**2023-4 season sees continued growth of Worcester City Chess Club**Ray Collett 29 May 2024 (hon secretary)

**Activities last Summer**. The club met at Spin The Black Circle, Pump Street during the months of June, July and August for casual games. The club entered two teams into the Worcestershire Chess Association’s summer Cup competitions with the u1650 team winning the final on tie-break from Longbridge and losing the Towers Cup final against Redditch. An online team battle against Ulmergė was played on 2 June losing 28-42 with 9 players taking part from Worcester. Worcester beat Hereford in both home and away friendly matches 3½ -2½ and 5-2. The county association took over responsibilities for the 4NCL online teams.

**Team over-the-board results**. No team won a league trophy this season, but the Rooks and Bishops teams finished runners up in the Challengers and District leagues respectively.

**Online results.** Worcester and Ukmergė played a second team battle on 21 Feb winning 54-42 with Rob Sutton being Worcester’s highest scorer.

**Internal tournaments.** Rapidplay and the club championship fixtures were completed to schedule. Joe Rastall won both the championship and the rapidplay tournaments. The Blitz championship was played on 1 Feb with sixteen players competing and won by Rob Sutton.

**Club support for county.** Six club members played in county matches and two members – Ray Collett and Simon Berry - are officers of the county association and Aiden Griffiths is captain of the u1450 county team. Ray Collett and Colin Vernon co-manage the county online Wolfpack teams. Scott Oxtoby, Aiden Griffiths and Joe Rastall are organising the Worcestershire Closed congress in the centre of town on 13 and 14 July. Simon Berry, Scott Oxtoby and Joe Rastall coach young players at the Junior Chess Academy.

**Members’ achievements.** Congratulations to veteran member Arnold Kirkland who is presented with the Friar award for services to Worcestershire Chess; new junior member Ed Higgs, who won the Ball Cup; and Scott Oxtoby who defeated GM Keith Arkell in a simultaneous display at Hereford. Colin Vernon has successfully completed the FIDÉ School Instructor course.

**Membership statistics.** During this season the membership has totalled 34

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Statistic** | **2022-3** | **2023-4** |
| All membersRejoining from previous seasonNot rejoining from previous seasonNew membersAll visitorsVisitors attending more than once | 2916 (89%)1 122514 (56%) | 3425 (86%)5 10219 (43%) |

**Club facilities and attendance.** The club will have opened for 41 nights with an extension of the season at the church hall into June. The highest attendance was 27 (13 last season) with an average of 17 (10 last season) players present. The highest number of members attending on any one evening was 18 (14 last season). Tea, coffee and biscuits were available courtesy of Ray Collett and players’ contributions to refreshments so far this season are over £175. The club committee’s bid to purchase a further six discounted digital clocks from the ECF was accepted and they will likely arrive in a few months time. The committee has informally discussed purchase of further boards and I recommend folding plastic (55mm squares) price £9.95, but members might like to consider buying new weighted sets, boards and drawstring bags price £212 for 10.

**Summer activities.** Friendly matches have been arranged with Hereford club at home on 20 June away on 16 July, and with Leominster away on 18 June. Two teams have been entered in the county association summer cup competitions to be held in August. Some players have asked for a second Blitz tournament in June. The club will meet at Spin The Black Circle during the months of July, August and September.

**Worcester City (1st team) in the Worcestershire Chess Association Champions League: Captains Report**

Final standings as below; full results at <https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/league_comp/187015/efixtures>

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Team | Play | Won | Draw | Lost | For | Against | Points |
| Malvern | 10 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 33½ | 16½ | **19** |
| Longbridge | 10 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 25 | 25 | **10** |
| Halesowen | 10 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 26 | 24 | **9** |
| ***Worcester City*** | ***10*** | ***3*** | ***2*** | ***5*** | ***23*** | ***27*** | **8** |
| Redditch | 10 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 21½ | 28½ | **7** |
| Kidderminster | 10 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 21 | 29 | **7** |

We had twelve different players representing us this season; which has its pros and cons. In none of the 10 fixtures were we able to put out our ‘best five boards’ (with or without the weaker playing captain being present). Last season we had eleven different players. Ray Collett and Joe Rastall played nine games each and were the most frequently available individuals.

Joe Rastall collected the most individual points, 5 (two wins; six draws; one defeat); playing on board 1 for three of those games. Another notable mention goes to Seamus Flynn, for a win and a draw from the two games he played.

Malvern stood at as runaway victors this season, winning all but one of their fixtures, a draw against us! We finished fourth again (the same as last season) but collecting one more win, and thus one more point than last year. While Malvern stood out, there was very little to separate all of the other five teams. [Lee Davis and Ian Clarke, both of Malvern led the way with 6.5 points each, from just nine matches].

It was very rare for the captain to have difficulties in finding five available players; and for much of the season after Xmas, it wasn’t unusual for 10 or so players offering their service. Thus, I recommend that the Club take to the League AGM, a **proposal to extend the team board numbers from five to six for the 2024/2025 season,** to give extra opportunities for players seeking more competitive chess.

**Worcester Rooks’ Captain’s Report**

Worcestershire Challengers’ League

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Team** | **Play** | **Won** | **Draw** | **Lost** | **For** | **Against** | **Points** |
| Malvern | 8 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 21½ | 10½ | **13** |
| Worcester Rooks | 8 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 17½ | 14½ | **9** |
| Longbridge | 8 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 16½ | 15½ | **7** |
| Stourbridge | 8 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 13 | 19 | **7** |
| Redditch | 8 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 11½ | 20½ | **4** |

The Rooks had an excellent start to the season, winning our first two matches. Things started to slip after a disappointing loss to Redditch in December, followed by a loss to Malvern in January. Despite these setbacks we had a strong second place finish in the league table - it was hard to argue with Malvern’s exceptional performance.

In total thirteen different players from the Worcester City Chess Club played for the Rooks over the course of the season, with new players Edward Higgs, Dorin Luca and Luke Elsden both making their standardplay league chess debut in Rooks’ matches. A complete list of players is included in the table below, provided by LMS.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Games** | **Score** | **Performance** |
| Rastall, Joe | 5 | 2½ | 1851 |
| Oxtoby, Scott | 5 | 4½ | 2015 |
| Flynn, Seamus | 4 | 2½ | 1794 |
| Griffiths, Aiden | 3 | 1 | 1445 |
| Austin, Phil | 3 | 2 | 1900 |
| Collett, Ray A | 3 | 1 | 1698 |
| Sutton, Rob | 2 | 1 | 1773 |
| Luca, Dorin | 2 | 1 | 1805 |
| Shaw, Tony | 1 | 1 | 2200 |
| Higgs, Edward | 1 | 1 | 1928 |
| Lee, Chris | 1 | 0 | 1309 |
| Elsden, Luke | 1 | 0 | 1400 |
| Kirkland, Arnold G | 1 | 0 | 1128 |

**Worcester Bishops - u1650 - Worcester Chess Association - Captain’s Report**

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This season the Bishops team finished second on the league table losing out to Kidderminster who had a phenomenal season with only one loss. Across the season we have a total of 8 players with Jacques Olden and Paul Serafini making their club debut and winning their games played (one each).

Our leading point scorer was myself - Aiden - (3 points with 4 games played) followed by Seamus Flynn (2.5 with 4 games played) and Simon Berry (2.5 with 4 games played). A special thank you to David Cleak also for his continued support and attendance even when not playing.

I’d like to extend thanks to the players this season, it was a hard fought battle and I believe next season we can take home the league. This was my first time captaining a team through a season and I’m honoured to call you all my teammates.

As this is the lowest division grade that we cater for, if you would like the opportunity to play in the next season please let me know and we will get you added to the current mailing list.

Thank you once more!

**Worcester Knights in the Worcestershire Rapidplay Lague: Captains Report (Chris Lee)**

Final standings as below, the full results can be found as follows:

[Worcestershire Rapidplay league | ECF League Management System (ecflms.org.uk)](https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/league_comp/187035/efixtures)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Team | Play | Won | Draw | Lost | For | Against | Points |
| Longbridge 4 | 16 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 41 | 23 | 24 |
| Redditch 4 | 16 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 37½ | 26½ | 21 |
| Worcester Knights | 16 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 30½ | 33½ | 13 |
| Kidderminster 3 | 16 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 28½ | 35½ | 12 |
| Stourbridge 2 | 16 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 22½ | 41½ | 10 |

As you can see from the table, we came a distant 3rd to Longridge and Redditch and only just did better than Stourbridge and Kidderminster. We had a total of 12 players who played with 4 players i.e Joe Rastall, Rob Sutton me and Adien Griffiths playing most games.

Joe and Rob scored well, achieving a performance rating of 2023 and 1910 respectively. Unfortunate this was matched by not-so-great performances by me and Aiden! Scott Oxtoby also played well, achieving a performance rating of 1884 with his 4 games.

It has to be said we had an interesting early season when due to my work commitments I match had to be rearranged at short notice and unfortunately, I missed our fixture on 5th October against Redditch who turned up for the match. A team was quickly put together on the night (by others) and luckily, we could complete the match. I apologies when I found out and I apologies again to the club for this failing on my part.

I’m not sure what appetite there is for rapidplay by some of the senior players and some players are definitely not in favour of the format. If asked to captain the side for the forthcoming season I would seek further interest in the league from the club players to consider bolstering the side to see if we can mount a challenge next season.

This format may also be of interest to some of the newer members of the club and it may be possible to field 2 teams (dependent on interest) moving forward.

Alternatively, as this is a different and relatively new format for Worcestershire Chess perhaps a proposal to add an extra board should be put forward to see what other teams think.

Chris Lee – Team Captain

**Wheatley Cup KO Team handicap Captain’s Report (Chris Lee)**

The Wheatley cup is a handicap competition with the handicap assessed via a comparison of the totally ratings for players on the respective teams. The handicap is then added to the actual result to determine the match result.

Worcester were the champions in 22/23 but unfortunately could not repeat the result this year.

There were only 4 teams entered so there were 2 semi-finals with our result shown below.

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John Heskeths game was the last to finish and decided the match result. Our additional handicap of +0.1 swung the match.

We fielded the same team for the final and played against a higher collectively rated team and we had a handicap of +1.1 meaning we needed to score 1.5 to win the competition. The result is shown below.



Unfortunately, Redditch ground us down in the end and we couldn’t score the 1.5 needed. So well done to Redditch and we look forward to next year’s competition.

**Competitions Secretary Report for the AGM– Worcester City Ches Club: 2023/2024 Season**

As with past few years, we held three internal formal competitions this season:

* The *WCCC Championship* (open, season long, all-play-all followed by finals knock-out, standardplay – 45/15);
* the *WCCC Rapidplay* (open, season long, all-play-all followed by finals knock-out - 20/10); and
* the *WCCC Blitz* (open, single evening, two-group all-play-all followed by finals knock-out – 3/2)

All results can be found at <https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/league/club/37445/136465/org> ; thus what follows, here is a short commentary and proposals for next season. Notes on the Club trophies are also provided below.

*Championship 2023/24*

Participation was low again this year, following a recent trend, with only five games played between October and March. Five different players participated in the preliminary all-play-all component, with Scott Oxtoby beating Aiden Griffiths in an eliminator to qualify to play Joe Rastall in the final. (Final result TBC, at time of report production). The winner will be awarded the Challenge Cup trophy at the AGM.

To increase participation in 2024/25, it is proposed that the Championship returns to a straight knock-out ‘cup competition’. Expressions of interest will be sought from members at the start of the season; with a random (unseeded) draw, to be played across four fixed-date evenings (based on an assumption of more than eight but fewer than 16 players; i.e. 1st round, ¼er finals, semi-finals, final).

*Rapidplay 2023/24*

Again, participation was not great; however, 18 preliminary games, played eleven different individuals does at least represent an improvement on last season, which failed to draw a result / winner because so few games were played. The final standings had Rob Sutton paired against Edward Higgs and Joe Rastall against Chris Lee. Joe Rastall triumphed against Rob Sutton in the final. Joe will be awarded the Rankin Cup trophy at the AGM.

One small change is proposed to the structure of the event for next season, alongside enhanced promotion. The proposal is to remove the knock-out element and run the all-play-all element for an extra six-weeks, into mid-May. The winner will be decided by final league standing position.

*Blitz 2023/24*

By far the most popular internal tournament run by the club, as it has been for many seasons. We played 60 games on the evening of 1st February 2024, with 16 participants. Rob Sutton beat Stephen Mellor in the final, their second game after their first was drawn. Rob was awarded the Knight trophy on the evening of the tournament, but this was exchanged for the Dollin Plate.