

Rugeley Chess Club



1968—2018

Fifty years of Rugeley Chess Club

A short history by Anthony Meakin, with contributions from
Matthew Carr and Mike Page

For up to date information about the club and daily puzzles, please visit the club's website at:

<http://www.rugeleychessclub.co.uk/>

Foreword

In 2018 Rugeley Chess Club celebrates its 50th year. When the club was first set up Rugeley had recently transitioned from rural market town to an industrial one with a new colliery and power station that dominated the landscape. The club has outlived them both but of course chess has changed beyond recognition too, thanks to computers and the internet. Clubs like Rugeley survive because their members still believe that face to face chess, whether competitive or just for fun, is worth preserving. Quite a few chess clubs have gone by the wayside in recent years, particularly the smaller ones, but we will be doing everything we can to ensure chess in Rugeley continues to thrive for the next 50 years.

Whilst the committee is very much focused on the future, it is also important that we remember and celebrate the past. Hence this pamphlet recording the memories of our longstanding and past members, thereby preserving information that goes back further than the last decade. That has already been well-documented thanks to our webmaster and secretary Catherine Hiley. We are fortunate that we still have as a member one of the original founders of the club - Mike Page - who was my predecessor as Chairman and is now an honorary life member. I am grateful to him and particularly to another longstanding member, our treasurer, Tony Meakin, who has gathered the material together.

We are proud to be the Staffordshire Chess Club of year in 2018 and we shall be celebrating with a rapidplay tournament and a social event later in the year. The tournament will be run by our very own International Arbiter Matthew Carr. It is open to all and will be held at Lea Hall on 7th April. If you are interested in chess and live anywhere near WS15, come and join us then and/or any Tuesday night.

Patrick Waller
Chairman, Rugeley Chess Club
January 2018



Rugeley Members at Scarborough

Introduction

2018 is the 50th anniversary of Rugeley Chess Club and the members will be holding a number of events to mark this occasion amongst other things an appearance at the Rugeley Charter Fair and the first ever Rugeley Chess Club rapidplay tournament on 7th April.

I started my life with Rugeley Chess Club in 1984. I had just started secondary school and then one Wednesday evening in September I was taken to the Rugeley Royal British Legion in Bow Street. Upon entering the room there were a number of 'men' gathered around a small table. My dad enquired 'is this the chess club?', then gestured in my direction. A few heads were raised and one solitary voice replied 'Yeah, leave him with us'.

For a couple years up to that point I had been playing games only against family members and school friends. From that time my family decided to find a local club for me to continue my education. All enquiries drew a blank until one day, without any warning, I was taken to a place which was to become significant for the next 10-15 years of my life.

The Beginning

Although a group of enthusiasts had been playing chess together for a some time beforehand, 1968 saw the official start of Rugeley Chess Club and the date attributed to this is 5th December although there was an article in the Rugeley Times in November 1968 forming with there first meeting being at The Red Lion at Brereton although their stay here was short lived and by 1969 they had moved to The Royal British Legion in Bow Street. The following year saw the Club commence its competitive activities when it joined the Wolverhampton and District Chess League where the Club entered three teams. Rugeley continues its membership today.

As the Club became established records show that an internal club competition was set up, this was a knock out tournament with players competing for Arthur Hyson trophy. The first winner was R. Evans in 1971. The competition continued until 1981. Also, 1980 saw the beginning of a separate competition – The Club Championship. This competition's first winner was Mike Page. However it did not last for very long, only running for about 3 years. The trophy still exists but is currently in a poor condition.



Press release from 1993 after a successful league season featuring past and present members



Press release from 2005 to encourage attract new members



Chess club draws with R.A.F. team

Rugeley Chess Club opened their season with the first team entertaining R.A.F. Cosford, one of the best sides in the service. The result was a 3-3 draw.

On board one, Rugeley 1st team captain R. Ewan, fell to a simple match while he was rushing to attack too soon and leaving his defence open.

On board five, D. Robinson had difficulties early on and lost after a hard fight back, while J. Machota had an easy win on the last board.

Rugeley's second team struggled against Wolverhampton 2nd team. Captain R. Hughes provided the strongest game after an all night struggle but finally fell. A Myson on board two attacked aggressively but fell along with R. Darling on board three. J. Newby on board four, found his opponent strong and finally went down, as did R. Baird on board five, resulting

in a loss for Rugeley by five clear boards.

Pictured is a typical scene in Rugeley British Legion Club on most Wednesday's with Rugeley Chess Club in action. The picture shows a game between Mr. A. Rotchell (left) and Mr. J. Shaw.

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October 1969 - Reporting on the league exploits of all of Rugeley's teams

Progressive chess club

Encouraging progress has been made since the Rugeley Chess Club was founded a year ago, reports its chairman, Mr. D. Heilbronn. The club proved so popular that it remained open during the summer.

"Initially it was anticipated that a lot of time would be spent teaching the game to non-players, but it was soon found that the standard of play was quite good," said Mr. Heilbronn.

"In preparation for the coming season we have run a club challenge league which has provided an incentive for competition, and has maintained the interest during the summer period."

The top three players are R. Ewan, D. Heilbronn and R. Baird. Mr Heilbronn said it was clear that the coming season would be an exciting one. "We have registered three teams in the Wolverhampton and District Chess League and in addition there will be inter-club competitions, including a trophy knock-out and an inter-club league championship," he added.

Mr Heilbronn said: "People interested are welcome to come along to the clubroom at the British Legion club on Wednesday evenings. As we are prepared to teach chess we are especially happy to welcome those who cannot play."

1969 - Describing the progress made a year after the club was formed

The 1980s

The early 1980's also saw the Club move to new locations as it relocated first to St Paul's Church and then to the Vine Public House, however, these clearly did not suit chess players as in 1983 they returned to the British Legion.

As mentioned previously, I joined the club in 1984. At this time the Club met on a Wednesday evening and had almost exclusive use of the main Lounge and apart from Bingo calls in the room next door it was a quite conducive environment for playing chess. From that time I have seen many changes in the club membership. When I first joined there was a regular turnout of around 6 – 8 people (all men of a similar age). As time has progressed the numbers have fluctuated significantly partly due to a change in culture, such as the ability to play on the internet and partly due to venue changes. The summer months can be particularly challenging and, on one occasion at our AGM there was just myself and Mike Page.

By 1989 membership had increased sufficiently to enter a second team in the Wolverhampton League with one of the first team regulars, Graham Leese stepping down from his place in the first team to lead a team of youngsters and beginners in their first competitive chess matches. At the time I was in hospital recovering from surgery so was given just two months to get ready for the start of the new season. It was during this period that Graham recruited my dad, Robert, to join the team as he had started to play the occasional game when he came to pick me up from the club.

My first competitive match for Rugeley Chess Club happened on a sunny September evening in 1989 and I was picked up by my new captain Graham to go to our opponents that evening who were Union Locks. We lost the match 3-2, but the two debutants in the team won their games. Union Locks were one of a number of clubs which were formed by members of works social clubs such as Goodyear, Birmingham Lucas and John Thompsons. Sadly many of these no longer exist due to the closure of many manufacturing works in the area. Other clubs which have gone since I have been playing for Rugeley are: Cannock, Penkrigde, RAF Cosford and West Midlands Police.

1990's

In the late 1990s our search for a new venue first led to a brief stay at Riley's Snooker Club on Brewery Street, this proved to be unpopular due to the unrealistic expectations of the Manager about the amount of additional revenue that would be required and also discussions over a rental charge for the room. This is a constant consideration for a small club with only a dozen or so members and so the search continued. Another member, Bill Hulley, lived very close to Lea Hall and was aware that the venue had a number of separate rooms which may be suitable. So Lea Hall officials were approached.

We began our stay at the new venue in the lounge, this was a large room and at the time was seldom used by other patrons however, time went on some people started to experience some difficulties with the lighting and the noise from the bar area. We were

On 4th April 1999 the Cannock Chess league was formed. This provided a slightly easier approach to League chess with a number of advantages such as:

- All teams were more local so less issues with long journeys to away matches.
- Time controls which means that all matches would finish on the same night without adjudications.
- Teams consisting only of four players making it easier for clubs to form teams and travel in one vehicle.

The league structure was controlled by a team's combined grading which encourages less experienced players and teams.

The New Millennium

A new century, saw the start of a new era. In 2001 Rugeley gained its first female member Catherine Ashton later (Hiley) who joined from neighbouring club Cannock. For a number of years now Catherine has been the Secretary of the club and the driving force behind many of its activities, both chess related and social.

Around the Country many chess players play at the weekend, and attend chess congresses. Over time I have attended many local events but in 2005, the then secretary, Mike Page asked if I would like to attend the Scarborough congress. This is one of largest weekend tournaments the Country (with over 300 participants) with the first game starting on the Friday evening and two further games on the Saturday and Sunday. Initially we would leave early on the Sunday to return home but now we stay for an extra night and return home on the Monday. Other members have also joined us on this excursion and in 2016 Mike, Catherine and myself all competed and returned home with an assortment of cash prizes.

With membership numbers consistently at around 10 or 12 for a few years talk at the AGM was about whether we should enter additional league teams in order to help the younger and less experienced players. In 2010 after deciding that such a commitment would be too great for such a small club we elected instead to opt for a Club Championship in which all completed games would be submitted to count towards a players grading played under match conditions. The format of the tournament divides all competitors into 2 pools with points being awarded, 3 points for a win and one for a draw and at the end of March the player in each pool with the most points play each other in a best of three games final.



1969. Rugeley members playing against each other after their league opponents did not show. Third up on the left hand side - current member Mike Page.

CHESH COMMUNITY' IS AIM OF GROUP

THE latest step in the growth of community spirit and interests in Rugeley was the formation this week of the Rugeley Chess Club in the Red Lion Inn, Brereton. First suggested only a few weeks ago in a letter to the "Times" the club has now obtained premises, a committee and enough equipment to establish itself.

But the thing which will make Rugeley Chess Club different from similar clubs in other towns is its policy. At the first full meeting on Tuesday the members decided that the aims of the club should be to "teach non-players to play and to coach established players to play better."

Clubs in other areas concentrate on expert players and league competition and most of them seem to "freeze out" the novices, said the club's chairman and founder Mr. D. W. Heilbronn. But Rugeley Chess Club will not be playing competitive chess for some time while they bring more outsiders into the game.

So the club is now open to all persons over the age of 18. The acting secretary, Mr. I. Gallately (Tel. Rugeley 2509) of 11, Toye Close, Rugeley has details of membership.

COACHING

Already the club has established its headquarters and games room at the Red Lion Inn in a room which Mr. Heilbronn claims is "ideal" for chess. Mr. Heilbronn and another keen player have already planned their programme to include a great deal of coaching of novices and they have discovered a former-world class player living in the area who is willing to coach those players of a higher standard.

For the first two seasons the club will be organising its own competition's, but eventually, says Mr. Heilbronn they have hope to have players of high standard who can represent the town in league matches.

Chess clubs are notorious for being tiny groups of utterly devoted and serious players, but the aim of the Rugeley Club is to establish a "chess community" in the town and the response after only two meetings is described as "very encouraging".

Chess players of any standard are invited to contact the secretary of the club or attend one of the weekly meetings at the Red Lion on Wednesdays starting at 7-30 p.m.

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The beginning of Rugeley Chess Club - The First Press Release November 1968

Rugeley Chess Club Venues

As previously detailed we have had to change our venue a number of times over the years. Here is a look at the places we have been housed in.

The Red Lion
Main Road
Brereton



The first documented home of the chess club in 1968.

The Royal
British Legion
Bow Street
Rugeley



The Rugeley branch was founded in November 1923 and was home of the chess club in the late 1960's and then returning in the early 1980's after a spell at two other

St. Pauls Church
Lichfield Street
Rugeley



After their initial stay at the British Legion the chess club moved to St Pauls Methodist Church.

The Vine Public
House
Sheepfair
Rugeley



This is said to be a former malt-house which provided a home to the club in the early 1980's.

Riley's Snooker
Club
Brewery Street
Rugeley



This was the shortest of our venues during the summer break and did not actually stage any league fixtures for the Club.



Lea hall Miners and Welfare Club is the current home of Rugeley Chess Club and has been now for around 20 years. It was suggested due to the number of separate rooms and the club to date has utilised a number of them

Gallery



The Arthur Hyson Trophy



The Original Club Championship Trophy



Rugeley Members at Scarborough in 2014

Members

Current Members (late 2017)

Matthew Carr - The current tournament secretary of the Club and President of the Wolverhampton and District Chess League.

Bob Edgar - When not doing battle across the board Bob can be found in a canoe or the goals of a local Hockey team.

Robert Fell - Joining as a junior member, Rob has been a member of the Club for many years and is the current captain of the Wolverhampton League Team.

David Hadley - Ever present and always full of stories from his travels around the world.

Catherine Hiley - Been with the Club for also 20 years and involved in all of the clubs activities. The current secretary.

Bill Hulley - Another member who has been with Club for many years and currently the highest graded player playing for the club.

Tony Meakin - The current club treasurer has been with the club for over 30 years.

Mike Page - The former Chairman is the only member of the club to have been there since the beginning.

Stephane Peddar - Previously a member with neighbouring club Stafford, he has joined us this year due to work commitments and to renew his passion for the game.

James Perks - Only been a member for a few years and enjoys other facilities Lea Hall has to offer such as the snooker tables.

Luke Sullivan - The current captain of the Cannock League Team. Luke has also initiated the Club's rapidplay competition to be played over the summer months.

Patrick Waller - The current Club Chairman joined us from Fareham in Hampshire. He and his wife, Jean, have provided the venue for the some of the Club's summer get togethers.

Previous Notable Members

Dave Amour - Rugeley's highest graded player reaching 180 ECF rating in July 2015, and the originator of the Club website.

Alan Dobson (deceased) - A former secretary who started a one man campaign to prove any position was drawable and generally succeeded.

Steve Heath - Winner of the Harold Bidgood Trophy 2005-6.

Paul Jackson - Vice-President of the Cannock League 2010-12.

John Montague - A valued member for a number of years starting the Rugeley News-

Stories

Past Members

In the early 1980s Rugeley Chess Club had a treasurer from South America, he decided to organise a jumble sale in the local church hall with the support of some of the other members at the time to raise club funds. The jumble sale was a great success raising a reported £150. However this money was never recovered and instead found its way to South America with the then treasurer and the rest of the club funds.

Another treasurer went to Thailand on holiday and upon his return said to then Chairman that that he was leaving the club but wasn't sure what the balance of the club accounts was, so a fifty pound note was thrust into the hand of Chairman and another treasurer departed.

Over the years there have only been a few junior members, one, Conor has joined us in Scarborough on a couple of occasions. The first year, although an enjoyable social event, the chess proved somewhat challenging for the youngster. After seeing a number of chances I feared the worst but was delighted (and surprised) when he informed me that he had won the game. With great pride and enthusiasm, a couple of the other members played through Conor's big moment only to find both players making a number of illegal moves, going un-noticed by his opponent.

Current Members

Current Tournament Secretary, Matthew Carr shares his first memory of the club:

In days of old, when Knights were bold and the Hiley thrust* hadn't been invented yet.

I have always blamed the ECF Junior Director Traci Whitfield for giving me my first job as an arbiter, however, I blame Rugeley Chess Club's John Montague for getting me into organising and keeping me in Chess.

John was the one when I joined my first chess club took me under his wing and taught me what he knew. My mentor, his lessons were always fun, taught me to be aggressive and how to set little traps for my opponent to fall into. Not only is his chess literature amazing, he always found a way to make it funny, I still have some of his booklets, his sure fire way to beat Fritz always amuses me. I used his method for creating booklets and tables for the Cannock League when I was its secretary.

If it wasn't for him and for all the players that make up the Chess Club providing me with such fun times, I wouldn't be the player I am, the arbiter I am or the person I am.

I wonder what he's doing now? Still finding ways to get out of doing the washing up maybe? I look forward to seeing him again someday.

One dark winter's night in the early 1990s Rugeley were scheduled to play West Midlands Police at Stourbridge. Team members were travelling in two separate cars but travelling together to minimise the chance of getting lost. After circling the ring road a number of times in an attempt to find the path to the venue I managed to lose sight of the other vehicle. In an attempt to re-join my team mates I inadvertently went down a one way street in the wrong direction, where there was a waiting Police Officer who stopped me but after hearing my explanation issued me with words of advise and directions to the venue.

Midland Red Bus Depot. Before the advent of satellite navigation finding the venue could be part of the fun and during one summers evening on a trip to play Warley Quinbourne at the Midland Red Bus depot we set off particularly early knowing that the venue was a fair distance away. Some of team had travelled independently. We arrived in the town in ample time but were confused by the lack of signage and understanding of where we were passing a coach of day trippers at the crossroads as we did so. We followed the written instruction we had been given we went round the area again... and again, and again by this time we were somewhat late and confused and the coach of day trippers were still at the crossroads. Eventually, by accident, we arrived at the venue to a stern telling off from our team mates and only 5 minutes or so to make our 30 moves. At the end of the match we started on our way home find the coach gone, revealing a sign to the Midland Red Bus Depot, our desired destination.

Social Evenings

Alongside the Chess playing Rugeley Chess Club prides itself in having a number of social events. Over the last few years these have included Christmas and end of season meals, summer gathering and fun nights such as lightning tournaments and one night events where players are given a time handicap.

Neighbouring club Lichfield hold a number of events such as a lightening tournament and a time handicap event. Rugeley members are often invited, and attend these fun evenings at Lichfield Chess Club.

Friendly Matches

In previous seasons Officials in the club have organised pre-season friendly matches with neighbouring clubs including Stafford and Penkridge. Historically in the early eighties matches were arranged with Sudbury and Featherstone prisons.

County Representation

Staffordshire Chess runs a number of teams for players to compete at County level. For a number of years various members have represented Staffordshire County at a number of grading levels and helped Staffordshire to achieve national honours such as County Champions and runners up.

Accolades

County

2010 – Staffordshire chess club of the year

2018 – Staffordshire chess club of the year

Wolverhampton & District Chess League

Club Trophies

Division 3 Champions – 1998

Division 4 Champions – 1993

Summer League Champions – 1998

Humphries Cup – 2011

Individual trophies

Rock Cup – Bill Hulley – 1993-4, 2000-01

Harold Bidgood Trophy – Steve Heath 2005-6

Cannock and District Chess League

Division 2 Champions – 2000

Division 3 Champions – 2007, 2011, 2016