

## **English Chess Federation Annual Award Scheme 2024**

### **Small Club of the Year**

#### **Submission by Radcliffe and Bingham Chess Club**

In 2023/24 Radcliffe and Bingham Chess Club (RBCC), a small chess club based in the south-east corner of Nottinghamshire, celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with probably the most successful year in its history.

#### **Strong Growth in Membership**

During the year RBCC's fully paid membership increased from 12 to 20 thanks to local advertising, an updated website and word-of-mouth. We have been pleased to welcome several new members from other clubs who appreciate our friendly, enthusiastic and supportive environment; they now consider it "home".

To promote diversity and to acknowledge the cost of living, we also have four members on discounted membership rates.

#### **Club Nights Extended to All Year-round**

Traditionally club nights were held only during the league season; however, since 2022 we now continue to meet during the summer 'off-season'. This has attracted new members and supports our host venue, the Royal British Legion social club, an important part of the local community in Radcliffe-on-Trent.

#### **All-inclusive Club Championship**

We run our club championship on a time control handicap basis. This boosts participation and usually results in a different winner each year.

#### **Active Participation in Local Competitions**

We like to 'punch above our weight' in competitions organised by the Nottinghamshire Chess Association (NCA). At the Nottingham Rapidplay in February 2024 we fielded 16 players, almost 10% of the total entry. We also contributed an arbiter to the event. Likewise, at the recent Nottinghamshire County Championship RBCC members comprised almost one-fifth of the total number of participants. Pleasingly, strong representation is occasionally matched with success over the board, e.g. with Marcel Taylor winning the Notts Under-1850 Championship.

During the 2023/24 season we entered five teams in the NCA league, one more than the previous season. Only one club, Gambit, fields more teams.

Further afield, we compete in the end-of-season Anstey Jamboree with clubs from Leicestershire and Derbyshire and during the pandemic we played online matches against clubs from around the country.

## **Promotion and Development of Chess in Nottinghamshire**

The club makes a vital contribution to the promotion and development of chess in the city of Nottingham and its county. Two of our members, Nick London and Stuart Humphreys, are tutors for Chess in Schools and Communities, teaching chess to over 100 children across five inner city and rural primary schools; in fact, they are the charity's only tutors in the county.

In July 2023, to help mark the Centenary of the NCA, members of the club played a leading role in organising the first-ever ChessFest in Nottingham city centre that attracted over 500 members of the public.

In November 2023, under the auspices of the NCA, RBCC's chairperson, Nick London, organised the Nottingham GM Invitational and Junior Invitational tournaments.

Club members have been prominent in donating prize money and providing loss guarantees to tournaments run by the NCA. Further, Nick and Marcel are trustees of the Nottinghamshire Chess Foundation, a charitable organisation providing financial support and grants to develop and improve chess participation and achievement in the area.

## **Vibrant Junior Section**

During the league season RBCC runs a Junior Section in the early evening before the main club night. Local schoolchildren receive group and individual coaching for a nominal fee of £1 per session. In 2023/24 these sessions raised over £350, up 50% on the previous year. The funds are reinvested to enter the juniors in the Delancey UK Chess Challenge and to subsidise their travel to the annual ChessFest in London. We were particularly pleased that in February 2024 one of our juniors, Harry Stanley, won the Nottinghamshire County Under-9 Championship.

## **Launch of Newsletter to Educate and Entertain Members**

In October 2023 the club launched its first-ever newsletter, *En passant*, issued fortnightly during the league season. It supplements team captains' match reports and features positions, annotated games and curios from the world of elite GM chess. *En passant* uses affectionate nicknames to help hide members' blushes at their blunders and to contain their egos when their masterpieces are featured.

The newsletter serves an important role in providing educational content whilst creating a community spirit within the club.

Examples of *En passant* and a match report are attached to this submission.

To round off the year, RBCC's annual dinner was held in the Wheatsheaf Inn, Bingham, the venue where the club first met. We were delighted to be able to make a Special Award for Outstanding Contribution to former club captain Stephen Morley, who has been a member ever since on that very first club night 50 years ago.

**Supporting Statement**  
**by Neil Graham, President, Nottinghamshire Chess Association**

As President of the Notts Chess Association, I write to support the application made by our member club Radcliffe & Bingham Chess Club.

Having been involved in chess administration for longer than I care to remember, I have seen many clubs start, flourish and then fold. There have been dozens of these in Nottinghamshire especially those situated in small towns & villages across the county. Similarly, clubs associated with workplaces such as Raleigh, Players and Boots that once thrived have now disappeared. It is therefore a pleasure to see that Radcliffe & Bingham are celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

To be a success a club must not depend on just one individual and the Radcliffe club has had a succession of members who have taken up office within the Notts Chess Association over the years and indeed at the recent Annual General Meeting of the Association we find that two of the primary NCA roles (Secretary & Treasurer) elected were Radcliffe & Bingham members.

I have read their submission to the Committee and wholeheartedly endorse their application.