

History

Trophy Winners 1885 to 2010

Compiled by Steve Richardson (County Secretary 1998 to 2002)

Updated by Syd Cassidy (competitions controller) in 2010

Background

The "Trophy Winners" compilation provided in this report is to fill a gap in the County archive for which we have no previous compiled record of team and individual winners of County events. However, we need to understand the history of the Cumbria Chess Association (CCA) and its predecessor associations in order to represent clearly the past club and individual champions. In order to reflect on this, I draw heavily on "A Short History" by Malcolm Armstrong, an account also used in the Northern Counties Chess Union Centenary handbook in 1999. I also acknowledge the Whitehaven Library archive that houses the CCA records up to 1997. It is a good source of data, but it does require some patient trawling. There are numerous people who contributed to getting lists compiled of past winners from the trophies and checking consistency on issues like the Junior Trophy mix-up, of which there is more later, so if I miss anyone from the following list of contributors, my apologies: Thanks to Syd Cassidy, Reg Broadbent, Tony Baker, Jonathan Erskine and Trevor Blower for some of the more lengthy tasks.

Cumbrian Chess

The early history of chess in Cumbria is written largely by those in the former Cumberland region. What happened to the winners of Trophies in the Westmorland and Furness areas, and indeed the trophies, after the merger of those associations is not well known and may stay forever concealed in history. For those who read this from the Westmorland and Furness areas, I hope someone will feel galvanised to do some historical research and find out what happened before the mergers in 1938 and 1953 respectively. For those in Cumberland, remember that the early wins were in a much smaller geographical area than exists today.

While organised chess, playing for a trophy, started in 1886, the history of chess in Cumberland goes back much further. Records of organised chess show the game was played at the Mechanic's Institutes of Whitehaven and Workington, Carlisle Library and the Athenaeum Club in Maryport in the 1840s. The first actual chess club was formed in Carlisle in 1870, who contested their first chess match in 1871 against a group of players from Whitehaven. In 1883, further clubs were started in Maryport, Cockermouth and Whitehaven. Together with Carlisle, these four teams provided representatives in Cumberland's first regional match against a team from Newcastle and Gateshead on the 8th March 1884, history recording the away team won 13.5-10.5. At a meeting on the 9th August 1884 the Cumberland County Chess Association was formed. The first victory for the County was on 20th February 1886 in a 16.5-13.5 win over a team from Bradford.

The league match between Workington and Maryport in 1888 could well have been the world's first to take place by telephone.

Cumberland was represented at a meeting in Manchester on the 28th January 1899 in which representatives from Northumberland, Westmorland, Durham, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire formed the Northern Counties Chess Union. Cumberland played in the NCCU events until 1907 until travel became a burden and a 47 year gap existed before the association played again. As travel was a problem, correspondence chess offered a solution and the first match in 1904/5 against Northumberland resulted in a narrow victory 14-13. The association ceased to function during the 1st World War and did not resume until 1923.

In 1938 Cumberland merged with Westmorland Chess Association. Around 1953, the Furness area joined, after an agreed departure from Lancashire, to form the Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness Chess Association, to be renamed the Cumbria Chess Association in 1974.

The CCA events and trophies

Within the County there are numerous trophies played for under the auspices of the CCA. Those listed in this current report are events and competitions directly funded and supported by the CCA as County competitions on an annual basis. It is worth noting that other Congresses and Competitions have existed outside this in the past and still do exist in the County, including at present the South Lakes Congress, the Austin Friars Quickplay and the John Wood Memorial Trophy between Kendal and Windermere. These have their own recorders and I would like to think that a history of these events will be separately added to the CCA history at some stage.

In all the records listed, the date records the year in which the trophy was won, hence a cup won in the 1999-2000 season will be recorded as won in 2000.

1. Team Championships and trophies

The leagues have always been divided into one or more hierarchical divisions, the winner of Division 1 becoming the County Champions. The presence of the lower divisions were always subject to numbers and while Division 1 was first contested in 1885, it was not until 1927 that Division 2 was added and then Division 3 appeared in 1977.

The First division contests the Cumberland Chess Association Challenge Cup. This is a silver chalice standing on top of a wooden block. The cup itself is inscribed with the earliest winners and the silver band on the wooden support holds the inscriptions of all subsequent club winners, combining to give a record since 1885. This listing is the basis of the information in this report and has been checked to be correct as far back as records allow.

The Second division is somewhat more intriguing. The early results are listed on what is called the "Junior Trophy". In 1927 Junior did not mean second division, but those players who formed teams in which their members were under the age of 30. Yet, as there was no second division at the time, it would be picking fault not to assume this to be a second division of sorts and the results are included as such. Post-2nd World War we can assume that the second division is more clearly defined along the lines played up to the year 2002. However, during the mid-1990s, an understandable mistake led to the trophy being mistaken as a truly "junior" team

trophy for under 18s! The CCA decided a new trophy was required and the second division shield was purchased for the new winners. So in summary, the winners as recorded here should be seen as "Under 30 year olds" for 1927-1939 and as a true second division for 1947 onwards.

The Third division was first played in 1977. This division was played for sporadically up to 1987 and then consistently through 1990 to 2005. A decline in the number of clubs and teams has occurred and this has led to the suspension of division 3: Workington, Millom, North Copeland and Alston Moor chess clubs disappeared altogether, several clubs reduced the number of teams entered and Keswick and Whitehaven decided they could not raise a team to play in Saturday fixtures which is the norm in Cumbria. The competition is played for the Cumbria Shield.

The final team trophy was inaugurated in 1994 as an annual team knock-out event played on a handicap basis according to the relative grades of the teams and players. The rules are too complex to go into here, but are laid out within the current constitution. The Whitaker Handicap Trophy was an engraved board and set in a presentation case in memory of a long-serving member of the Arnside chess club. It was returned to Arnside in 2008 and a shield is now used.

2. Individual Championships and trophies

The County Major competition is played for at the CCA County Championships. It is open to all members of the CCA and has been contested since 1902. Thus this report marks the centenary in years of this competition. The trophy is a 21cm high Castle on a 7cm base. Its complete title is the "Cumberland County Chess Association - In memory of John Higgins of Workington, for many years champion of Cumberland - 1902", or more simple the "Castle Trophy". It is in hallmarked silver and in a wooden box.

The County Minor is also played for at the CCA County Championships. It has an upper grade limit that has varied over the years and has most recently been played at U125 and U130 levels, the latter being preferred recently. The event was first contested in 1924. The trophy is a solid silver horse figure with a silver stand and silver shields on a black plinth. The total height is 25cm. The "Knight" trophy was donated by the Keswick Hotel.

In 1998, a new U100 event was also introduced at the County Championships. It is played for the "Greenhalgh Trophy", an engraved board and chess set in a case.

3. Junior team championships and trophies

The County has 3 junior team competitions. In essence these are quite recent additions to the chess playing calendar, however the long term record of team junior events is far from being complete and the lack of minuted results in our archive points to some results but not a complete picture.

The Junior Trophy is played for by club teams at U18 level. It was contested from 1998 to 2005 but for several years after that Austin Friars was the only club with a junior team. With the formation of a junior club in Penrith this may change in 2009 or 2010.

The "Goodwin" schools trophy has been played for between Secondary Schools since 1994. Mike Goodwin of the Workington club obtained the Cumberland slate trophy and organised the competition for the first few years. However, schools events are noted in the County's history and these are also recorded where the winners are known, although they will almost certainly have played for another trophy.

The U11 Team Trophy is a Junior Schools event and is a new addition to the calendar, having started in the year 2000.

4. Junior Individual championships and trophies

The U18 trophy is played for the Chambers Cup. Its full inscription is "Presented to the Cumberland Chess Association by the Misses Chambers, in memory of their brother Robert F. Chambers, 1929". It is a sterling silver cup with double handles, approximately 20cm high, with a wooden base and a wood storage box. Names and dates are recorded from 1955. Additional records from earlier trophies and the County archive can push this record back to 1929.

The U18 trophy, noted above, is open to Boys and Girls, thus far only won by Junior Boys. In 1999, a Girls trophy was established within the same competition for the highest finisher. This is contested for "The Friars Cup".

There are a series of age category cups and trophies open to both Boys and Girls under the same competition. These are now contested at U15 (since 1998), U13 (since 2002), U11 (since 1998) and U9 (since 2000). There are no records of any systematic junior chess organisation run by the CCA at less than the U18 level before these dates. However, as noted before the record may not be complete and marks the limit of our current knowledge and archived data.

Statistics

It would not be complete to finish this report without highlighting a few of the main statistics. In doing this, I will only concentrate on the Division 1 league champions, County Major Individual champions and the Junior U18 championships. By doing this, we acknowledge the best players and teams in each category.

As noted earlier there are three time-periods to consider. Up to 1938, when Cumberland was the sole chess playing body, 1938 to 1953 when Cumberland and Westmorland were merged and after 1953 when Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness formed the association as we know it today.

Before 1938

The dominant teams in this era were Whitehaven, Workington, Carlisle and Keswick. Workington won the trophy 15 times between 1885 and 1938. This was led largely by a broken run of 14 wins from 1890 to 1904 split only by a victory for Keswick in 1896. The remainder of the championships were split fairly evenly between Keswick with 10 and Whitehaven and Carlisle with 9 apiece. In the individual Major championship, JE Shipman had 4 wins between 1924 and 1929. The 1st World War caused a break of 7 years from 1917 to 1923.

From 1939 to 1953

This period was understandably heavily affected by the 2nd World War and 10 years without a championship. Of note, alongside the continued strong Keswick and Carlisle presence, was the newly merged chess playing team from Kendal. Carlisle led the way with 4 wins in this time. In the individual Major, FW Tee had two wins and FM Stewart had the first of his wins of which more later. RJ Holloway had 3 consecutive wins in the junior competition.

From 1954 to 2001

In this period the championship has been held by ten different teams. In order of most wins (in brackets) these are: Windermere (17); Carlisle (13); SASRA (5); Barrow/Vickerstown (4/1); Whitehaven (3); Arnside (2); Keswick (2). Windermere had a run of 9 consecutive wins from 1971 to 1979. In the 1980s Carlisle picked up 4 titles and Windermere another 3. The 1990s saw the emergence of SASRA5 who won 5 titles between 1994 and 2001 with 4 from Windermere.

Major individual winner's honours are shared by FM Stewart and J Toothill who have both won 6 championships and both had 3 consecutive wins, between 1959-1961 and 1971-1973 respectively. Other champions of note are D Everett with 5 and M Mackenzie with 4.

In the Junior U18 championship the most wins and most consecutive wins was by Max Brown with 5 from 1999-2003. R McWilliams had a run of 3 junior championships from 1986 to 1988.

From 2002 to 2010

Windermere again dominated in this period with 5 more championships while SASRA picked up 2 and new boys Cockermouth also won two.

The individual championship was dominated by Ben Morgan who won six in a row from 2002-7. Ben has not entered since then but Robert Patla arrived from Krakow to Penrith and won the next three.

In junior chess Austin Friars dominated at secondary level winning their tenth title in a row in 2006 while Laura Woollass won 4 girls' titles between 2005 and 2009. In 2007 for the first time an individual title was won by a girl, in fact two girls, Laura Tickner and Natasha Hall, were joint winners of the under 9 title.

A note from the compiler

The data in this report are reviewed as far as possible and thanks to those who took the time to check facts with myself. If entries are seen as incorrect it would be appropriate to send proposed corrections to the County Secretary so that the final version can be considered and collated correctly. I suggest that this report is distributed to all current clubs and any corrections be taken at the next AGM and this or a future revised version of this report should be filed in the CCA archive. Thank you to all chess players who have contributed to highlighting the performances of the champions.

S Richardson 30 August 2002

S Cassidy 18th May 2010