

DEVON COUNTY CHESS ASSOCIATION

AGM + Autumn Meeting 2024

To be held at 7pm on Friday 4 October 2024 at The Courtenay Centre, Kingsteignton Road, Newton Abbot, TQ12 2QA

AGENDA

1. Welcome and opening remarks
2. Apologies for absence
3. Updates from individual clubs (highlighting any current difficulties)
4. Matters arising
5. Updates from current officers
6. Update on DCCA committee membership
7. Election of officers for the 2024-25 season
8. Arrangements for the 2024-25 team competitions
 - Review of last season's team events (one-day, two-round jamboree events at agreed venues)
 - Rules of team competitions (including rating limits, and any rule changes)
 - Financial and organisational details (including venues and host clubs)
9. Arrangements for the 2024-25 individual competitions
 - Discussion: Revamping the individual competitions
 - Rules of individual competitions, including Champion of Champions (including agreement of rating limits and any rule changes)
10. Club affiliation to DCCA – discussion of fees for small / large clubs
11. Junior chess 2024-25
12. County chess 2024-25
13. Future of Paignton Congress (currently replaced by Riveria Congress)
14. Update on 2024-25 tournaments
15. Arrangements for other 2024-25 events (including organisers / venues)
16. General chess calendar for 2024-25
17. Timing of next meeting
18. AOB

DEVON COUNTY CHESS ASSOCIATION

Draft minutes of the AGM + Autumn Meeting 2024 held at
7pm on Friday 4 October 2024 at The Courtenay Centre,
Kingsteignton Road, Newton Abbot, TQ12 2QA

In attendance:

Tim Paulden (President, Exeter)
Sean Pope (Treasurer, Exeter)
Jon Underwood (Match Captain, Seaton)
Tony Tatam (Rating Officer, Plymouth)
Julian Bacon (Junior Officer, Sidmouth)
Steve Dean (Seaton / Sidmouth)
Mike Dow (Barnstaple)
Richard Smith (Barnstaple)
Trefor Thynne (Newton Abbot)
Steve Dean (Seaton / Sidmouth)
Ray Chubb (Teignmouth)
Ian Henry (Teignmouth)

1. Welcome and opening remarks

Tim (President) opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. He noted that the attendance was excellent compared to last October, and thanked Trefor for organising the meeting venue.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jack Rudd (Competitions Secretary).

3. Updates from individual clubs (highlighting any current difficulties)

Trefor (Newton Abbot) reported that the club was doing well with more than 20 members attending in recent weeks. It was noted that the club's approach of entering all the DCCA competitions meant that new members always had plenty of teams to slot into. It had also been valuable to recruit dedicated organisers to help run the different teams.

Mike and Richard (Barnstaple) reported that Barnstaple Club was developing nicely, with an increase in junior members, and the recent addition of a titled player (Chris Gant) . It was noted that the club was running a one-day rapidplay event on 19 October 2024, and that they planned to make every effort to support DCCA.

Ian and Ray (Teignmouth) reported that the club had around 9 or 10 players, with around 5 currently playing in matches – these numbers might not be sufficient for them to commit to playing in too many DCCA events.

Jon and Steve (Seaton) reported that Seaton currently had a limited number of members due to illness, travel, and so on. The chance of the club entering team events beyond the Newman rapidplay were therefore limited.

Julian and Steve (Sidmouth) reported that the shift of premises to Blue Boar had been successful, and the attendance had reached a steady state of around 10-12 members.

Sean and Tim (Exeter) reported that 10-15 members were regularly attending, though as usual there had been a lull over the summer. The Exeter Junior Chess Club had also moved to Tuesday nights (5:30pm-7pm), immediately before the main club night. It was noted that several “online players” had come along to the club but their attendance was irregular, and the club would benefit from having an assigned “welcomer” on club nights (or for this role to be shared on a rota).

Tony Tatam (Plymouth) reported that membership was extremely good (currently 40+), and that he was running five internal leagues of 8 or 9 players. However, cost factors had led the club to meet just one night per week rather than two. It was noted that despite this activity, it was challenging to convince members to act as a “team captain” or to assemble a careful of players to play away matches.

Finally, Trefor observed that some clubs who weren’t in attendance had not yet re-engaged with the DCCA, including successful and friendly clubs like South Hams and Totnes. Plymouth University also had an active chess club, and had entered into the Torbay League. The meeting agreed that it was important to integrate these teams back into the DCCA, and it was hoped that these clubs would begin to re-engage with the one-day team events this season. It was noted Exmouth no longer has an active club and Trefor noted further that there were no active clubs actually within Torquay or Paignton themselves. It was noted that the DCCA team events were competing with numerous other ways to play chess (internal club competitions, 4NCL, online, and so on). There was a short discussion of junior chess activity, and how positive it was that some junior teams had entered the Team Quickplay.

4. Matters arising

Minutes of the 2023 Autumn Meeting. The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

Torbay and Torquay Congresses. Tim noted that the well-established Torbay Congress was scheduled to take place on 8-10 November 2024, and a new event called the “Torquay FIDE Congress” had been scheduled just a fortnight before (25-27 October). The latter event had been organised without consultation with DCCA or the Torbay Congress, although the organiser had claimed that he had checked with the DCCA before booking the dates, which was not accurate.

After a lengthy discussion, the meeting took the view that these communications had not been made in good faith, and it would not be appropriate to promote the new event or to include it on the DCCA calendar.

It was further noted that the new event had received only 20 entries with around two weeks to go. The meeting discussed whether DCCA itself would be negatively impacted if the event failed, and it was felt that any risks were modest and could be managed and mitigated. The meeting was reassured to hear that the entry numbers for the well-established Torbay Congress had not been impacted, and were in fact slightly higher than usual.

5. Updates from current officers

Tim (President) said that he was heartened by the success of last season's team events, as one year ago there had been a sense of foreboding at what would happen if the new format didn't work out. In fact, many of the competitions had seen the best attendance in years, and attendees at the meeting commented on the positive vibe surrounding the events.

Sean (Treasurer) circulated a printoff showing the current financial position. Last year, the AGM anticipated that the hiring of spaces for the six one-day team events would lead to a £500-600 loss, so the actual deficit of around £400 was slightly better than expectations. It was noted that the goal of reviving the competitions had been successful, and it was never the objective for the income from entries to cover the venue hire cost.

The meeting noted specifically the high cost of hiring the Exminster Victory Hall for the three-team Bremridge event, but Tim explained that the number of teams entering was unknown at the time of booking, and the lead times for such venues in Exeter could be more than six months (e.g. book in October for April / May).

The meeting discussed whether it would be appropriate for entry fees to be slightly raised, or alternative venues explored to reduce costs. These measures were subsequently agreed in the meeting, as shown later in these minutes.

Julian raised the idea of using a venue jointly for DJCA and DCCA event on the same day, to make effective use of the space, although it was noted that the amount of available space is uncertain until very close to the date.

Sean noted that the plan was to transfer a proportion of the DCCA funds to a suitable savings account – this would need two signatories, and Tim said he would happy to act as the second signatory. The interest earned from this would help offset the deficit associated with the one-day team events. Julian noted that there might be several extra hurdles to set up a club account compared to an individual account. The meeting agreed that the decision on the amount of money to transfer was at the discretion of the Treasurer.

Tony (Rating Officer) noted that he had been very active as Rating Officer. There had been a delay in getting results information from some of the DCCA events, but it was hoped this was now in hand. He explained that if results information was sent to him immediately after the

event, updated ratings would now appear on the ECF website by the following day. The meeting thanked Tony for his excellent and efficient work as Rating Officer.

Apologies for the meeting had been given the Competitions Secretary and no report had been received. It was noted on the teams front that the one-day events were "self-running", with the trophies being presented after each event. The meeting congratulated all of the team event winners for 2024/25, as summarised below:

- Newman – Exeter
- Moyle – Teignmouth
- Schofield – Exeter
- Mamhead – Newton Abbot
- Bremridge – Exeter
- Peter Rooke – Newton Abbot
- Team Quickplay – Exeter (Thomas Trophy), Exeter (U7300 Hodge Trophy), Newton Abbot (U6200 Graded Trophy)

On a practical point, it was noted a new 'silver strip' would need to be added to the Peter Rooke trophy to expand the engraving space, and Tim said he would action this.

There was no further update on progress in the individual competitions, other than Nandaja Narayanan winning the Ladies Championship – she was congratulated by the meeting. The Champion of Champions was also paused and had not yet been drawn. There was a feeling expressed that a line should be drawn under unfinished competitions not rounded off imminently, so that this season's individual competitions could take place.

Jon noted that many counties awarded their County Championship based on performance in a particular named Congress, and suggested that one of this season's Devon congresses could fulfil this role. After a detailed discussion, it was agreed that the 2025 East Devon Congress – which was being held at the Rougemont Hotel – would be ideal for this purpose, with the individual trophies being awarded to the best performing "Devon player" in each section. Different views were voiced on how best to formulate the criterion of "Devon player" and how to award the Ladies Championship Cup – it was agreed these would be discussed further over email.

Note: Matters concerning junior chess and county chess were not discussed at this point in the agenda, but were attended to in sections 11 and 12, later in the meeting.

6. Update on DCCA committee membership

Tim noted that there were important DCCA committee vacancies including General Secretary, which he was currently covering. It was remarked that this role was really the fulcrum of the committee and a crucial one to fill.

The meeting was asked if there were any expressions of interest, but none were received. Attendees noted that it was increasingly hard to find willing people to volunteer, but it was important for the future of the Association for players in Devon to step up and take on a role.

Tim reminded the meeting he had previously announced his intention to step down this season for family reasons, and that for clarity going forward, he was definitely going to step down in a year's time (October 2025) – this would represent a period of six years as President (and a considerable period covering the General Secretary role).

It was noted that the roles of Publicity Officer and Archivist were also currently vacant, and that the role of Congress Secretary (which was historically the organiser of the now-defunct Paignton Congress) was temporarily held by Tim in the sense that he was the signatory on the account.

7. Election of officers for the 2024-25 season

Moving to the election of officers, Tim asked the meeting if anyone in attendance was interested in running for the vacant posts. No expressions of interest were received.

Tim then asked whether there were any objections to conducting a single vote for the re-election of the current officers, rather than individually.

Trefor voiced his view that he felt it was unsatisfactory for the Competitions Secretary (Jack Rudd) not to be present to report back at the meeting, although it was noted that his involvement had been very helpful over the season in helping to structure the pairings for competitions.

After a discussion, and in the absence of any new volunteers, the meeting agreed to re-elect all current officers.

There was further discussion on the administration of the competitions, and it was noted that the meeting had agreed for the individual trophies to be awarded based on performance at the 2025 East Devon Congress, and the team competitions were now separate events not requiring as much input as the previous "league" structure. It was also suggested that a one-day mechanism could be considered for settling the Winter Wood (Champion of Champions) event in future.

8. Arrangements for the 2024-25 team competitions

- Review of last season's team events (one-day, two-round jamboree events at agreed venues)

Attendees at the meeting expressed strongly positive views on the new one-day events, which had succeeded in bringing players from all corners of county together. It was noted that some tweaks could be made on the financial side to make the running of the events more sustainable, as explored further below.

It was noted in particular that the opportunity to play two games in one day is highly appealing, and that all games matter because the winner of the event is decided based on total board points scored.

- Rules of team competitions (including rating limits, and any rule changes)

The Competitions Secretary (Jack Rudd) had proposed via email that the “revised” ECF ratings from the calendar month before an event should be used, rather than those from the previous September. Trefor had further proposed using the previous month’s ECF rating both for eligibility and to determine board order, with the latter having a latitude of up to 50 points (i.e. a 1950-rated player could play below a 1900-rated player, but not below a 1899-rated player). After a discussion, both proposals were accepted by the meeting.

- Financial and organisational details (including venues and host clubs)

Trefor’s suggestion to repeat the cycle of events at the same venues as last season with no major changes was received positively by the meeting. It was noted that if other clubs wished to act as a host club in future, they would be very welcome to do so.

On the financial side, the meeting reaffirmed the principle that the team events should not put a financial burden on the hosting club. It was proposed formally that the board fee should rise from £3 to £4 this season, and that host clubs should try to make the choice of venue as cost effective as reasonably possible, given the likely entry. The meeting agreed with these proposals.

The timing of the Team Quickplay was discussed, and Clyst St Mary Village Hall was raised as a possible alternative venue to America Hall. Tim agreed to investigate viability. It was noted that for the Team Quickplay, Peter Rooke and Bremridge, choosing a venue was a “chicken and egg” situation as the venue had to be big enough to accommodate the possibility of a large entry. Other venue possibilities (e.g. West Hill) were also discussed, some of which might be available at a discount via local contacts. The idea of a link-up event with DJCA to make maximal use of a large venue was also raised.

It was noted that Seaton would be unlikely to be able to enter the team events unless a joint Seaton & Sidmouth team were permitted. The meeting felt that this linkup made sense geographically and should be permitted in the interest of stimulating the competitions.

Tony emphasised the importance of results being submitted promptly for rating after each event.

9. Arrangements for the 2024-25 individual competitions

- Discussion: Revamping the individual competitions

As minuted earlier (see section 5), the individual competition trophies this season will be awarded based on performance in the East Devon Congress. Tim agreed to circulate a proposal via email after discussing with Jack.

- Rules of individual competitions, including Champion of Champions (including agreement of rating limits and any rule changes)

There was a suggestion made that in future the Champion of Champions could be run as a “one-day event” for the players concerned, although it was noted that this is not in keeping

with its traditional long-play, knockout format. It was agreed that any changes to the long-standing format would need to be mapped out in detail in conjunction with Jack.

10. Club affiliation to DCCA – discussion of fees for small / large clubs

Currently, the DCCA affiliation fee is set at £30 for clubs with 12+ members, £15 for “small clubs” with fewer than 12 members, and free for junior / school clubs. It was agreed to keep these charges the same for the 2024/25 season, and details would be sent around to all Devon clubs in the coming weeks.

11. Junior chess 2024-25

Julian (Junior Officer) circulated a handout summarising the junior chess activity from the previous season and the planned schedule for the season ahead (full details are available on the DJCA website).

It was noted that the current DJCA financial position was OK, but the greatest issue was getting schools themselves to participate. There was a further discussion of recent successes, particularly at secondary school level, including Exeter Mathematics School qualifying for a national final. On the communications front, it was agreed that we should “cast the net wide”, and pass on information about DCCA events to school contacts as well as clubs.

12. County chess 2024-25

Jon (Match Captain) reported that the prior 2023/24 season had gone much more poorly than usual, due to a deterioration in player availability.

In respect of the coming season, he noted that he had recently sent out a message to the 25 strongest players with the county match dates, and if a core of 12 players could pre-commit to the sethree matches, he would agree to continue as Match Captain, otherwise he would not wish to continue. The meeting was in agreement with this approach, and expressed gratitude to Jon for his ongoing hard work.

13. Future of Paignton Congress (currently replaced by Riveria Congress)

It was noted that the Riviera Congress held at the start of September had received good feedback, and the overall view of the meeting was that this event had now effectively taken the place of the Paignton Congress.

14. Update on 2024-25 tournaments

Confirmed dates were noted for various Congresses, including Torbay, Weymouth, Somerset New Year Congress, Simon Bartlett Memorial, and the East Devon Congress (which would be changing venue in 2025 to the Rougemont Hotel in central Exeter).

15. Arrangements for other 2024-25 events (including organisers / venues)

Tim noted that Exeter would be happy to host the Team Quickplay again (though the venue and date were still to be confirmed).

The meeting discussed the Inter-Area Jamboree, which had fallen by the wayside this season since all of the DCCA team competitions had effectively become jamborees. Some attendees expressed the view that it would be a shame if it was completely lost, but naturally there needs to be a desire for someone to take on the organisation.

Julian suggested that there might be a way to award the trophy based on the overall results achieved by clubs in the other one-day team events, but it was not clear how this might be done in a fair and balanced fashion.

After further discussion, the meeting agreed that the purpose of the event was now being achieved in a different way, and it was logical to “park” the Inter-Area Jamboree for the time being.

16. General chess calendar for 2024-25

The proposed dates on the calendar circulated by Tim were discussed, including the likely dates for the one-day team events. The dates for the Peter Rooke, Bremridge, and Team Quickplay would need to be coordinated based on availability at the chosen venue.

17. Timing of next meeting

It was agreed that the various discussions begun at this meeting would be continued via email where needed. If there were specific matters to discuss in around February or March 2025, it was suggested that an online Zoom call might be helpful, but otherwise the next face-to-face meeting would be assumed to be the AGM + Autumn Meeting in September / October 2025.

18. AOB

Trefor noted that the various changes being made to the meeting schedule would eventually need reflecting in the DCCA Constitution, if this revised scheduling was to continue in the future. This matter should be reviewed at the next face-to-face meeting.

Attendees raised a vote of thanks to the President for chairing the meeting and all the officers of the DCCA for their ongoing hard work. The meeting was closed at 9:30pm.
