

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CHESS ASSOCIATION AGM 2025: OFFICERS' REPORTS

President's Report (Neil Graham)

I am now in my second term as President of the Notts Chess Association; my last tenure being some 40 years ago (1985-1988). In those intervening years my chess has got no better I am sorry to say but there has been plenty of activity within Nottinghamshire chess over these years.

Without the volunteers who organise chess on our behalf there would be no Association and no League and we are indebted to the individuals who sort out these and our website, the congress and all the other myriad events on our behalf.

Chess is a young man's game – witness the ascendancy of Gukesh Dommaraju who became undisputed World Champion at the age of 18 years and 195 days. I am extremely concerned that the running of the Association is in the hands of an increasingly elderly cohort of organisers. I hope that younger people will come forward in future years to assist in the running of the Association; indeed General Meetings have shown a distinct lack of enthusiasm for people to take on administrative roles. In addition the next Gukesh could already be in the county and we need a system that encourages and identifies the stars of the future. On that note I am pleased that Senith Gunarathne (West Nottingham) has won the MCCU place in this year's British Championship. It was only through the efforts of this Association that the qualifying place was awarded to the Nottingham Congress and I understand that Senith will receive support from the Nottinghamshire Chess Foundation.

If we look at achievements during the past year, the start of the Summer Rapidplay League plus the expansion of the Minor League gives everyone including beginners the opportunity to play competitive chess and we have seen a number of new players competing. I hope that these competitions and indeed the main otb League itself may increase in 2025-26.

Finally returning to opening remarks, we have lost a number of players and supporters over the past year through death and illness. We remember them at this meeting.

General Secretary's Report (Nick London)

The main activities have been arranging EC meetings, writing and circulating minutes, follow-up actions etc. EC has met more regularly than in the previous few years which enables business to be conducted in a more timely manner. Some supporting work in the absence of a League Secretary has been undertaken (entries, fixtures etc), and some admin with the start of the new summer RP league.

A steady stream of general enquiries have been received, most of which are passed on to the relevant club or sub-committee. A working Group on PR and chess development has also been formed.

The action from 2024 AGM to establish a 'Whatsapp' group was taken and so far has 26 members. More members from more clubs would help to make it a really effective means of communication.

Records Secretary (Simon Scott)

Total league games: 2460

Players: 219

Players assigned estimates: 114 (including summer league entries)

Match penalties: 8

The season progressed very smoothly, all teams submitted results in good time - there was no need to chase and there has been an increase in opposing captains verifying results. A steady stream of new players with rating estimates were processed, mostly for the Minor League and Summer League (not included in other stats).

There were still a couple of instances where a team was penalised for using a P-rating rather than the agreed estimate, and then being out of board order. The LMS player list was contributing to this confusion but this has been improved.

The league rule change to C4 has also reduced the weekly workload of checks.

Rapidplay Committee (John Swain, Stephen Humphreys, Simon Scott, Hambel Willow)

We welcomed a record capacity (180) entry to the 34th Nottingham Rapidplay on Sunday 2 February, held as usual at Nottingham High School. This was ECF-rated as normal and also FIDE-rated for the first time (bear in mind that FIDE only now publishes ratings above 1400). We also used the congress.org site for the first time, enabling online payments rather than cheques in the post and cash on the day. Thanks to the bumper entry, we were able to offer slow-starter prizes and make a profit of over £820.

We are very grateful to the Nottinghamshire Chess Foundation for providing £380 for prizes for an Improvers' section, which attracted 47 players, many new to over-the-board chess, and also for underwriting any financial losses (thankfully, not required).

Thanks are due to: the players who turned up early and helped us to set up and those who stayed behind after the last round and helped to put away the equipment and rearrange some tables and chairs; the control team of Phill Beckett, Stephen Humphreys, Simon Scott, John Swain and Hambel Willow; NCA Treasurer, Stuart Humphreys, who combined playing in the Major with various administrative tasks and who undertook the not inconsiderable job of paying the prize-winners after the event; finally, the parents who staffed the provision of hot drinks - Indika and Shaman Gunarathne, Marc Richmond and Pat and Carol Sykes - enabling £150 to be raised for Ukraine humanitarian relief.

Congress Committee (John Swain, Stephen Humphreys, Simon Scott, Hambel Willow)

The 48th Nottingham Congress took place at a later time (10-11 May) than our more usual late March/April berth. This was not our preference, but 4NCL dates occupying the first three April weekends, EPSCA dates and a March event at our venue, Nottingham High School, forced our hand. This timing probably accounts for our numbers (138) being far less than last year (172) although they were not massively less than 2023 (153). The proximity of GCSE, A Level and university exams, together with some county Quarter-Final fixtures and Megafinals probably provide the bulk of the explanation. A return to a more usual late March/April weekend in 2026 would be sensible. Nevertheless, thanks largely to late entry fees, late withdrawal fees and some generous competitors who donated prizes or who withdrew beforehand but donated their entry fees, we made a profit of over £170. Thanks to bookstall provider Mike who donated five books, we were able to offer slow-starter prizes.

We are very grateful to the Nottinghamshire Chess Foundation which provided the £525 prize fund for the Improvers' section. Fortunately, our numbers were sufficient and did not require us to activate the NCF's much-appreciated loss guarantee.

As usual, we provided a tea and coffee facility with proceeds heading to the Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal. £187.50 including Gift Aid was raised. Thanks are due particularly to Indika and Shaman Gunarathne and to Marc Richmond for running this.

Thanks as always to: the Control Team of Phill Beckett and Hambel Willow (both recently elevated to FIDE arbiters – congratulations!) Stephen Humphreys, Simon Scott and John Swain; NCA Treasurer Stuart Humphreys for organising prize payments and refunds; the Nottinghamshire Primary Schools Chess Association for the loan of boards, sets and some clocks; finally, many thanks to those who helped to complete setting up on Saturday morning and especially to those who assisted on Sunday afternoon after end of play with moving furniture and collecting chess equipment.

County Championship (Nick London, Stuart Humphreys)

Following the new pattern of clubs taken responsibility by rotation, Radcliffe & Bingham volunteered to organise an event for 24-25. RBCC's new venue was suitable but only available on Sundays. Since the perceived preference is that the event should be at classical rates and over two days, two separate Sundays have been booked, the first of which has taken place. The concluding rounds will be on 20th July.

Final entries totalled a modest 24 – exactly the same number as 2024 at the same time of year. The event will therefore fall well short of covering costs of venue hire and arbiter fees. The event did however benefit from the use of the newly established online entry system, for which Stephen Humphreys is offered thanks for his assistance in making it work.

There is a strong case for fundamentally reviewing the nature and format of the county championship, given the low entry and the net costs to the Association. Research indicates that we are unusual in running a dedicated weekend tournament and different ways could be considered:

- played during the season at clubs e.g. once round per month, swiss format
- incorporate into Notts Congress (top scoring Notts-qualified player)
- one day event with faster times

The time of year should also be considered, since June is clearly not a popular month for indoor chess. Autumn may be a more successful option.

It is recommended that EC consider these points and possibly form a sub-group to review future competitions.

Minor League (Nick London)

The third year this competition has run, and those taking part have given positive feedback. It provides an opportunity to introduce new club members to match chess in a less intimidating environment, and establishes them on the ECF rating system. We welcomed a team from Ashfield CC as a new participant. 240 rapidplay games (25+10) were played by 48 different players. The large majority were juniors but the competition is available for adults of any age who want to try out this form of the game. The minor league also provides an opportunity to any new chess club or group to get involved in NCA events in a less demanding way. The league was closely contested between West Bridgford Bishops and West Nottingham New Brooms, who won on game points tie-break.

Expressions of interest for 25-26 season will be sought once the main league fixture list is finalised. The current format appears to work well in general, although the large number of younger juniors taking part suggests that a flexibility on time controls may be helpful for longer distance away matches.

My thanks to the team captains for their work in continuing this successful competition.

Correspondence Team Captain (Phil Morgan)

We finished in 6th place in a Division 1 competition of nine teams. Thanks to all players who competed. Our team was 1 R Webster 2 J Shaw 3 G Anderson 4 P Morgan 5 K Williamson 6 A Combie 7 A Robins 8 F Richmond. All our games this year were drawn, in what looks very likely to have been the final season of the event:

“Counties and Districts Correspondence Chess Championship

Austin Lockwood Wednesday, April 2, 2025

*Unfortunately, due to a lack of administrative support, the Counties and Districts Correspondence Chess Championship will be discontinued following the completion of the 2024 Season.
This event has run continuously for over one hundred years, since 1922. “*

Website Report (Stephen Humphreys)

This year has seen an increase in articles posted to the website. A new obituaries section has been added. We have updated historical records thanks to Drag. Stuart with the assistance of Drag has been scanning back copies of old Notts Bulletins. Phil, Neil and Mike have been supplying reports on the league & 4NCL. We have pushed our Rapidplay, Congress and County Championship. Much thanks to all those who submitted articles. I hope to have many more next year. It would be good to get some annotated league matches published if anyone would like to submit them.

Notts Chess Foundation Update (Nick London)

The trustees have continued to meet and operate according to the well-established aims of the charity and in accordance with Charity Commission regulations.

Dave Griffiths and Chris Budd have continued in their roles as NCA nominated trustees, whereas Graham Neil withdrew from this role. NCA's previous AGM did not nominate a replacement, but EC approached Ruth Humphreys and was able to nominate her as a trustee and Ruth was duly appointed by trustees for a 3 year period.

Volatile financial circumstances, made considerably worse by the advent of President Trump, have affected NCF's long-term investments, but interest income has again exceeded outgoings.

During the last 12 months the NCF has supported and funded 17 different projects/events and distributed £9773. These have included the normal range of causes such as schools and clubs in need of equipment, supporting NCA activities and individuals and team playing in national and international events.

Trustees' ambitions for the next year include better and more assertive promotion of its own existence, especially to peripheral chess groups outside of NCA membership.

Reports not received in writing as of 1/07/25

Junior committee

MCCU Delegates

ECF Delegate

Safeguarding Officers