felt powerless to initiate or carry through the changes to membership fees, grading band alterations or any other change to the status quo. He considered this to be particularly irritating on the matter of the additional fees required for Silver membership and the absence of any clear benefit for the amount paid which appeared to him to be solely for the benefit of the ECF central body. This led to a discussion on this and the associated subject of chess club membership and whether this was reducing. It was agreed that with some specific area exceptions chess players were an ageing section of the community. A consequence of this was that they were generally the more affluent of the population and at present at least were willing to pay amounts required. Those who played in several congresses per annum might only be paying an additional pound or two for the 'privilege' without fully understanding that the money did not stay with the congress itself. However, this acceptance would not be continued indefinitely if fees continued to rise and the numbers paying them continued to fall. A secession from the ECF by individual congresses or regional union could not be totally dismissed in principle but it was agreed that such action would require a great deal of effort and

change and be up against the reducing number of people willing to take on tasks, this of course being another cause of concern.

In the absence of the Secretary there was no formal report but aspects are mentioned under other headings.

GH reported a balance of £2415.47 in the bank together with 8 clocks at a value of £350 earmarked for club championship winners.

County championship matters were subject to problems of availability of players and suitable venues and the refusal of the ECF to consider changes in the grading bands had not helped, leading to a record number of defaults at the national stages last season. As a result, for instance Lancashire might have to reduce the number of team entries. DM said that the problem was primarily with the higher-grade bands where the 'enemy' was the 4NCL and he had less problems with the lower ones. He had a large area and numbers with a few very active reps but he needed more and the very fact of the large area from which players were drawn gave rise to problems in choice of convenient venues whilst some players were not able or willing to play as often as requested. A possible answer would be to fix a neutral venue solely dependent upon ease of travel access. BOR said that there had been no comeback on a previous suggestion of a jamboree style competition that might reduce such problems. (Item 5 on Agenda)

Cumbria had beaten Lancs 7—5 in a recent U140 match and Lancs had a U120 match on 8<sup>th</sup> Dec v Merseyside at Bury. There would then be U100 and U180 matches v Merseyside and Yorks respectively both on Sunday 15 Dec and at Bradford. DM was anxious to do something similar for U140 and U120 matches due for March 2020 and was asked to submit a proposal to Dave Almond and Andy McAteer with copy to BO'R

DC will be organising the Club Championships and issuing details idc

DM reported that Chris Goodall (Northumbria) had volunteered to take on NCCU grading duties. There had been recent exchanges of views by e-mail on potential grading problems should more frequent changes be instituted. The meeting agreed that if cut off dates were in 2019 the August 2019 grades should be used but those for Jan 2020 could be used if the relevant dates were thereafter.

There was no formal report on ECF matters in the absence of TW but note was taken of his e-mail in which he had promised to submit a written report in his absence. This had not been received as yet but could no doubt be read into the minutes upon its receipt.

The whereabouts or even of existence of specific trophies was discussed based upon the schedule provided by the Secretary in his pre-meeting e-mail. Some confusion had been caused by the changes in qualifying bands after the initial engraving of cups.

Open Trophy won by Yorkshire last year is now with DM

U180 Shield found with D Almond and now with BO'R for engraving. This was identified as the initial U175 trophy

U160 'Silver Rook' Rupert is to be asked to confirm this trophy is with him.

U140 This had not been seen in recent years and in view of the band changes there might not be an actual trophy in existence. BO'R trying to tie together the Mike O'Hara trophy and the U120 trophy. There is quite a lot of confusion.

U120 This is/was known as the Pennine Shield and won by Mside in 17/18. Alan Kelly would be asked about it.

U100 With BO'R for engraving

The U16 Chess competition for the Pennine Cup was to be organised by Peter Cloudesdale of Yorkshire with the only possible doubt being on the number of players per team.

The School award for 2019/20 was for nomination by Cheshire/NW but as with other matters nothing had been heard from them.

The NCCU Award for 2019/20 was for nomination by Lancashire and BO'R gave a very positive recommendation to Kirkham GS which had become a very active training base for Junior chess with the enthusiastic support of the chess teacher and his assistants. This was one of several bases being set up by Lancs and BO'R would be happy to provide further information upon request.

The Durham Congress in May 2020 was now confirmed as the venue for the NCCU Individual Championships and BB gave a glowing report on the quality of the venue , a 4 star hotel and in the city centre, and the available accommodation. MB said that this was in stark contrast to the situation that arose on the 2020 British Championships due to take place in Southport but which fell foul of a change in venue ownership and management (NB There is a circular e-mail from Mike Riding dated 11<sup>th</sup> December re the Durham Congress)

The 2020 Presidential Nomination should come from Merseyside. MB ruled himself out by the reason of advanced age and family commitments and he thought Jim Moran would not wish to take it on. He would approach Gareth Ellis.

The revised timing of the 2020 AGM was discussed and a provisional date of Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September and this Bradford venue was agreed with 12<sup>th</sup> being an alternative if required.

AOB the only item was that BB should be informed of the schedule of County fixtures and be provided with a format for the submission of results in connection with the web site situation.

The formal part of the meeting ended at approx 2-30pm when refreshments provided by the venue were partaken and for which the 'lady of the house' was thanked.

M D Barrett

12<sup>th</sup> December 2019