

OCA Junior Report 2012–13

Andrew Varney, 10 September 2013

Schools League

The Oxon schools league had ten teams entered at U9 and twelve at U11, meaning that there were two pools in each age group, even after one of the teams withdrew. The entries included four teams from primary schools new to the league. As the sections were split into pools, there were play-offs held for the cup, with winners/runners-up from the pools playing semi-final matches to decide the finalists. It is noteworthy that the play-offs included two of the new school teams. In the U9 section, the semis were Magdalen College School (MCS) vs Dragon and William Fletcher vs Batt; in the final MCS beat Batt to take the title. In the U11 section, the semis were MCS A vs Emmanuel Christian School and SS Mary & John and MCS B. The final was an all MCS affair, which (naturally) MCS A won.

The issue of secondary school participation remains an issue. At the Oxon Junior/Schools League AGM, in order to attract more entries, decisions had been taken to obsolete the U15 section of the league and change the rules to require teams of just four players. We had an encouraging response, with five teams entered for the U18 and four for the U13 sections. However, each section had one team withdraw and in the end no matches were played in the U18 section and some matches were left unplayed in the U13 section. Although they only won one match, Cherwell School won the U13 trophy, ahead of MCS, due to the points system which rewarded them for playing all their matches.

There is already interest from more school chess clubs in all sections of the league for the forthcoming season. Any offers of help/encouragement available from the OCA clubs in their local area, especially at secondary school level, would be much appreciated.

School and Club Teams

MCS continued to have success as a school at national level as well as dominating locally.

Achievements included:

December 2012 National Preparatory Schools Rapid Play Team Champions

February 2013 National Schools Chess Championships Zonal Finalists (and reaching 1st round in Plate competition)

May 2013 EPSCA Primary Schools U11 National Semi-Finalists (4th)

July 2013 ECF U11 Team Championship Finals (4th)

Abingdon School also took part in the National Schools Chess Championships, at which they were Zonal Semi-Finalists, but then went on to reach the 2nd round in Plate competition via a Last Chance Saloon. Another chess event that the school took part in this year was the West of England JCC in Swindon, entering ten players in the Intermediates' section.

Radley College chess club continues to grow, with an active club and very popular inter-house competition. They also took part in the National Schools Chess Championships, but fell at the first hurdle. They also learnt a lot from taking part in a Rapidplay tournament at Eton and a friendly match vs Cowley 4. This year Radley will be hosting a regional event for the 2013-14 Secondary School Team Chess Challenge

MCS also hosted an EPSCA Primary Schools U11 zonal qualifier in which MCS fielded four teams. Local schools Dragon, Wolvercote, St Andrews and William Fletcher took part, and three MCS teams and Dragon proceeded to the next round.

Junior participation in the OCA League is flourishing. As well as the MCS/Blackbirds, Abingdon School/City and St Clare's, Witney, Cumnor and Cowley regularly field teams consisting of mostly or all junior players. Membership of Witney includes twelve juniors and increasing; Cumnor, being a small club, is already saturated with juniors with the current nine members; Nine juniors played in

league matches for Cowley last season, with others attending on club nights even if not playing for the teams.

EPSCA Inter-Association Competitions

Trials for the under 9 and under 11 EPSCA county teams were held in January, split over two days due to capacity issues at the venue. Overall numbers were very close to last year's record. The U9 county champion for 2013 was Eva Wang and the U11 place was awarded to Oscar Idle.

Seventeen individual players represented Oxfordshire in the under-9 team this season. The team finished fourth in the southern zonal competition with 16/36, a long way behind Wey Valley (31.5) and Sussex (25.5). In the final the team came equal thirteenth out of eighteen teams.

The under-11 team were placed fourth in the southern zone with a very reasonable 28.5/60 but only managed 21/60 to take fifteenth place in the final in Nottinghamshire due to unavailability of many of the players. Altogether thirty-two individuals played for the team in the various matches.

The under-11 girls team did well to score 22.5/36 in the girls final at Barnet, only 5 points behind the leaders, resulting in fifth place. There were notably strong performances from some of the younger players.

Overall in the Grand Prix, Oxfordshire finished ninth, up from last year's equal thirteenth place.

SCCU U14/U130

The county had a particularly large group of juniors qualified to play for the team this season, many of whom were playing well above their grades. Hence the team had rather easy and conclusive wins against Berkshire and Buckinghamshire in the zonal tournament (and Hampshire defaulted). However, in June Oxfordshire went on to win the final against a Surrey team that had achieved similarly conclusive results in their zone. The final result of 17-7 reflected the tremendous strength in depth of the team.

There was quite a lot of overlap with the junior half of the Chiltern League U125 team, which was similarly successful this season.

ECF U13/U18

Oxfordshire entered one U18 team and three U13 teams to this one-day event, consisting of 32 players altogether. It was a very strong tournament and even our top boards in the U18 Open section had challenging games. The teams were placed as follows:

U18 - 8th/13 in Open (12/24 points)

U13A - 7th/13 in Open (10.5/18 points)

U13B - 12th/13 in Open (4/18 points)

U13C - 16th/18 in Minor (4.5/18 points)

Delancey UK Chess Challenge

There were 180 entries for the Oxfordshire Megafinal, from 32 different schools with another 10 entries from other Oxfordshire schools via the "Last Chance Saloon." About a third of the players qualified for the Gigafinal. Of course, the Berkshire Megafinal also saw some Oxfordshire participants. This included Abingdon School, who had significant enough success there (a record seven qualifiers) to merit taking a minibus to the Gigafinal.

Twelve Oxfordshire players qualified for the Terafinal or Challengers in Loughborough. In that tournament there were six Oxfordshire prizewinners, Marcus Harvey in first place netting £2000 and

the title of *Strat*, Maria Wang third equal and Anna Wang a lower place in the main event, with Zoe Varney achieving equal top girl in one of the Challengers sections and Pavel Asenov and Oscar Idle winning a DVD/book in the others.

Other Oxon Tournaments/Events

The annual Witney Junior Rapidplay in September featured a particularly strong line-up, with relatively few younger players and beginners, but some strong out-of-county entries amongst the strong Oxfordshire players.

Witney Chess Club also took over most of the running of the Oxfordshire Junior Chess tournament at MCS in November. As in recent years, this was a one-day rapidplay tournament listed as a qualifier for the London Junior Chess Championships as well as incorporating the Oxfordshire U13, U15 and U18 junior cups. There were around 75 entries, mostly in the LJCC qualifying sections, including a fair few from outside of the county, down from the peak of over 100 in 2010. The winners of the Oxfordshire junior trophies were Zoe Varney (U13), Daniel D'Souza-Eva (U15) and Matyas Hanisch (U18).

In the spring, Wantage Chess Club held their annual tournament for players from primary schools in their locality with prizes provided by Wantage Rotary Club.

During several of the school holidays there was informal chess training for juniors held at St Giles church, Oxford, run by Rod Nixon of Cowley Chess Club.

A new "Oxfordshire Junior Squad" chess club is starting this season. It is intended for up to about fifty players of junior county team standard, and to supplement/encourage, not compete with, OCA league clubs; hence it is membership by invitation only. It is planned to meet weekly with coaching included.

4NCL

A number of Oxfordshire juniors played in various divisions of the 4NCL. In particular, the Oxford 3 team in the third division continues to give the opportunity for some developing juniors to play FIDE-rated chess with long time controls.

In the Junior 4NCL, Witney took the third place trophy for the season, but both the winning team, and the all-girls' Beethoven's Vth team in second place, also included Oxfordshire juniors in their line-up.

Individuals

Familiar names continued to appear in results from national and international chess tournaments during the 2012-13 season. At the very top, some of the highlights in Marcus Harvey's achievements were coming equal 3rd at the British Blitz Championships and winning the UK Chess Challenge Terafinal. At the very start of the season he had represented England in 2012's U16 Olympiad. Chantelle Foster played for England at the European Youth 2012 and 2013, amongst others. The Wang sisters continued to win many titles, including Anna being crowned both U14 and U15 British Girls' champion in Torquay.

Half of the section winners in the new UK Chess Challenge Silver Plate (2012) competition were Oxfordshire players, which entitled them to an invitation to play in the World Schools Championship. Hence May saw three Bartholomew School pupils, Jakob Holton, Isabel Hauer and Marianne Hauer play for England in Greece. Another Bartholomew School pupil, Pavel Asenov, had some great tournament performances throughout the year, including more than enough half-norms to secure him a place in the National Chess Junior Squad. Both Oscar Idle and Elizaveta Sheremetyeva played in the EPSCA U11 England trials in Liverpool after qualifying from various junior tournaments, but unfortunately did not (yet) quite get the results needed to make it into the squad.