

## Secretary's report

**County team successes.** The first team shared the Midlands counties team Championship - their first Midlands title since 1947 - and the u140 team won the Midlands championship outright. Each of the county's three over-the-board teams has qualified to play in the national stages: the first time ever all three teams have qualified. These achievements are very much due our team captains' leadership: John Wrench (First team), Paul Sharratt (under-140 team) and Richard Collett (under-120 team). Stephen Woodhouse deputised as captain for John Wrench at the first team's last regional match. The quarter finals were played on Saturday 13 May. In spite of the support of Keith Arkell and the most highly graded team this season, Suffolk won 5½ - 10½. John Edge (Halesowen) was the only Worcestershire player to win. Worcestershire under-120 team played Lancashire at Newcastle-under-Lyme on the same day and were lucky having two points in the bag to make a tied match 6 - 6 and a better board count to take them through to the national semi-final match probably on 10 June against Warwickshire or Middlesex. The Under-140 team played their quarter final on Saturday 20 May against Essex at Milton Keynes and won 9½ - 6½.

**Worcestershire League.** Halesowen won both the first and the second division titles. Worcester Bishops won Worcester & District League with Stourbridge taking the Division 2 title. In the Dudley & District League, champions were Warley Quinborne. Division 2 winners were Halesowen, and Division 3 was won by South Birmingham.

**Worcestershire players.** Congratulations to Finlay Bowcott-Terry (Halesowen), who is listed as one of England's top under-12 players and won the Minor tournament at Nottingham Rapidplay. GM Keith Arkell (Halesowen) won the Hastings Blitz tournament and continues to flourish in weekend tournaments. Nigel Towers (Redditch) won the Major tournament at Telford. Nick Arkell (Halesowen) was placed second just behind GM Hebden in the Nottingham Rapidplay. Two association players were elected ECF Directors: Alex Holowczak (Oldbury) and Stephen Woodhouse (Barnt Green)

**Chess clubs in the county.** Halesowen won the race for the 2017 Birmingham League championship and have won the Division 5 title. Also congratulations to Redditch winning Birmingham's Division 3 title and Shirley & Wythall for winning the Division 6 title. In the last few years, the association has been strengthened by the active involvement of new clubs Olton and Mercia and participation of Shirley & Wythall in the knock-out cup competition. Redditch club recently hosted GM Jon Speelman for a successful workshop on chess endings and Halesowen host GM Arkell for simultaneous display on Thursday 25 May. Recently established clubs for informal play are running successfully at St Anne's Bewdley, St John's Worcester, and University of the Third Age (Worcester), but there has been no sign that the club at Hagley can be revived and Droitwich has sometimes found it difficult to field a full team in competitions. There appears to be a trend towards fewer and larger membership clubs, but this does mean that players have to travel further for their chess.

**County congress.** It would be desirable for the association to revive its congress if only as a closed event. I have been offered a free venue at Worcester on the weekend of 19 /20 August. If I can have some help to organise it, I shall put the wheels in motion.

**In memoriam.** On a sad note, we mark the loss of four players during this season: Steve Foster (St John's); Geoff Harris (Stourbridge); Barry Stone (Malvern); and Ken Tyson (Worcester).

Ray Collett - 23 May 2017