

Minutes of the fifteenth Annual General Meeting of the New England Chess Club, held online via Zoom, on Thursday, 8th July, 2021.

1. The chairman, Paul Hanks opened the meeting at 8.08pm and thanked everyone for attending on Zoom as, due to the pandemic, it was the only way we could hold the meeting.
2. There were seven members present: Paul Hanks, Mahmoud Tarabad, Phil Turp, Paul Spencer, Peter Walker, Ray Ilett and Chris Russell. Apologies for absence were received from Ed Knox, Ron Jones, and Norman Wedley.
3. Paul Hanks reported that Steve Wozniak had died last season and said that we should take a moment to remember him. He had been a good and faithful friend to the club right up to the end and we will miss him.
4. The minutes of the fourteenth meeting had been circulated before the meeting and were approved as a true record. (Chris pointed out that Paul had recorded the meeting and offered to send a copy to anyone who wanted to challenge his record!)

5. *Matters arising from minutes*

- 5.1 Paul said that due to the lockdown, the 2020 CCCA AGM had decided to end the season's competitions with final positions decided on a points per game basis and as a result, our results are as reported in the October 2020 newsletter. We came fifth in Div.1, fourth in Div.2 and the Cavaliers and Patriots were second and third respectively in the 550 league.
- 5.2 It had been proposed that we add a club history to our website, but this had not happened. He proposed to carry forward the action to next year.
- 5.3 There were no other matters arising.

6. *Treasurers Report*

- 6.1 Chris said that there was nothing to report as we had not spent any money! We were paid up at the Lancaster Club until April 2021, but they are now closed, and so we will have to write off all of the RAFA fees. As they are a charity, he was not going to argue about that.
- 6.2 We currently have circa 15-18 members but cannot be certain of numbers for the new season. Once we start OTB chess again, we will need to charge for membership. The cheapest venue we have currently found is £20/night, and for a thirty-week season, that will cost £600. Based on our membership, Chris thought that fees would have to go up to £50 to accommodate that.
- 6.3 The Yard of Ale pub on the Oundle Road is prepared to accommodate us, at £20/night. It appears to be an attractive venue, though there is a slight question mark on noise. One alternative is that we could share the Bridge Club venue with Peterborough, but they are paying double that and their fees have risen to £100/year as a result. Chris thought that was too expensive as an increase. He hoped that further options would become available as the lockdown eased, but that at the very least, we could reasonably use the Yard of Ale for the coming season.

- 6.4 We have a current balance in the Nationwide of £276-72. This, plus a new membership fee of £50 should be enough to fund the club for the season, in the probable worst case of only 10 members joining. We have enough equipment, and CCCA fees and scoresheets, etc. are only incidental costs. But our room fee governs how much we will have to pay to play chess.
- 6.5 It was therefore proposed that we raise membership fees to £50, based on the assumption that we use the Yard of Ale this season. We can look for alternatives in the meantime. Phil pointed out that Cambridge charge £90 per member, so we would still be a cheap option. There was some general discussion on individual members and their likelihood to re-join. With a worst case of approximately 10 and best of 20 members, setting fees to £50 was consequently agreed for next season.
- 6.6 Chris said that he had enjoyed Paul's Zoom masterclasses and would like for these to continue, but this was dependent on finding the money to pay for the licence (£12+VAT/month). Paul had proposed £1 each per session, which meant Chris, Paul and Mahmoud paying circa £38, Phil £24 and Ed £12 based on attendance. Chris hoped to be able to use some small part of the £50 membership fee towards this to encourage others to participate, but he also thought that once the pandemic was over, we would only need the Zoom licence over the summer months, when masterclasses used to run. Mahmoud said that if necessary, we could still use Zoom free for short (40 minute) meetings and Paul pointed out that once we were able to meet in person we could reasonably dispense with the licence.

7. Match Captains' Reports

- 7.1 There were no OTB team reports, due to the pandemic.
- 7.2 As the online team captain, Paul Spencer said that he had run 2 teams in the Icen league. We had struggled in Division 1 but the second team in Division 3 had fared a bit better. Mostly we have had a good turn-out, but numbers are reducing now that the summer is here. Paul was happy to continue as long as wanted, but a summer break might refresh interest. It is hoped that we will be able to meet OTB again in September. There is a new league starting soon. Paul will send out a request for volunteers, and will run new online matches dependent on interest.

8. Tournament Secretary's Report.

Paul had submitted a report:

- 8.1 A Handicap Tournament was not possible online due to the lack of such a feature on the available websites.*
- 8.2 The Problem Night went ahead online on 22nd September and attracted 6 entrants (i.e. 3 pairs). Ed Knox and Mahmoud Tarabad were winners. Please note that this was Steve Wozniak's final club event.*
- 8.3 A consultation game took place during the Masterclass sessions and at the Christmas Special.*
- 8.4 Before Inter-Club matches began, a World Cup-style competition was contested by 8 players from June to October 2020 and was successfully completed - Paul Hanks beating Paul*

Spencer in the final, reversing the result at the group stage and Mahmoud Tarabad edged out Chris Russell to claim the Plate.

8.5 *A Ladder competition was organised online but did not prove popular with only 1 game completed.*

8.6 *The Online Club Championship was started in October but by then, there were weekly rapid-play tournaments and the Icen League competing for time. It proceeded slowly and thanks must go to those who completed their games. However, with only 3 rounds undertaken incompletely over 9 months, it has effectively withered away.*

8.7 *The weekly online rapid-play tournaments were aggregated over a number of competitions (usually a month's duration) and so far, Ray Ilett has topped 5, Peter Walker 4 and Paul Spencer, Ed Knox and Paul Hanks 1 apiece.*

8.8 Chris said that both Paul H and Paul S had done fantastic jobs and were to be commended for keeping the club going online while we have been unable to meet. This view was endorsed by the meeting.

8.9 Ray asked about ECF membership. Chris said that we would need to renew membership in September to coincide with the resumption of OTB chess.

9. Website Manager report

9.1 Phil Turp said that our website attracted around 7000 hits last year, some 30% lower than last year, but still very popular. Paul's monthly newsletter gets most attention, along with the main page. Phil said that he has reorganised the site to make it easier to keep up to date. It should also be more responsive. He has now downloaded all of the data used from Dave Wild's site to cover that being retired, but Phil said that he had learned that this had been delayed for two years. Chris replied that he had been told at the EACU AGM that Norfolk would still be using it this year and hoped to be able to do the same.

9.2 Phil is creating an index, so that the site can be searched and individual games located. A photo gallery will be added, plus whatever anyone else can suggest. (Action CR/PH/NW Supply the old Perkins club history to Phil for inclusion.)

9.3 Paul asked if Phil had all of the newsletters. Phil thought he had. He said that individual game records, unannotated would help with creating the index. Phil was thanked for his efforts on the website as it clearly helps attract attention to our club. Phil said he hoped the site functioned better now and would be easier to hand on to a successor (though we are not letting him off that easily!)

10. Chairman's Report

Paul thanked everybody that had contributed to getting through a difficult year. We have managed to keep running online chess under difficult circumstances. Phil said that getting Chris Ross to contribute to the masterclasses had been a real coup for Paul and he was to be congratulated. Mahmoud thought that the masterclasses had worked even better online, with Fritz replacing the magnetic board. Paul admitted that up front preparation was easier electronically.

11. Club Policy / Coronavirus issues

Paul proposed having a coronavirus contact to deal with all things related to the pandemic, as a safeguard once we return to OTB chess (See appendix). Several people expressed the desire not to wear a mask while playing chess, but it was pointed out that we would have to follow the rules of the host venue. However, it was felt to be a good idea to have some measures in place to reassure less confident players when returning to OTB chess. After some discussion the meeting agreed to adopt Paul's proposal.

Using the Yard of Ale as our new venue was discussed. Paul and Chris have seen their function room and both thought it was adequate to use for a trial period, but we will arrange a Wednesday night excursion (after 19th July) to give members the opportunity to make up their own mind. We have made no commitment, and if problems arise, we may have to consider finding somewhere else. It is to be hoped that once the pandemic eases our options in that respect will improve. Mahmoud suggested that we take some sets to do an impromptu tournament when we go.

Paul said that we will have to canvas members to determine squads. Mahmoud proposed that we had one team in each league, i.e., an A team, a B team, and one 550 team. This was felt to be reasonable, but we potentially have 2 new keen members so it is possible that we will need an extra 550 team once we have confirmed numbers. Phil pointed out that it is likely that our opponents will lose numbers, and this could lead to reduced fixtures anyway.

It was finally agreed that we would enter a minimum of 3 teams, with a second 550 team if and league numbers allow. Paul also proposed that we enter 2 Fenland KO teams, an A team and a 550 team. This was agreed.

Aside from the league, we will organise a club championship and other competitions as fit into the fixture list. Chris expressed a desire for extending the OTB club championship as far as possible in preference to extending online chess. Most members preferred to get back to OTB chess, but Paul Spencer said he would be happy to run an internet team if there was interest. Mahmoud thought that we should retain an online presence, which would help attract new members. Paul said he would continue to ask for online volunteers. This was agreed, but it was hoped that it would not lead to some of us having too many chess commitments.

12. Election of Officers

Chris briefly took the chair while Paul was re-elected as chairman (unopposed). Ed Knox did not wish to stand as B team captain, but would be prepared to run a 550 team if asked. All other committee members were happy to stand again. Chris agreed to be B team captain, with Ed replacing him as 550 team captain. Mahmoud will run the other 550 team (if there is one.)

It was then agreed to re-elect the committee en-bloc as follows. Hence, the following posts were elected, all unopposed: -

Chairman:	P. Hanks
Secretary:	C. Russell
Treasurer:	C. Russell
Website manager:	P. Turp
First team Captain:	R. Ilett
Second team captain:	C. Russell
550 league Captains:	E. Knox, (M. Tarabad)
Internet Captain:	P. Spencer

FKO Captains:

R. Ilett, E. Knox, (M. Tarabad)

Tournament Secretary:

P. Hanks

13. Recruitment

The hope was expressed that the Yard of Ale being on a major bus route would help us to recruit. With the issue being raised, nobody expressed concerns over getting to the new venue and its central location was thought to be a benefit over Yaxley. But we will have to go back to our system of drivers providing lifts as needed.

14. Any Other Business

The Cambridgeshire Chess Association AGM will be held next Wednesday on 14th July. We will report back the outcome.

There being no other business, the chairman closed the meeting at 9.42pm.

Minutes prepared by

Signed by

C.J. Russell
Secretary

P. Hanks
Chairman

Appendix: New England Chess Club Covid-19 Prevention Protocol

New England Chess Club shall: -

- designate two members as principal and reserve points of contact for matters concerning the Covid-19 pandemic. These nominees shall
 - liaise with the venue operators about any local procedures
 - stay abreast of developments in recognisable symptoms
 - circulate venue compliance measures, the symptoms and any subsequent changes to the membership
 - mandate members displaying symptoms, awaiting a test result or required to quarantine/self-isolate not to attend club events
 - be able to pass on information about testing and vaccination
 - notify the County Association of their contact details and responsibilities for onward forwarding to similar appointees at other clubs.
See <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>

- provide hand sanitiser for use on entry to the playing area
- maintain a register of everyone entering the playing area including contact details for visitors
- require members to inform the Covid designates immediately should they test positive for Covid-19 or strongly suspect infection due to their symptoms
- broadcast the potential for infection to all possible contacts on the register for the appropriate session and the Covid designate for any visiting team.

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Measures not included: -

Risk assessment and publication

Knowledge of cleaning and sanitisation schedule at the venue especially for common touch points e.g. handrails, door handles and table tops

Mitigation procedures in the playing area e.g. limiting numbers, one-way systems, barriers/screens, social distancing, side-by-side play, face covering, fresh air/ventilation, no raised voices, staggered starting, fixed subdivision bubbles

Restrictions for high-risk groups e.g. clinically extremely vulnerable, ...

Sharing common facilities e.g. scoresheets, pens

Reduced surface contact e.g. tidying your own litter and glasses

Separate travel