

Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of the Bury Area Chess League
Held on Monday 22nd June 2015, at Moreton Hall Community Centre, Bury St Edmunds

1. Welcome

Present:

Vicky Allen – VA (Stowmarket)
Ole Bay-Petersen – OB (Chairman, Cambridge)
Tim Davison – TD (Internet Officer, Cambridge)
Adam Harvey – AH (Bury St Edmunds)
Norman Hutchinson – NH (Vice-Chairman, Cambridge)
Bob Jones – BJ (Outgoing Congress Organiser / Grader, Bury St Edmunds)
Frazer Jones – FJ (Newmarket)
Paul Kemp – PK (Treasurer, Linton)
Steve Lovell – SL (Outgoing Admin Secretary / Incoming Congress Secretary, Bury St Edmunds)
Charles Richmond – CRi (Outgoing Ex-Officio / Incoming Press Officer, Newmarket)
Patrick Ribbands – PR (Rapidplay Organiser / Incoming Match Secretary, Linton)
Colin Roberts – CRo (Outgoing Press Officer / Incoming Ex-Officio, Bury St Edmunds)
Mark Szymanski – MS (Roger Goldsmith Organiser, Ely Beet)
David Wood – DW (Bury St Edmunds)
(14 Members)

Club Representation and Votes:

Bury St Edmunds – 5, Cambridge – 3, Ely Beet – 1, Linton – 2, Newmarket – 2, Stowmarket – 1
(These are all within AGM club voting allocations.)

Apologies:

John Wickham – JW (Incoming Congress Director)

2. Minutes of the AGM 23rd June 2014 and Matters Arising

These minutes were agreed as a true record of events, and there were no matters arising not already on the agenda.

3. Officers' Reports

(i) Chairman – Ole Bay-Petersen

- OB began his report commenting that the league appeared to be alive and well, and that it had been another season without major problems, and went on to thank players, captains and members of the Executive for their part in making things run so smoothly.
- There was one dispute which arose in February and was finally dealt with in May. This could have been handled better by those involved. OB recounted a story from the 1935 Warsaw Chess Olympiad, where a dispute led Najdorf to ask England captain Sir George Thomas how it would have been handled had such a dispute arisen in England, to which Thomas replied

that “In England such a dispute would not arise.” OB’s conclusion was that regrettably times would appear to have changed.

- FIDE rule amendments discussed at the last AGM, and our opt-outs from certain of them, appear not to have caused any issues.
- For the coming season ECF membership fees are increasing by £2 (for bronze membership), £3 (silver) and £4 (gold), and the game fee for non-members will rise to £2.50.
- OB briefly summarised the league’s financial position. As small deficit this season showed the league as financially stable, though the purchase of Champagne for winners of the Roger Goldsmith would be discontinued.
- The congress, BJ’s last, was another great success. It has proved impossible to replace BJ by a single organiser, but a team including JW, SL, PK, supported by BJ mainly in an advisory role, has been making good progress with the plans for the next event. JW’s and SL’s occupancy of these new roles is of course yet to be approved by the AGM. Being based in Norwich, JW will not be expected to attend meetings, but will be providing reports as required, in combination with SL and PK as necessary. Although stepping down as congress organiser, BJ will be continuing on the BACL Executive in his role as Grader.
- OB went on to express his thanks to BJ for his efforts running this superb congress over the 16 years. Many regard it as the best weekend congress in the country, enabling many hundreds of players to enjoy the game in a friendly atmosphere. Were it available, the title of “Grand Master Organiser” would be rightly bestowed upon BJ. OB then presented a trophy to BJ, named after him, in recognition of his contributions. This trophy will be awarded as part of the congress. BJ received a warm round of applause from the meeting.

(ii) Match Secretary – Jon Crowe (JC)

OB relayed that JC was absent and had not provided a report. VA noted that this had also occurred last year. OB explained that JC’s increasing work commitments had continued to make it impossible for him to take a more active role, and that JC was therefore stepping down from the role.

(iii) Treasurer – Paul Kemp

Having circulated a statement of the accounts and his own report, PK gave an overview of the league’s financial situation. The season saw a deficit of £162.79, almost entirely related to exceptional items of expenditure (mainly the trophy mentioned above). The accumulated surplus for the league now stands at more than £1300, and that for the congress at more than £900, giving a total accumulated surplus of more than £2200. As such, the league continues in good financial health and PK recommended leaving league fees to clubs as in the previous season. This proposal was approved by the group.

(iv) Press Officer – Colin Roberts

Having offered to stand down at the last AGM, and not having been able to give any more time to this role than previously, CRo stepped down from the position of Press Officer. The meeting thanked CRo for his contributions over the years. OB commented that CRo had agreed to continue his work compiling a history of the league.

(v) Grading Officer – Bob Jones

- BJ has been carrying out the expanded role agreed at the last AGM. Estimated grades were checked at the beginning of the season and all seemed to be in good order.
- However, the introduction of new “Category F” grades, based on between 5 and 8 games, which several players obtained in the January grading list, caused problems. In some cases these overstated a player’s true strength by as much as 50 grading points. For that reason, BJ had brought a proposal to treat all category F grades as estimates, which would be discussed later.
- BJ asked secretaries to email him a list of all their players with estimated grades by 1st September.

Action: Secretaries to email Bob with details of estimated grades for the upcoming season.

(vi) Internet Officer – Tim Davison

- Results were once more entered promptly and accurately. Although penalties for late confirmation were threatened at the previous AGM, TD was pleased to report that confirmations had also been prompt.
- VA commented on it being a “lovely site” and CRi praised TD for his swift handling of queries.

(vii) Roger Goldsmith Organiser – Mark Szymanski

- MS reported that five teams entered in Division 1 and four in Division 2. Both were closely fought competitions with Cambridge Masters prevailing in the former and Cambridge Students in the latter.
- The event ran largely without problems, though Newmarket did at one stage field an over strength team, resulting in a point being transferred to their opponents.
- There were issues in relation to estimated grades, which we would return to later in the meeting. OB noted that the RGT would also be included in the Competitions Review later in the meeting.

(viii) Rapidplay Organiser – Patrick Ribbands

- PR reported that across the two legs of the event there were 20 players in total. This was a rather disappointing turnout, and itself the main cause of the aforementioned Competitions Review.
- Chris Davison was the Individual Winner, Zac Vane won the Grading Prize, while Bury won the team event (although this was by default, since no other teams were entered).

(ix) Congress Organiser – Bob Jones (Outgoing)

BJ circulated a copy of the accounts, which showed a small surplus. The accumulated surplus now stands at approximately £900. When BJ took on the event 16 years ago this stood at zero. There were 162 entrants, the second highest in the 16 years BJ has run the event. Entry was very even across the four sections, the largest being the Minor (50) and the smallest the Major (32). BJ offered copies of the cross tables to those present, noting that they featured a rare photo of PR.

(x) Congress Director – John Wickham (Incoming)

- The 2015 event will again take place at the Apex, which has been booked for 24th and 25th October. We initially thought we'd received a windfall with a price reduction of £800, but although this had already been queried, it turned out to be an error.
- Due to ECF raising pay-to-play fees, we have also made equivalent increases in the entry fees. As ever, we will need a good number of volunteers to assist with setting up on the Saturday morning.
- We are also looking for additional sponsors. If anyone has any leads these should be communicated to JWi and/or SL. AH was able to confirm that Music Sales would indeed be continuing to sponsor the event, at approximately the same level. NH queried whether Bury council might be able to offer a grant. BJ responded that the council had backed the event some years ago, and that it was probably worth investigating this again. OB questioned whether, in a period of public sector cuts, supporting chess was likely to be amongst their priorities.

(xi) Games of the Season – Jon Crowe

Again, having received no report from JC we were not in a position to make any definitive statements on the standings in the Games of the Season competition. PK confirmed that some games had certainly been sent to JC for inclusion. SL noted that at this stage normally the judging hadn't taken place and that results would only be available for the Jamboree. On VA's suggestion, if that looks unlikely, we will ask for the games to be forwarded to the incoming Match Secretary.

Action: OB to liaise with JC to check on progress in the Game of the Season competition. Entries should be forwarded to PR if JC is not able to carry out this role.

4. Election of Officers

With SL indicating that he would step down from the role of secretary after discharging his duties in relation to the 2014-15 season, CRi intending to stand for the newly vacant position of Press Officer, and the Goldsmith and Rapidplay both to be discussed later, OB observed that there are therefore seven confirmed roles in which the incumbent is willing to continue and, there being no additional nominations from the floor, moved to re-elect these en bloc. These were duly elected and are detailed in the "en bloc" rows in the table below.

In relation to the vacant positions, PR asked if the election of the Match Secretary might wait until after the discussion of one of the proposals, the outcome of which might influence whether he wanted to stand for the position. CRI stood unopposed for the role of Press Officer and was elected. No nominations for the role of Admin Secretary were forthcoming, but the meeting was encouraged to consider this and to contact OB or SL with any suggestions. OB noted that there will be little or nothing to do in that role until spring and that SL will be happy to liaise with his successor to facilitate a smooth transition.

Action: All to consider possible candidates for the role of Admin Secretary and contact OB or SL with any suggestions.

For ease of reference, although some elections happened later in the meeting, the full list of current members of the Executive is included below.

Elected	Role	Holder
En bloc	Chairman	Ole Bay-Petersen
En bloc	Vice-Chairman	Norman Hutchinson
En bloc	Treasurer	Paul Kemp
En bloc	Internet Officer	Tim Davison
En bloc	Grading Officer	Bob Jones
En bloc	Congress Director	John Wickham
En bloc	Congress Secretary	Steve Lovell
Individually	Press Secretary	Charles Richmond
Individually, later in the meeting	Ex-officio	Colin Roberts
Individually, later in the meeting	Match Secretary	Patrick Ribbands
Individually, later in the meeting	Goldsmith Organiser	Mark Szymanski
Individually, later in the meeting	Rapidplay Organiser	Patrick Ribbands
Vacant Post	Admin Secretary	

5. Honours

OB recounted the winners of the season's various competitions. These were as follows:

League Competitions

Competition	Winners	Captain
Division 1	Cambridge Examiners	David Redman
Division 2	Cambridge Oddfellows	Ole Bay-Petersen
Division 3	Bury F	Dick Myhill

Players of the Year

Competition	Winner	Score
Division 1	David Redman (Cambridge)	6W 6D 0L = 9/12 = 75%
Division 2	Paul Kemp (Linton)	7W 2D 0L = 8/9 = 88.89%
Division 3	John Cooper (Cambridge)	6W 2D 1L = 7/9 = 77.78%

Roger Goldsmith, Team Rapidplay & Jamboree

Competition	Winners	Captain
Goldsmith Division 1	Cambridge Masters	Stephen Pride
Goldsmith Division 2	Cambridge Students	Austin See
Rapidplay Team Winners	Bury	Steve Lovell
Jamboree	Cambridge A	Akito Oyama, David Redman, Austin See, John Daugman

Individual Rapidplay

Title	Winner	Club
Individual Winner	Chris Davison	Ely Beet
Grading Prize	Zac Vane	Bury St Edmunds

Trophies will be presented at the Jamboree as usual. OB queried the whereabouts of each of the trophies. SL confirmed that he had all of them in his possession other than that for the Division 1 champions, though it later emerged that he also lacked the trophy for the Jamboree winners. BJ queried whether there was now a trophy for the Goldsmith Division 2 winners, and SL confirmed that he had a spare trophy in his possession which the Executive had agreed could be put to that purpose.

Action: SL and OB to liaise about the missing trophies, both with Cambridge teams.

6. Proposals from the Clubs and the Executive

Before moving to the proposals on the agenda, BJ brought a request that the AGM – as allowed under rule 2.2 – permit the Bury F team to remain in Division 3 rather than being promoted. This had the approval of CRI, the secretary of the Newmarket club, whose team would otherwise be relegated from Division 2. The Bury F team would not be sustainable in Division 2 and would fold if promoted, but would be a useful outlet for upcoming juniors in Division 3.

There followed some discussion about the status of the promotion and relegation rules and whether, given the frequency with which they are put aside at AGMs, other arrangements for entering teams into the leagues might not be preferable. TD suggested that perhaps clubs could at the AGM simply suggest how many teams they wished to enter and into which divisions. PK and others argued against a complete overhaul of the divisional structure, stating that these matters are rightly dealt with on a case by case basis.

PK queried whether rather than not relegating Newmarket, to keep Bury F in Division 3, Stowmarket would like to be promoted in Bury's place. VA declined this invitation.

The AGM approved BJ's proposal, and therefore for the 2015-16 season Bury F will remain in Division 3 and Newmarket Stallions will remain in Division 2.

(i) Ex Officio Members of the Executive

Partly motivated by the desire not to lose the expertise of CRO should there be no vacancy for an Ex-officio member of the Executive, the Executive brought a proposal to increase its flexibility by

altering rule 1.4 to allow up to two Ex-officio members. This meeting approved this proposal, and went on to firstly elect CRO as the first Ex-officio member and then to discuss other possible candidates for the second vacancy. VA declined CRI's invitation to put herself forward for this role. The rule now begins:

The League Executive will consist of the League's officers, together with up to two ex officio members elected at the AGM.

Action: Rule change to be included in the League Handbook

(ii) Estimated and Category F Grades

BJ and SL outlined the proposals in question. PR pointed out that the proposal to alter rule 5.3 should be considered first, since it would affect the wording we were voting on for rule 5.2. In relation to rule 5.3, we were considering the proposal to treat new category F grades, based on between 5 and 8 games, as estimates subject to alteration for league purposes (eligibility, nomination and board order). The meeting approved this proposal. Rule 5.3 therefore becomes:

Where a player is ungraded the club secretary will provide the Match Secretary with an estimated grade, which should be used for the purposes of these rules. The estimate should be based on all known data, including old grades from a previous list and games held by the grader. Should the grader consider the estimate to be significantly different to the player's performance (either when first submitted or during the course of the season) he will notify the Match Secretary and club secretary, and the grader's estimate should be used thereafter. The grader will treat all category F grades, which are based on fewer than nine games, as estimated grades and therefore subject to revision.

Action: Rule change to be included in the League Handbook

In relation to rule 5.2, we went on to consider a proposal under which estimated grades (including category F grades) from the beginning of the season would be superseded by re-estimated grades or new official grades (other than category F grades) issued later in the season. The meeting also approved this proposal, and Rule 5.2 therefore becomes:

For the purposes of nomination and eligibility, a player's grade will be his category A to E standard play grade at the start of the season, and this continues to apply after the ECF publishes mid-season grades. However, a week after the new grading list is published the latest grade should be used to determine board order (subject to the permitted 10 point tolerance). A person without a category A to E standard play grade at the start of the season will be given an estimated grade, which will be used for nomination, eligibility and board order until either the grader revises it or the player acquires a category A to E grade in the mid-season ECF list, whereupon the new grade will be used after a week's delay.

Action: Rule change to be included in the League Handbook

(iii) Rights of Officers and the Executive

- The Executive brought a proposal to limit the powers of individual members of the Executive by changing rule 1.2 so that proposals for the consideration of the AGM should be brought either by clubs or by the Executive as a whole rather than by clubs or Executive officers.
- SL and PR made the case against this change, stating that it was not necessary to change this rule as it had rarely been used in that fashion and on the one occasion that it had been used that way, it served to highlight an issue (late confirmation of results), which might not have been given such attention in other circumstances. The net result of that additional attention for the issue seems to have been an improvement in the timeliness of result confirmation.
- OB said he was concerned that allowing officers to bring to the AGM proposals which had already been considered at the Executive and rejected there merely invited the rehearsing of a debate. It was also argued that an officer who had failed to persuade either his club or the executive to back his proposal, wasn't likely to gain support at the AGM.
- CRo expressed concern that the current rule gives individuals an inappropriate amount of influence over proceedings.
- OB remarked that the Executive properly makes its decisions as a 'body' and that this should be reflected in the rules.
- PK expressed sympathy with the opposition to this rule change on the grounds that the current arrangements disenfranchise individuals. He would like to see individuals, including those not on the Executive more involved and so make the decisions of the AGM more open to influence from outside the Executive.
- CRo and BJ noted that the current rules actually preclude the current practice of the Executive bringing proposals 'as a body' since (according to the rule) they must be brought by individual officers (or clubs). PK responded that such proposals may, as a legal fiction, be regarded as coming from an individual member of the Executive.
- Having debated the issues at some length, the proposal didn't secure a majority verdict, and the rule in question therefore remains unchanged.
- With this decided, PR stood for election to the position of Match Secretary and was duly elected.

(iv) Disputes and Appeals

OB and SL outlined the Executive's proposal to expand the rules around disputes and appeals, giving improved guidance to the Match Secretary and Executive about how to conduct such matters and giving captains 14 days rather than 7 days in which to appeal the Match Secretary's decision. The meeting approved this proposal. Rules 10.1 and 10.2 now read as follows:

10.1: The Match Secretary will adjudicate on any dispute, having obtained statements from the players involved and their respective captains. If necessary the Match Secretary may also seek advice from external sources. Should the dispute involve the Match Secretary's club(s) he will nominate another officer who is independent of both clubs (normally the Chairman, Vice-Chairman or Administrative Secretary) to handle the dispute on his behalf.

10.2: A captain may appeal against a decision of the Match Secretary or his nominee within 14 days of being notified of the decision. The Executive will decide the matter after consulting the captains involved and the Match Secretary (or his nominee). The Executive may also wish to involve an independent ECF arbiter, whose verdict will guide the Executive. No member of the clubs involved may vote on the appeal. The Executive's decision will be final.

Action: Rule changes to be included in the League Handbook

(v) Competitions Review

- SL outlined the reasons for undertaking such a review: the RGT has now run in a two division structure for three seasons, and the success of this format needed to be assessed. The Rapidplay has been poorly supported for the last two seasons. The Jamboree was added, partly because some believed that support for that event has also been declining, but mainly because the Executive believed it was worth considering all the events "as a whole" rather than each being taken in isolation. The comments that follow are organised by tournament.
- BJ, TD, and PK all spoke in favour of the RGT in its current form. The event seemed to be better supported than the previous format. CRo noted that the figures circulated included only the final year of the previous format and suggested that while current numbers were higher than those, over the longer term they still represented a poor level of support.
- BJ commented that he likes the Jamboree in its current form but would like it to be a graded event, since under the ECF membership scheme this should have no cost implications for the clubs or the league. TD noted that historically the Jamboree hadn't always been held at Bury, but used to be hosted by the winners of the previous year's event. VA spoke against having the event graded, since it allowed people to take the event less seriously which is welcome after a summer away from chess. SL noted that while grading this event should not have financial implications, it would make things considerably more difficult to organise since results would need reporting, and would require a very early policing of ECF membership which might prove difficult. PK noted that if we weren't concerned about grading we could opt for a time handicap system. BJ commented that time handicaps were difficult due to the small number of people capable of setting digital clocks appropriately. While the meeting generally seemed to feel that the Jamboree continues to be well supported, CRo suggested that appearances were misleading as a large proportion of entries are from Bury and even then the number of teams entering the event was somewhat lower, in his view, than in years gone by.
- BJ, PK and others agreed that the Rapidplay is in poor health. CRi suggested that holding the event very soon after the end of the season might improve take up. PK said he'd like to see the event held on a single day at a weekend rather than over two evenings, but spoke in favour of the "Ribbands Pairing System"
- Given the limited time available to formulate or discuss options, pending a fuller consultation and review to be undertaken during the year, the group agreed to vote on the retention, for at least a season, of the RGT and Jamboree in their current formats. The meeting approved those continuations, including the re-election of MS at RGT organiser.
- PR noted that a decision about the Rapidplay was not so pressing. NH suggested a survey of the BACL membership via a simple question to be answered by as many as possible. This

would ask whether people were more likely to participate in the Rapidplay competition in its current form or if run on a single day. This suggestion was welcomed by the group and SL volunteered to create an online survey and make this available to the BACL membership via club secretaries.

- To avoid the possibility of a Rapidplay event without an elected official to run it, the meeting moved to elect PR to continue in his role as Rapidplay organiser, taking charge of any event which may take place. PR was duly elected.

Action: SL to create an online survey, circulate to the Executive for approval, and once finalised to club secretaries for distribution to all club members.

7. League and RGT Entries

Provisional entries into the league competitions were taken from club representatives. These were recorded as follows

Club	Division 1	Division 2	Division 3	RGT 1	RGT 2
Bury	2	2	3	2	1 (perhaps 2)
Cambridge	3	2	1	3 (perhaps 2)	0 (perhaps 1)
Ely	1	0	0	0	0
Linton	1	1	1	0	1
Newmarket	0	1	0	Perhaps 1	Perhaps 1
Stowmarket	0	0	1	0	0
Totals	7	6	6	4 (to 6)	2 (to 5)

Clubs were asked to confirm entries to PR and, for the RGT, to MS by the end of July. Along with numbers of teams secretaries should also confirm any additional constraints such as the number of fixtures a club can accommodate on a given club night and teams which shouldn't play in the same week. SL asked clubs also to confirm their venue and club night to other club secretaries as well as to PR and MS.

Action: Club secretaries to confirm or amend entries in the table above by contacting PR and MS, along with any constraints. Changes of venue or club night should be communicated to all secretaries.

8. Upcoming Events

The following upcoming events were noted

- The BACL Jamboree: Thursday 10th September 2015, 7:15pm at the Bury Venue
- The BACL Congress: 24/25 October 2015 at the Apex
- The Cambridgeshire Rapidplay: Sunday 11th October 2015 at Whittlesford Memorial Hall

9. Any other Business

No further business was brought to the attention of the meeting.

Close of Meeting - 10:03pm