

# LANCASHIRE JUNIOR CHESS 1987 – 1998

by Ken Gorman

## PERSONAL BACKGROUND

As for many chessplayers, my introduction to chess as a child, was through a relation - my grandfather in my case. He was James Gorman, J.P., a councillor for both Salford and Manchester, and twice a Parliamentary Labour candidate (1918 and 1922). He was regularly elected to the paid position of Manchester Organiser of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. He publicly advocated the teaching of chess as part of the school curriculum, as it helped to inculcate clarity of thought and the adversarial element was good training for dealing with confrontational situations such as the negotiations he was often involved in with his trade union work. On train journeys, he would take his sturdy portable chess set, of a type which was later used by our troops in German prisoner-of-war camps. I still have and use this set. I have no idea whether my grandfather played club chess, i.e. prior to 1940, so if anyone has any evidence of it I should be grateful to see the details. I have a newspaper reference of a simul. he took part in against Salo Flohr, so maybe he was a club player. The other influence was from my father, an engineering patternmaker, who made a wooden chess set for me. I played chess at grammar school, but not in a school club. Likewise I played chess occasionally at University, but not in a club. So even then, words like 'Sicilian' meant nothing to me, except in that case geographically.

I became a secondary school teacher (of French, German, and sometimes Russian). Now foreign languages are officially among the least popular subjects in UK schools, and I am fairly confident that my efforts may well have done little to increase their popularity. It was understandable, I feel, that I sought interest and success for pupils in extracurricular activities. For most of 16 years, therefore, I ran school soccer teams, and was pleased at how successful most of them became. However, the last team I looked after, in a mixed school, had only 13 boys from whom a reasonable team could be picked, and included a stropky captain. (When I, as the ref., sent him off in one match, it was the only match the team won all season.) At the age of 38, and growing tired of such hassle and cold, wet Saturday mornings, I gave up school soccer teams. At the same time, a colleague, inspired by the Fischer-Spassky World Championship Match of 1972, challenged me to a game of chess. This led to him looking up moves in a book, and beating me 7-0. In W.H. Smith's the only reasonable book I could find on chess was by Reshevsky, ranked third in the world in his day, and who seemed to do well with the Queen's Gambit. I used opening moves suggested by the book and beat my colleague 7-0. I joined a local club, started playing league chess, and it dawned on me that I could be running school chess teams. This was in the Southampton area, which had middle schools. In the schools chess league, pupils of the same age in Hampshire, (outside Southampton), were in high schools, so my school being in Hampshire I had the advantage compared with most schools, of having more players to choose from. Nevertheless, it was an organisational matter to be sure to select the best players, in the correct playing order, and to change the team members as different players became stronger, which was usually as a result of them using my suggested Queen's Gambit for White and the Sicilian (now I knew what it was) for Black. I ran two U-12 teams and two U-14s. The U-12s won their division in 1976, and also won the Southampton U-12 lightning chess team tournament. The U-14s' best result was reaching the semi-final of the zone in the Sunday Times National tournament. They lost to King Edward VI School, Southampton, who had several strong teams.

When we moved back to the north-west, to Poulton-le-Fylde, and I started teaching at the Blackpool boys' comprehensive, Warbreck High School, I had an advantage re chess teams, as the other (mixed) schools would not be able to find many girls interested in chess. I also put more effort into it than other schools, in some years having the chess club open every lunch hour. There would eventually be over a 100 members, and a typical entry from the school to the Blackpool Chess "Conference" would total 22. All results were recorded, and from these results, I selected the best players, in the correct order, for teams. We tended to beat all other schools in the area, and before long I entered the 1<sup>st</sup>. team in the Blackpool & Fylde (adult) League, and then the 2<sup>nd</sup>. team. In due course, in 1980, the 1<sup>st</sup>. team was promoted to the top (adult) division, and although relegated that same season, in 1981 won the League K.O. Trophy, beating British Aerospace 4.5 - 3.5 in the Final, the only school ever to have won the K.O., before or since.

This experience gave me the confidence to take on the job of Lancashire Junior Organiser in 1987, but there is more background to explain first.

Having moved back north in 1977 with our second (baby) son Kieran, I felt that at the age of one he would be just a little too young for chess. Although I later came across 4-and 5-year-olds who could win games in tournaments, I felt Kieran was not ready to compete until he was 7, in 1983. Colin Duerden was the teacher who ran the Blackpool junior school chess league and an annual junior school chess tournament at his school, Revoe Primary, Blackpool. Having shown Kieran how to play, I entered

him in these tournaments. One or two other pupils at Kieran's school, St. John's R.C. Primary, Poulton-le-Fylde, in particular James and Nicola Romer and Deneal Smith also became involved.

At that time Lancashire did have U-9 and U-11 teams competing at national level. The qualifying tournaments for the selection of players were generally held in east Lancashire, in Burnley or Oswaldtwistle (near Accrington), and sometimes Preston, since the teachers who organised these events belonged to those areas. Colin Jefferson, headteacher of St. Paul's C.E. Primary, Oswaldtwistle, led the team of teachers involved, though before long he moved schools to the Altrincham area, and I believe became involved in Manchester junior chess. His departure left Denis Otter, headteacher of St. Peter's C.E. Primary, Burnley, in charge, ably assisted by others, notably John Minter of Greenlands Primary, Preston, and at high school level, by Ken Youde of Ashton-on-Ribble High School, Preston. As the U-9 and U-11 tournaments were organised by serving teachers, who did not have time to prepare everything beforehand, it was normal for hordes of children and parents to be waiting for an hour or so on the Saturday morning while everyone was registered and allocated to the right section. This meant also that the time available for each round was limited – to 30 or 45 minutes. If one player spent 40 minutes on his moves, his opponent would only have 5 minutes. The result of this was that the games between the best players were likely to be unfinished, and if so, adjudicated. Deneal Smith, for example, was a piece up (with most pieces still on the board) but his game was adjudicated a draw. Deneal was so upset by this, that he could not concentrate in the next round, and lost. Another drawback was that as there was no time control, it was possible for the player with the advantage to play slowly in order to win by adjudication.

The final selections for the U-9 and U-11 Lancashire teams would often be announced immediately after one of these tournaments. It was not clear how the players were selected, but hopefully recent previous performances were taken into account. My impression, however, was that selection was based on the players' scores in that final tournament. I felt that could result in inaccurate assessments. However, they did start to invite the better players to selection tournaments, for finer assessment, and held one such event at Kieran's own primary school, where they also held one of their main tournaments. So the organisers were quite willing to travel from East Lancashire, given the encouragement.

I have no accurate records of the Lancashire U-9 and U-11 team performances in this period, but my impression was that they struggled to reach the national finals, and if they qualified, did nothing spectacular, or may not even have travelled to the national venue, as the event could be staged in Cornwall, for example! I kid you not. When James Romer and Kieran were involved one year, Lancashire must have reached the national finals, because I remember a Tower Hamlets team walking onto the stage as winners of the event. I remember thinking what dedicated people must have developed that team, from such a deprived area.

#### I OFFER TO BE LANCASHIRE JUNIOR CHESS ORGANISER

I had taken the opportunity of early retirement from teaching in 1985. However, I was self-employed full-time selling chess computers by mail order from home. This business (Doska Chess Supplies) had developed purely through my involvement in schools' chess, and it helped to eke out my teacher's pension. Although it occupied me full-time, the business allowed me to organise my time, and so enable me to continue running junior chess teams – at county level.

In September, 1987, Kieran would start attending Cardinal Allen R.C. High School, Fleetwood. If Kieran and others were to continue representing Lancashire, it looked as though there would be no team to play for. I believe Ken Youde, who worked with Denis Otter's Lancashire Schools' Chess Association (LSCA), did not intend to run such teams at high school level, and the Lancashire Chess Association (LCA) had no junior organiser since Mike Conroy.

I asked the LCA if they would have me as their junior organiser, and they welcomed me. I felt it was more appropriate to be working for the LCA at high school level, as the LSCA was mainly primary school based, and as I was no longer teaching. However, funding for Lancashire junior chess was paid to the LSCA by the County Council, and in order to lay any claim to it, I had also to belong to the LSCA. The LSCA would invite me to meetings at 4 p.m. in Burnley, which I could hardly attend because (a) my wife might not have returned from work with our car by that time, and (b) the meetings could not benefit my efforts at high school level. My claims re Lancashire team travel expenses would have to be claimed from the LSCA by post anyway. On occasion, when Roy Townsend of Blackburn was LCA President, he would attend the LSCA meetings on my behalf.

#### MY FOUR ANNUAL TOURNAMENTS BEGIN

The most logical first venue for my tournaments, if permitted, was Cardinal Allen High School. The school had been involved in schools' chess prior to this, but it was a matter of asking permission. The school governors agreed to four Saturday tournaments, in October, November, January and February. I shall always feel indebted to the Head, Dr. O'Brien, for his continuous support (and even help on the

day shifting tables!). In later years, I would have venues in various parts of Lancashire. After all, Fleetwood is rather out of the way for some Lancastrians, but Dr. O'Brien would always give a warm welcome whenever Fleetwood was needed as a venue.

So my first tournament was on 10<sup>th</sup>. October 1987, with U-14 and U-18 sections, but of course primary schoolchildren could enter. There were 35 U-14 entries and 8 U-18s, a grand total of 43 turning up. On 14 Nov. there were 45 + 8 entries, total 53, so we were starting to roll.

Now the National Youth Chess Association (NYCA) U-14 National Team Championships would be at Farnborough, Hampshire on 28<sup>th</sup>. November, 1987. I had to decide on a team of 12, making my selections from the performances in the two tournaments. Also, Denis Otter was staging his annual "Jack Robinson Memorial" tournament on 21<sup>st</sup>. November, so I could also look at performances there before making final selections. I went over to Burnley, hoping the organisers had lists of results to give me. No, but I could take the individual match cards. These had been pinned on a notice board, from which the players had been invited to take their cards. So a number of them were missing by the time I reached the board. However, from the information available I could make final decisions on selection and board order.

#### AN AGGRESSIVE WARDROBE

For this first and last occasion, i.e. before NYCA events were staged centrally, most players had to stay overnight B & B with their parents, and find their own way there. One player, a possible 3<sup>rd</sup>. or 4<sup>th</sup>. board, could not come, as staying away overnight could create a medical problem, and he was involved in attending an Open Day at Bolton School. This could clearly weaken us on every board below that. However, it enabled Sally Woods to play on board 12, and my Kieran moved up to 11. Also, 5 players were aged 11 and one aged 10. One incident nearly resulted in the team being one short. At the B & B in the morning, Mrs. Basterfield returned to the bedroom to find 10-year-old Derek (board 10) lying spreadeagled under a wardrobe, which had decided to encapsulate him when he dared to open its door, but had not managed to abduct Derek to Narnia. However, an unharmed Derek went on to score 3/3.

#### A REASONABLE BAPTISM

The NYCA U-14s at that time played one round to decide on the top few teams to play 2 more rounds in the Championship, then the remaining teams played 2 more rounds in the Major. The totals of all three rounds determined the team positions. Lancashire were 11<sup>th</sup>. out of 18 in round one, but only 7 teams stayed in the Championship, won by Gtr. Manchester. Lancashire finished 5<sup>th</sup>. out of 11 in the Major, ahead of Merseyside and Berkshire, so were 12<sup>th</sup>. out of 18 overall. This result was extremely encouraging for a first attempt, and as more players became available, we must achieve better results. For the record, board 1 was Darryl Wolstencroft (13), 2: Ben Hague (14), 3: Christopher Dawson (12), 4: Ian Farrer (12), 5: Richard Simpson (11), 6: Catherine Ashton (13), 7: Andrew Carter (11), 8: Nicola Romer (14), 9: James Romer (11), 10: Derek Basterfield (10), 11: Kieran Gorman (11), 12: Sally Woods (11).

#### TOURNAMENT ATTENDANCES INCREASE, and U-18s NCCU CHAMPIONS

Attendance at Fleetwood on 9/1/88 was 56 + 10, total 66, and even more on 6/2/88.

I had advertised for anyone to manage Lancs. teams (other than the U-14s), but as no one volunteered, I decided to take the U-18s on myself. On 5<sup>th</sup>. March, 1988 I took my Lancs. U-18 team of 12 to Pontefract for the Northern Counties (NCCU) (Single-round) Team Championships, which we won (to my surprise) with 8 points, ahead of Northumberland (7.5), Durham (6), Yorkshire (5.5), Cheshire & N. Wales (5), Merseyside (4). Peter Jowett and Darryl Wolstencroft were boards 1 and 2, and Paul Isherwood and Ben Hague were boards 11 and 12. Winning this event meant Lancs. qualified for the BCF National U-18 Team Championships at Birmingham on 26/3/88. Our opponents were Hampshire, Middlesex and Gtr. Manchester. Unfortunately, the opponents we regarded as the weakest, Glamorgan, never arrived, as their coach broke down. Against strong opposition, Lancs. scored only one win out of 12, a magnificently engineered win by Phil Crocker against A. Hon of Middlesex. This result helped Hampshire to win on board count against Middlesex (8 pts. each). Gtr. Manchester scored 7. This result caused the organiser D.J. Blackman to comment in the BCF Year Book that perhaps he ought to refer to us as 'rural' Lancashire, now lacking two conurbations. In fact, we went on to win the NCCU U-18 Championship more often than not, and never again had such a low score in the Finals.

#### LANCASHIRE v. MERSEYSIDE FRIENDLIES BEGIN

As several Blackburn players had turned up at Fleetwood in February, I arranged the next congress (1/10/88) at St. Wilfrid's C.E. High School, Blackburn, attendance 51 + 12, total 63. At Bacup &

Rawtenstall G.S., Waterfoot, on 12/11/88, the figures were 45 + 13, total 58.

I had arranged with Merseyside (who had similar strength to Lancs. at Farnborough) to hold an annual friendly U-14 match over 25 boards. On 16/4/88, at Fleetwood, over 2 rounds, we lost 20.5 – 29.5 to Merseyside. As we were now stronger, this suggested that Merseyside had not managed to take their strongest players to Farnborough.

#### LANCASHIRE versus MANCHESTER

I was never involved in the conflict between Lancashire and Greater Manchester, which had arisen because the political County of Greater Manchester was created, and Manchester chess players took the opportunity to form their own Chess Association. Jim Tennant-Smith famously established by going to court, that he could still play chess for Lancashire, even though he belonged to the Rochdale club. This means that Lancashire players with no Manchester qualification (school, residence, or club) (I believe actual place of birth does not qualify), **cannot** play for Manchester, but Manchester players, even with no qualification relating to the now smaller county of Lancashire, **can** play for Lancashire. By 1987, my impression was that by now all was friendly between the two associations. After all, Lancashire President Peter Furlong, was supplying both areas with chess equipment for tournaments through his ManCHESter Supplies business, and I believe played chess in both areas.

Indeed, some Manchester juniors attended the LSCA tournaments, and also my tournaments from their inception. I had an immediate rapport with Stan Goodall, father of young Manchester stars Edward and John, especially as Stan, like myself, was an Old Mancunian, i.e. Old Boy of The Manchester Grammar School. I had first met Stan when Edward (future British U-12 Champion) was only 5 and attending an LSCA tournament. I played Edward between rounds, and managed to win only because Edward was too young to notice my bishop on the diagonal. Also between rounds, Edward was studying chess positions from a book!

#### LANCASHIRE U-16 NATIONAL CHAMPIONS!

The NYCA U-16 (Single-Round) National Team Championship at Daventry was scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup>. October, 1988. Now you can imagine that with mainly U-14 players who had struggled at Farnborough, I had fears of Lancashire U-16s being annihilated, but I felt we needed to test the water at that level. Then I heard that Manchester had not entered this year! So I could legally ask any of their players to play if willing. I asked Stan Goodall if Edward could play. Stan checked with a Manchester official that there would be no problem. I then invited three Manchester G.S. players, Paul Garner, Alex Lewis and Danny Copeland (Alex and Danny played for a Lancashire-affiliated club – Whitefield). They were all happy to play in the circumstances. However, on 30<sup>th</sup>. September, I received an irate phone call from the Manchester junior organiser, Phil Adams, basically telling me “to find my own players”. Phil was also upset because I had sent invitations to one or two Oldham juniors, who had done well in the annual August Bank Holiday LCA junior tournament at Chorley, to come to my junior tournaments. Although I assured Phil that I would not ‘poach’ players primarily committed to Manchester, he did not agree that juniors who were never selected by Manchester could play for Lancs., since Manchester ‘arranged plenty of activities for them’. So there was no good luck message from him. Oh, the passions aroused by chess!

The next day, at my Blackburn junior congress, Stan Goodall said how he disagreed with Phil Adams’ attitude. However, Stan failed to bring Edward whom he had entered, instead bringing younger brother John, who, significantly, was the last junior committed to Manchester ever to enter my tournaments. Stan made an excuse about Edward re the U-16 event.

Now a Lancashire player, Jonathan Walton, who had won the LSCA U-11 tournament when aged 7, and obviously potentially the strongest Lancashire junior, had sadly recently moved to the Altrincham area, and in future always played for Manchester. When I invited Jonathan to play in the U-16 event, his father told me he was going to a party at the Sandcastle in Blackpool, and that the Lancs./Manchester situation had not affected the decision.

I had thought I would need about 8 Manchester players to prevent a humiliating result, but settled for three. Before the players left the coach, I gave what must have been my most effective ever manager’s ‘pep talk’, including the management of school football teams. Perhaps in an attempt to fuse these two disparate groups of players, I believe I said something on the lines of: ‘You’re playing mainly southerners today, who don’t think much of northern chess players. Just show them what you can do!’ And show them they did! Perhaps there was also an element of luck – our top 4 players played opponents from the bottom 4 teams, a possible factor in Lancashire becoming Champions on board

count over Hampshire 'A', both teams having 9 points out of 12. But then only one Lancs. player lost, and to a Hampshire 'A' player. Details:

LANCASHIRE	9 (CHAMPIONS)	Peter JOWETT	170	1	v. Gavin Knott	157
HAMPSHIRE 'A'	9	Darryl WOLSTENCROFT	161	1	v. Steve Jones	96
ESSEX	8.5	Paul GARNER (MGS)	150	0.5	v. Mathew Beynon	
SURREY	8	Alex LEWIS (MGS)	148	1	v. T. Philips	
HUMBERSIDE	7.5	Julian SEETHARAMDOO	136	1	v. K. Rist	144
WARWICKSHIRE	7.5	Mark CORRIGAN	(U)	0.5	v. Steven Hampton	145
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	6.5	Danny COPELAND(MGS)	126	0.5	v. Neal Page	109
SOMERSET	6	Ben HAGUE	(U)	0.5	v. John Overend	110
HAMPSHIRE 'B'	4	Mark BULLOUGH	(U)	0	v. Emelia Holland	126
W. GLAMORGAN	3.5	Emily HUMBLE	(U)	1	v. Neil James	
E. GLAMORGAN	3.5	Derek BASTERFIELD	68	1	v. David Foley	109
SUFFOLK	3	Mark FOSTER	(U)	1	v. Chris Tomlins	114
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	2.5					

At the presentation, someone from Hampshire apparently made a protest, but I was not aware of it. What the protest related to, I do not know, but I received a written apology from the Hampshire organiser subsequently. Re the board count, for this event it was calculated using only wins and draws. With a 'normal' board count, we would have lost! So Hampshire lost 57-60 on board count, and had lost on board count to Surrey in 1987, 68-69.

One result of our success was that Phil Adams made sure Manchester entered the event in 1989. Sure enough, Manchester won. Lancashire were 3<sup>rd</sup>. out of 8 teams. An abiding memory is of the Manchester players' coach overtaking ours, and their players waving the U-16 trophy at us from the rear window. Their players were probably not too conscious that they had probably only entered and won, because of Lancashire.

#### MANCHESTER BOYCOTT LANCASHIRE JUNIOR EVENTS

After the 1988 contretemps with Manchester, it was noticeable that Manchester junior team members never again took part in my Lancashire junior tournaments. It was obvious that they were under instruction not to attend, as not a single one attended. Only those juniors not selected by Manchester attended, and this enabled us to help players such as Martin Musk and Chris Statter, both of Manchester Grammar, who became highly-graded in due course. I can understand Manchester's paranoia to some extent. After all, it looked as though Lancashire junior teams might do well and be attractive to Manchester juniors, while Lancashire juniors could not play for Manchester. In reality, players with dual qualification would tend to play for and stay loyal to, the Association which selected them first. As Lancashire were soon fielding more junior teams than Manchester, the advantage in this respect moved to us, but Manchester's advantage lay in the development of very strong players in the 3C's junior club. Manchester, I understood, received an annual grant of £3,000, and they had people willing to take their juniors to weekend adult tournaments by minibus. Lancs. received about £1,000, and we were lucky if even one set of parents took their offspring to weekend adult tournaments, the most effective method of achieving chess playing strength. The advantage to Lancashire of Manchester's boycott was that I was able to calculate our team board order more accurately. A player losing to a strong Manchester player gives little information of his relative strength in Lancashire.

#### U-14 FUN IN HULL

By November, 1988, more competent U-14s were presenting themselves for selection, and I decided to take two teams of 12 to the NYCA U-14 Championships at Hull. After all, transport by coach costs no more, more players have the opportunity to play for their county, and besides, my Kieran had only qualified for board 10 on the 'B' team!

One of those fantastic chess situations arose in the first (qualifying) round. Jonathan Walton (ex-Lancashire) of Manchester 'A' was playing Christopher Dawson of Lancs. 'A'. Now Jonathan (a younger player) had defeated Chris a few years ago in a LSCA event, which Chris, as an U-11 England player, would have expected to win. This time Jonathan was winning again, but with very little time left on his clock. Chris had about 8 minutes available, but was warned by the Controller that he had stopped writing his moves. This flustered Chris, and also, I think, affected Jonathan, who soon offered a draw, which Chris accepted. The Manchester managers told Jonathan he 'could have won that'. The result of this draw meant that both Lancs. A and Manchester A had 7 pts., with Lancs. A entering the Championship Section on board count. So Lancs. A could finish no lower than 5<sup>th</sup>. (out of 12) after the next two rounds, and they did. Manchester's strength was shown by their winning of the lower section

by 7 clear pts. from their own B team. (But perhaps it meant they had not selected their teams in the best order?) Lancs. B finished last, but only 4 pts. behind Lincolnshire's and Merseyside's only teams. The psychological boost of having pushed out last year's champions was tremendous. Where could we not go from here?

#### 1989 – A YEAR WITH SOME NEGATIVES

My congress at Fleetwood on 7/1/89 attracted a total of only 54, so it was obvious that the venue was considered too distant for many. For my next tournament on 11/2/89, I had secured The Manchester Grammar School as a venue. There was some nostalgia in this for me, as the venue was the Refectory, where I used to eat my school dinners. I was not expecting juniors committed to Manchester to attend, but I circulated all Manchester schools with invitations, and I thought that members of the M.G.S. Chess Club who were not selected for teams might be interested in Lancashire. My impression was that members of the M.G.S. Chess Club were not even informed of the event, and other M.G.S. pupils not at all informed. The result was that only one M.G.S. pupil, Martin Musk, who already knew about us, attended. Of a total entry of 65, only two pupils from the City of Manchester (Parrswood H.S.) attended. So there did not seem to be much junior chess activity in Manchester schools, which was a reminder that Gtr. Manchester's main junior activity was mainly centred outside the City, in Altrincham and Oldham. What potential there was for junior chess in the City of Manchester, which nobody appeared to be developing! I could hardly develop Manchester as well as Lancashire, so this was the last event I organised in the City.

#### OF PARENTS AND PRODIGIES

The next event was the NCCU U-18 Team Championship at Pontefract on 4/3/89. Unlike 1988, SEVEN first-choice players were not available. Five were for acceptable reasons, including our top boards Peter Jowett and Darryl Wolstencroft, but one was a 17-year-old who had always been reluctant to play for the U-18s, and just refused. Another was an 11-year-old, whom I rated roughly equal with 5 others on his performance at the M.G.S. tournament. His father phoned to ask which board his son would occupy. When I suggested 5 or 6, apparently he did not consider this high enough, because I then received a call from a senior Lancashire player who belonged to the boy's club, Preston, who told me he should be playing much higher because he was such a good player. How this senior player could be aware of the other players of a similar strength when he had never been involved with Lancashire junior events, I do not know, and how he could encourage a parent to tell an organiser how to pick his team, is beyond me. Would he tolerate a Preston player telling his team captain which board he would play on, or else? The only outcome of this boy's refusal to play would be not to be asked again, and as he was in line to play for England U-11s, Ian Cowan, the England manager, assured me he would not select anyone who refused to play for his county. Would his father try to tell the England manager which board his son should play on? I never heard of this boy playing chess again anywhere. Perhaps that was the idea behind the parent's attitude? After all, some parents will consider an addiction to chess as undesirable. The lesson I learned was not to reveal board positions until the day of the match. After all, they could not be finalised until it was known that everyone had turned up. George Ellison's addiction to table tennis was disapproved of by his father, but George then played table tennis for England. George's academic prowess was delayed, but not impaired. He also achieved high standards in chess, and in 2002, at the age of 70, became British Veterans' Chess Champion. Who knows whether the Preston 11-year-old was a potential Nigel Short or Kasparov? Of those around him, why was I the only one to care?

A similarly bizarre situation arose around 1997, when a clearly brilliant 10-year-old nurtured by the Cleveleys Junior Club, played for Lancashire U-11s run by Steve Lamb, the Cleveleys organiser, but was not allowed by his father to play for Lancashire U-12s. I wrote to the father pointing out that playing for the U-12s would almost certainly result in him being selected for England, but the father indicated he was not bothered about his son playing for England. Now how many parents are there in the country who would take that line? When you consider that by then so many people were putting so much effort into organising Lancashire chess juniors into squads of maximum strength, how could a parent be so lacking in team spirit as to weaken a whole U-12 squad of 36 players, and in the process fail to show his son the value of team effort?

#### THE PRESTON CONGRESS

It was in 1988 that the annual Preston Congress was first staged. Its timing was most unfortunate. There seems to have been no consultation by Preston Chess Club with the LCA as to the most suitable date. They decided on the last Saturday in November. Now this coincided with the annual NYCA U-14

Team Championships, so that meant, firstly, that no Lancashire U-14 county juniors (and there would be about 40 of them involved each year) could ever attend the Preston Congress. Secondly, the congress would lose the entry fees of those U-14s who might otherwise have attended. So the juniors lost the chance of valuable local weekend tournament experience which might have led to them attending other weekend congresses, with all that would mean for Lancashire chess. In a reverse situation, we were never able to attend the NYCA U-16 3-round Championships, which had always coincided by chance with the LCA Blackpool Chess Conference in March, which is a priority congress for everyone. In any event, the U-16s in March would have been too much for me to cope with, with NCCU and BCF U-18 events at that time of year.

UNDER-18s (continued)

To return to the U-18s, in 1989, on 4<sup>th</sup>. March, with 7 first-choice players unavailable, they came only 4<sup>th</sup>. out of 7 teams in the NCCU Championships, as was to be expected. So no BCF Finals in 1989!

1990 at Huddersfield saw the start of improvement at U-18 level. I was now able to take 2 teams of 12 to the NCCU Championship. Lancs. A were 3<sup>rd</sup>. to Durham and Northumberland, with 7 pts. and Lancs. B were 5<sup>th</sup>. and last with 2.5, only 1 point behind Yorkshire's only team.

In 1991 at Leeds University, Lancs. A won with 9.5 pts., 2.5 pts. ahead of Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, and Cheshire & N. Wales, and Lancs. B were 6<sup>th</sup>. out of 6, with 4 pts. I must have had the board order right!

In the 1991 BCF Finals in Birmingham, Lancs. scored 5 points (which made up for the 1 point of 1988), finishing 4<sup>th</sup> behind Manchester, Surrey and Hampshire, and ahead of Suffolk.

At the NCCU in Leeds in 1992, Lancs. A and Yorkshire tied 1<sup>st</sup>. with 9.5 pts., with 3 Lancs. players with grades of 175, 168 and 133 unavailable for reasons beyond their control. Lancs. B were 4<sup>th</sup>. with 6 pts., ahead of Cleveland, Durham, Cheshire & N. Wales A and B. As Yorkshire, NCCU Champions on board count, were not affiliated to the BCF, and so could not attend the BCF Finals, Lancs. were able to go.

The 1992 BCF Finals were at the grandest venue ever – Keble College, Oxford. The massive, grand Library was awesome. By dint of ensuring that some players belonged to the Ormskirk Junior Club (in Lancashire), we had John Merriman (199) of Merseyside, and 3 members of the Haslinger family (living in Southport) playing for us. Ben Hague was board 2, and graded 173. Darryl Wolstencroft had played at Leeds but was not available for this match. We finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. out of 5, with 6 points. If Paul Heaton (129)(board 5) had beaten R. Bates (159) of Surrey instead of losing, (OK – unlikely) Lancs. would have been National Champions on board count! A memory from this event is of Ben Hague's opponent, in this grand, opulent, cathedral-like room, devoted to academic excellence, with a copy of the Sun newspaper at his elbow. Manchester, with its 'conurbations', had presumably not qualified, and Lancashire could no longer be patronised as 'rural'.

In 1993 at Ripon, Lancs. A were NCCU Champions again, despite the higher graded players being now too old, on a new tie-break system against Northumberland, also with 8.5 pts. (On the old system, we would have lost.) Lancs B had 5 pts. the same as Durham, and ahead of Cheshire & N. Wales. In the BCF Finals, at Nuneaton, we were joint 5<sup>th</sup>. and last with Wiltshire, with 4.5 pts.

Our average age was 14.5, our average grade 117, and our opponents' average grade was 146.

All our points were scored against higher-graded players.

In 1994 at Accrington, Lancs.A again won the NCCU U-18 title by a tie-break against Northumberland, with 9 pts. each. In the BCF Finals at Nuneaton, we finished 6<sup>th</sup>. and last, with 3 pts., all except one draw scored against higher-graded opposition. Again our average grade was 117, and the opponents' 146.

The NYCA now offered U-12 and U-18 QUICKPLAY TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS (for teams of 12). At Stoke-on-Trent, on 24/9/94, I entered an U-18 team (for which 7 players were not available, through no fault of theirs) and 2 U-12 teams. The U-18s finished 12<sup>th</sup>. out of 16 teams. The U-12A were 9<sup>th</sup>. out of 10 teams, and the U-12B won their section against Glamorgan and Middlesex B teams.

At this point, I lost confidence in the availability of the U-18s, who seemed to be most unreliable simply because at this age they had so many other activities which could prevent them playing. The Haslinger family, who had always been most supportive of events, were now more committed to weekend tournaments, and one or two other players had given up chess. So I invited others to run the U-18s. After all, I had never intended to run the U-18s myself anyway.

Mrs. Chamberlain, Tom Chamberlain's mother, had steered the U-18s to winning the NCCU event in 1995, which Lancs. A won. Upset by the negative (financial) comments of Denis Otter, Mrs. Chamberlain withdrew the team from the BCF Finals (see under "Finance"). However, someone else (I believe Stan Foulkes, LCA Treasurer) must have agreed to take them, organising transport by car, for the team actually went to the Finals and were 5<sup>th</sup>. out of 6, with 4.5 pts.

Lancs. won the NCCU event again in 1996, and were 6<sup>th</sup>. out of 6 in the BCF Finals, with 3 pts.

In 1997, Angela Hanley, mother of Craig and James, was happy to take over the U-18s. At Carlisle, on 2/3/97, Lancs. lost on board count to Northumberland (9 pts. each). As one player failed to turn up because of a car breakdown, 7-year-old James Hanley, graded 24, had to play on board 12, and lost to

a 77 grade. As Northumberland are classed as a "Minor" county, and Lancashire a "Major" county, I would have thought that Lancs. would go to the Major Final, and Northumberland to the Minor Final, but apparently Lancashire were ruled out.

After my retirement in Feb. 1998, on 21/2/98 Lancs. were 2<sup>nd</sup>. to Yorkshire in the NCCU U-18s. I would have expected Lancs. to proceed to the BCF Finals, but Yorkshire must have affiliated to the BCF. Yorkshire played in the Finals and came 2<sup>nd</sup>.

#### NYCA COMBINED U-18 and U-12 QUICKPLAY TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS (continued)

The format was a 5-round Swiss, teams playing head-to-head, and pts. from each round were added to give a final total.

On 30/9/95, in the NYCA event at Stoke-on-Trent, my records suggest Lancs. U-18 finished 8<sup>th</sup>. out of 10 teams, with 25.5 pts., but I cannot recall who managed the team. I selected and looked after the three U-12 teams, usually with the help of parents as team managers, or before long, with the help of Bill Winter and Steve Lamb. In 1995 Lancs. U-12A scored 28 pts. to be 7<sup>th</sup>. out of 10 teams, the U-12B with 22.5 pts. were 3<sup>rd</sup>. out of 4 teams, and the U-12C, in the same section, were 4<sup>th</sup>. with 21 pts. No other county had 3 U-12 teams.

On 28/9/96, I have no record of any Lancs. U-18 entry to the NYCA event. The U-12s were now strengthened by the up-and-coming players from the Cleveleys junior club, now the largest and best junior club in the whole of Lancashire, including school clubs. But the county opposition was tough because other counties had been running U-11 and U-9 teams, which Lancashire had not been doing for several years. It was early days. The U-12A were 8<sup>th</sup>. out of 10 teams (21.5 pts.). The U-12B were 2<sup>nd</sup>. with 33 pts. in their section of 5 teams, Manchester B winning, even though Lancs. had beaten them 7-5, a sign of progress if ever there was one. The U-12C were 4<sup>th</sup>. with 26.5 pts., despite beating Lancs. B 6.5-5.5. Oops! Did I have the board order wrong? No, the C team went on to lose 1-11 to Manchester B (no doubt smarting from their defeat by Lancs. B).

On 20/9/97, in the NYCA event at Stoke-on-Trent, Lancs. U-18s (managed by Angela Hanley) were 12<sup>th</sup>. out of 13 teams, with 23 pts. Craig Hanley (longplay grade 155) scored 5/5, with a grading performance of 203. (9 highly-graded Lancs. players were no longer available, 6 through age and 3 for various reasons.) Lancs. defeated Wiltshire 6.5-5.5, who finished 6<sup>th</sup>.=, and had no opportunity to play the three low teams around their own position.

Lancs U-12s had a very promising day. Many players were now available from the Cleveleys and Poulton junior clubs. In fact. of the 39 players taken, 14 were from the Cleveleys junior club, 4 from the Poulton junior club, and 7 others belonged to both, all a tribute to the coaching and development by Bill Winter and Steve Lamb, aided by George Ellison. They still lacked the experience to outperform Richmond and Manchester in the A section, finishing 10<sup>th</sup>. out of 13 teams, but that would come in the future. The coming strength was indicated by the B team winning the lower section with 48.5 pts., beating Manchester B 12-0, and Manchester C 8.5-3.5 (Did Manchester not have the correct board order?) The U-12C in the same section were 3<sup>rd</sup>. of the 6 teams, with 31 pts., beating Manchester B 8-4 and Manchester C 8.5-3.5. The B team returned home with Trophies, the C team with medals. Two reserves were also 1<sup>st</sup>. and 2<sup>nd</sup>. in the reserves tournament.

#### RETIREMENT BECOMES POSSIBLE

That was to be my last U-12 event. Bill Winter and Steve Lamb were now heavily involved with junior development, now concentrated in the Cleveleys junior club, and gave the impression that they would like to be more directly involved in Lancs. junior organisation. There was disagreement about the method of team selection, which was based on performance in my qualifying tournaments, which mirrored the actual event very closely. I think it is best for an independent person to make the selections. I used a system which has never resulted in lower teams selected by myself achieving better results than higher teams, unlike Manchester! I took the opportunity to hand the baton on to others, and indicated I would retire after the February junior congress. Various parents and chess players now seemed to be available to manage the now numerous teams, and hopefully development would continue and even accelerate.

#### U-11 and U-9 LANCASHIRE TEAMS FROM 1997

My records suggest the first U-9 and U-11 Lancashire teams to compete in EPSCA (English Primary Schools' Chess Association) since before 1987, did so in 1997. Firstly, in a non-EPSCA event, on 1/3/97, at Liverpool, the U-11s became North-West Champions, and the U-9s were Runners-up in their Championship. The other teams in both Championships were Manchester, Oldham, Liverpool, Wirral, Cheshire & N. Wales, and Shropshire. On the result sheet I circulated, I wrote as follows:



'Congratulations in particular to Steve Lamb (U-11 and U-9 manager) and Bill Winter, whose Clevellys and Poulton Junior Chess Clubs have contributed most to this success, with coaching assistance from George Ellison. The Heywood Junior Club (Bill O'Rourke) and a number of school clubs across the county are also playing an important part in the current development of Lancashire junior chess.'

On 15/3/97, at Bolton, Lancs. U-9s were 4<sup>th</sup>. out of 9 teams, and thus qualified for the EPSCA national finals. On 19/4/97, at Oldham, the Lancs. U-11s were 4<sup>th</sup>. out of 11 teams, and thus qualified for the EPSCA national finals at Catford, S.E. London, on 10<sup>th</sup>. May. I never received the detailed U-11 results. All I know is that they were 10<sup>th</sup>. nationally. I can find no record of the U-9 EPSCA finals on 26<sup>th</sup>. April. I believe the venue was too distant.

LANCASHIRE JUNIORS IN LENINGRAD, with the future JOAN HUMBLE, M.P. To come back to late 1989, I had the idea of taking junior players to Russia. After all, despite my Russian degree of 1956, I had never been to Russia, which was the ideal place to take chess players. My assistant leader was Walter Cottier.

The cost for a week (8-15 July, 1990) would be about £430 each, by coach to Heathrow, then by British Airways to a Leningrad hotel with full board, and including excursions. 23 juniors (who had to be aged at least 12) responded, and 6 of us were adults. (This was in contrast to an attempted school trip to Russia about 1969, to which only about 3 pupils responded, and so was not viable.) Two juniors were able to receive some financial assistance from Lancashire County Council.

Now I had experience of running school trips abroad, and asked the parents the usual questions regarding the children's health, but I had never felt the need to ask whether a child might be an alcoholic. Neglecting to ask this on this occasion, led to a situation which could have been quite serious.

We travelled overnight by coach to Heathrow, where we caught a morning flight to Leningrad (which reverted to the name St. Petersburg a few years later). On the flight, our party was spread about the plane, and it was not easy anyway to check what everyone was up to. It seems that one of our 16-year-old boys (X) was being plied with alcoholic drinks by the stewardesses. When we reached our hotel and sat down for our evening meal, X, strangely, sat at a different table from the rest of us, in the company of a young Russian male, who must have been plying X with even more booze.

After the meal, many of us agreed to go on a sight-seeing tour of Leningrad the guide had laid on, despite the pouring rain and despite our lack of sleep. Walter came on the bus initially, but decided he ought to stay at the hotel with those not coming on the tour. This proved to be a wise decision. During the evening at the hotel, X, no doubt in a drunken stupor, managed to put his fist through a glass pane in the basement, causing some lacerations to his hand. Walter was able to take X to hospital, which he described as 'grotty'. The large female nurse treated X's hand mercilessly with iodine. The following morning, X's roommate reported that X had a full bottle of whisky, which we confiscated. Now Walter had correspondent friends we met at the hotel, one of whom was a surgeon, who later in the week examined X's hand and pronounced it to be healing well. I never mentioned this incident to the boy's parents, and never invited him to play in a tournament or for Lancashire again.

Professor Kentler of Leningrad University met us at the airport on arrival. He was responsible for ensuring chess was taught to the first years of all Leningrad secondary schools. I believe it was one of Walter's contacts who put us in touch with the professor, who had organised three of the six chess matches we had that week, two of them at the university. We won only one of these six matches - at a primary school! At this school, the Russians found it amusing when I (whom they assumed was a highly-graded coach, rather than a low-graded organiser) sat down at board 17. They soon realised their mistake when my opponent, an 8-year-old girl with a pretty bow in her hair, won the exchange. Thanks to her youth and lack of stamina, I did manage to win the game.

The odd speech was expected at some venues, and it was an opportunity to use my Russian. At one school, I said (in Russian): "The politicians called us enemies. We were, of course, always friends." This was my way of pointing out that it is politicians, not populations, that have arguments with each other, and it seemed to go down well. At this school, a summer school, many miles north of Leningrad, a soccer match between their pupils and our boys was arranged. Their trainee 24-year-old P.E. teacher, who had won a silver medal in the USSR Kayak Championships, challenged me (aged 56) to a game of tennis, since I mentioned I still played (and thankfully I still do, at 68). The tennis court was extraordinarily wide, and the teacher had to prop up the net with a tree branch found nearby. The temperature was a sunny 65 F, and I had to play in long trousers and suede shoes. Only a few of the Russian pupils witnessed the match, but the teacher was most embarrassed to lose to me 6-0. When I returned to our soccer players, they found it difficult to believe that I had won.

Emily Humble was a product of John Minter's Greenlands Primary School club, and was a high board selection on the LSCA U-9 and U-11 teams about 1986. Emily and her younger sister Elizabeth were regular selections on my Lancashire teams, and parents Joan and Paul had brought them on this trip. Joan Humble later became Chair of Lancashire County Council Social Services, and in 1997 became the first Labour M.P. for Blackpool North & Fleetwood. Paul Humble is a lecturer in the Philosophy of Art, so was particularly interested in our tour of the Hermitage Museum, with its fantastic art collections.

The tour company had arranged visits to the usual sights, including Peter the Great's Palace and the Winter Palace. It was fascinating to see, moored on the river Neva, the battleship Aurora, which had fired the first shot to signal the start of the Russian Revolution in October, 1917. We also had a meal in a boat restaurant on the river.

One chess match was at a club in the leafy, wooded grounds of Catherine the Great's Palace. The club premises were the size of a large park bandstand, but the match was arranged outside, in the open air. However, the rain came, and we had to finish the match under cover. Their club captain, apparently about 2300 Elo like several of their players, chose to play me, and it was thought was trying to allow me to draw. If so, he slipped up, and gave me the chance of a win, which I took. Showing the game to the others next day, there were groans at the simplicity of the win.

Shopping on the Nevsky Prospekt was interesting. The substantial Russian chess clocks which retailed in the UK for £24 or more, were on sale for the equivalent of £1. Most of our 29-strong party bought one each, clearing the stock in that particular department. I went to another department to find one, preferably two, for myself. I was asked for my Leningrad passport. (It seems that if I had only a Moscow passport, I would not be allowed to buy.) When I explained my nationality, I was allowed to buy – but just one. The next day, our guide arranged for me to buy three more clocks in a country town. As a chess retailer, I was able to sell the clocks on return home, with a profit to offset some of the costs of the trip.

One adult member, Steve Berkeley, then graded about 150, decided to take on the chess players playing for money in the parks. Steve had to admit he lost every time.

We had brought presents to give to the players at each of the six matches. We kept our best presents for the last match arranged by Professor Kentler. These were red T-shirts bearing the logo "Lancashire Junior Chess". I prepared a speech of a few paragraphs, in Russian, the accuracy of which I checked out with the guide. I expressed our gratitude to the professor for arranging the three matches, and asked our players to hand over a T-shirt to their opponent. I hoped the professor was suitably impressed that someone from Lancashire had gone to the trouble of learning the Russian language. Afterwards, he brought us into his office, where he proceeded to talk at great length in Russian, presumably under the impression that I understood, which I did not. After all, I had only

rarely heard Russians speaking, e.g. our University lecturers, whom I had not followed easily either. He was apparently talking about Leningrad's links with Manchester chess, Manchester being twinned with Leningrad I believe. Luckily, what he was saying did not seem to require a response, and the Russian guide was present anyway. I gathered that if Lancashire wished to come again we would be welcome.

I had taken camcorder film of the trip, and sold copies of the film at £5 a time, the profits increasing the funds of Lancs. junior chess.

## FINANCE

From 1987, we were reimbursed for tournament entry fees and transport costs incurred by Lancashire junior chess teams by Lancashire County Council, through the LSCA. I very much appreciated the highly efficient efforts of John Ledwick, the LSCA Treasurer. My tournament fee receipts helped to defray expenses, but in these early stages the LCA guaranteed to make up the shortfall. Before long, however, tournament entries increased, and subsidy by the LCA was no longer needed. To enable the tournaments to take place, I supplied chess sets and boards with a retail value of £700, which stayed reasonably fresh, being used only 4 times a year, and I was able to sell some to the schools taking part, which also helped to keep them fresh. When I retired, as my business was no longer fully active, it took me 4 years to sell them all off.

By 1992, with the government restricting funds to County Councils, Lancs. Co. Council began imposing limits on the grant, and gradually reducing it. By 1995 schools could charge for the use of their premises. When I applied for reimbursement of £180 for two hirings of Longridge High School, Denis Otter sent me an A4 letter, insisting that I must obtain "previous written authorisation" from the LSCA in future. Denis also expected me to charge those county juniors who were not LCC pupils (i.e. who qualified from areas outside Lancashire or who attended independent schools) individually for their share of the travel costs. As if I did not have enough paperwork! It was obviously impossible for me to abide by these conditions. Denis Otter did not seem to appreciate all the work I was involved in, while the LSCA was not even involved in Lancashire junior chess teams. As a result, the LSCA and I exchanged insults, and I refused to accept money from the LSCA ever again. I sent the Co. Council an ultimatum on these lines, and informed the Chair of the Education Committee, whom I knew personally. Despite an initial letter from the LCC officer i/c sports grants saying I must use the LSCA, in fact funding in future was received directly by the LCA. (Schools were hired in future which either charged nothing, or the least, but in any event, these hire costs were refunded by the LCC.) For 96/97 we received the basic grant of £282, plus a travel grant of £825. In the year ending 31/12/1997, the Lancs. juniors turnover was about £3,300 and tournament entry fees had risen to £4. I learned that money the LCA received from the LCC seemed to come from "unofficial" LCC sources. The LSCA still received an official basic grant of about £282 from the LCC, even though they were not involved in Lancs. junior teams, which is the only justification for the grant. No doubt they will continue to receive it for the rest of the 21<sup>st</sup>. century even if they never run Lancs. junior chess teams. Meanwhile, I understand the money from the LCC to the LCA has stopped completely. However, the juniors now appear to be self-financing. This may mean that less well-off children will find it difficult to become involved in Lancashire chess.

## UNDER-14s (continued)

To come back to 1989, and the U-14s, we had a friendly match with Yorkshire on 8/4/89 courtesy of John Minter at Greenlands Primary School, Preston. The U-18s drew 5-5 in a single-round match. Lancs. U-14s played 2 games against Yorks. U-15s and won 21.5-18.5. Lancs. U-11s played 2 games against Yorks. U-12s, and won 28-12. So the final score was 54.5-35.5 to Lancashire. An encouraging performance.

On 15<sup>th</sup>. April, 1989 Lancs. U-14s beat Merseyside U-14s 26-24 in the annual friendly, away at Booker Ave. Junior School, Liverpool. A good measure of our improvement, though with the traditional Lancs. fading after having a big lead. This was the day of the Hillsborough football stadium disaster, with the loss of 96 lives. As we boarded the coach home, news of it was coming through, but we did not appreciate the full horror until we arrived home.

My congress at Ashton H.S., Preston on 7/10/89 attracted 91 entries, and at Longridge H.S. on 11/11/89, 94 turned up. From these players I was able to select 3 teams of 12 plus reserves. The standard was indicated by my Kieran not qualifying for even the third team. But then, Kieran never practiced. He would play in tournaments, play in Poulton Chess Club, and receive coaching from George Ellison, but despite the fact that as a chess computer dealer I had several machines at home,

he would never use one. Also, he was unwilling to analyse any games he played. In due course Kieran gave up chess, but now, as an adult, he will play socially if asked. In press publicity about Phil Adams, it seems his children also could not be persuaded to persevere with the game. Some people, like Kieran, see no particular point in beating someone else in any sport, and after all, that is not such an uncommon trait.

The NYCA U-14 Team Championships were held at Wolverhampton on 25/11/89. Lancashire was the only county to bring three teams. Was this justified? In the first qualifying round Lancs. A scored 7 pts. to be in 5<sup>th</sup>. place out of 16, squeezing out Gloucestershire and Suffolk on board count. Manchester had only 6.5 pts. Lancashire B scored 6, so were Lancs. B nearly as good as Manchester's best team? A nice dream, which faded over the next 2 rounds. Lancs. C scored 4, ahead of Lincolnshire's best at 3.5. Lancs. A finally finished 4<sup>th</sup>. in the Championship, ahead of Humberside, but behind winners Surrey, Hampshire and South Bucks. Lancs. B faded to 14<sup>th</sup>. in the Major, only one point ahead of Lancs. C, 16<sup>th</sup>. The Major was won by Manchester.

FADING: I felt this was a very encouraging performance, but a weakness of Lancashire teams which was noticeable even in the old LSCA U-11 and U-9 days, was one of fading in the later rounds, whereas some teams obtain improved results. I believe this is due to the first rounds, when players are fresh, being mainly tests of ability and potential. Players with experience in weekend tournaments develop the stamina to perform well in the later rounds, and few Lancs. U-14 players played at weekends.

Attendances at my tournaments: 13/1/90 at Lancaster (78), 10/2/90 at Fleetwood (76), 6/10/90 at Ashton, Preston (95), and 10/11/90 at Longridge (109).

At Fleetwood on 31/3/90, Lancs. U-14s beat Merseyside 38.5-11.5 with the help of 3 defaults. This was not surprising, as Merseyside did not seem to be developing their U-14s. Nevertheless, Merseyside were clearly shocked by the result.

The NYCA also began to expand. On 24/11/90, 23 teams entered, though Lancs. were unique in fielding 3 teams. With 7 pts. in round 1 (10<sup>th</sup>.) Lancs. A could only join the Major, along with our B (4pts.) and C (2 pts.). We finished 9<sup>th</sup>. overall (23.5 pts.), 2<sup>nd</sup>. to Richmond in the Major. Lancs. B were 19<sup>th</sup>. (11.5 pts.) and Lancs. C 22<sup>nd</sup>. (last, as Lincolnshire went home early) (6.5 pts.). Manchester A won the Championship.

Attendances: 12/1/91 at Fleetwood (60), 9/2/91 at S. Martin's College, Lancaster (74), 5/10/91 at Ashton (with U-11 and U-9 sections for the first time) (133), on 16/11/91 at Longridge (with U-11 section) (99). So the Preston area was confirmed as a fruitful one.

At New Heys School, Liverpool on 13/4/91, Lancs. U-14s beat Merseyside 29.5-20.5, with the help of 3 defaults again. I believe Merseyside felt they had a really useful team on this occasion, so were really shocked to lose. They did not seem interested in playing over (say) 20 boards in future, to avoid the defaults, and this was the last match of the series.

On 30/11/91, at Wolstanton, Staffs., the NYCA U-14 event attracted even more teams – 28, and Kent went one better than us and entered 4 teams, A, B, C and an U-11. Lancs. A scored 9 in round 1 to join the Championship in 6<sup>th</sup>. place, and finished 6<sup>th</sup>= overall. Manchester were 4<sup>th</sup>. and Surrey won. Lancs. B. were 17<sup>th</sup>= overall (17 pts.) and Lancs. C were 20<sup>th</sup>. (14.5 pts.) above the only teams of Hereford &

Worcs., Northants., and Lincolnshire. and the B teams of Warwickshire, Somerset, Glamorgan, and Leicestershire. Significantly, Merseyside had not entered. Good progress by Lancashire at least!

Attendances: 11/1/92 at Burscough (96), 8/2/92 at Fleetwood (67), 10/10/92 at Ashton (125), 14/11/92 at Longridge (116).

On 28/11/92, at Wolverhampton, the NYCA U-14s attracted even more teams – 32. Only Kent and Leicestershire fielded 3 teams like ourselves. Lancs. A had the best 1<sup>st</sup>. round result ever under my stewardship – 10.5 pts., (2<sup>nd</sup>.), squeezing Manchester into 3<sup>rd</sup>. place on board count. We had Stewart and Mandy Haslinger (148 and 137 grades) aged 10 and 11 respectively, on boards 1 and 2. However, perhaps our 1<sup>st</sup>. round opponents were favourable, as we finished 8<sup>th</sup>. and last in the Championship section (18 pts.). Richmond (with their £18,000 per annum sponsorship), were Champions. Lancs. B were disappointing at 25<sup>th</sup>. overall (13 pts.), and Lancs. C (27<sup>th</sup>.) had 10 pts., above Somerset B, Rotherham, Leicestershire B and C, and Ceredigion (Aberystwyth).

Attendances: 9/1/93 at Burscough (**102**), 6/2/93 at Horwich (**142**), 9/10/93 at Ashton (**168**), 13/11/93 at Longridge (**188**). Wow! Why so many? Simple – Nigel Short was in a World Championship match! The 188 was to remain the record attendance of my stewardship.

On 27/11/93, at Stoke-on-Trent, the NYCA U-14s attracted 34 teams. This time, all the A teams (18) played in the Championship Section, and the Bs and Cs in the Major. The Haslingers had chosen not to play, so it was difficult to measure our performance against 1992. Lancs. A finished 12<sup>th</sup>. (14.5 pts.), but at least the fading syndrome was disappearing, scores in successive rounds being 4, 5 and 5.5. Lancs. B finished 9<sup>th</sup>. (out of 16) in the Major (16.5 pts.), and Lancs. C were 12<sup>th</sup>. (12 pts.).

Attendances: 8/1/94 at Burscough (**147**), 5/2/94 at Horwich (**163**), 8/10/94 at Longridge (**142**), 12/11/94 at Longridge (**120**). I believe increased attendances were also due to my entering U-12

teams in the NYCA events. There were large U-11 sections in my tournaments now. Schools such as St. James R.C. Junior in Salford were entering regularly, and I was able to select their best players for the Lancs. U-12 teams. Their attendance at my tournaments depended on the headteacher being able to bring them by minibus. Parents proved not to have the required transport when the head was not available (e.g. when he had to take other pupils to other activities) so in due course, it became impossible to select their players. At least it showed the difficulty of finding and developing young chess players, when financial factors prevented it.

On 26/11/94, at Stoke-on-Trent, the NYCA U-14 event attracted 37 teams – yet another increase. This time the top 10 teams from 1993 played in the Championship section (which therefore meant Lancashire A played in the Major (21 teams), which all other A and B teams played in), and all the C teams and Leics. D played in the Minor (6 teams). All this was to initiate a 4-up, 4-down promotion and relegation system between the Championship and Major sections.

Lancs. A were 8<sup>th</sup>. out of 21 in the Major with 20.5 pts., and Lancs. B were 14<sup>th</sup>.= with 17 pts. Lancs. C were runners-up in the Minor (23.5 pts.), and so, pleasingly and encouragingly, collected medals for their efforts. Manchester were becoming stronger in 1993, and were even stronger in 1994, coming 2<sup>nd</sup>. in the Championship, and their B team 5<sup>th</sup>. in the Major, ahead of our A team. Our problem was that referred to previously – a lack of players going to weekend congresses. Of our 36 players only 4 had grades, the highest being 89.

Attendances: 7/1/95 at Burscough (**132**), 11/2/95 at Horwich (**147**), 7/10/95 at Fleetwood (**125**), 11/11/95 at Longridge (**151**).

On 25/11/95 at Stoke-on-Trent, the NYCA U-14 event attracted yet more teams – 39. Lancs. A finished 10<sup>th</sup>.= in the Major (20.5 pts.), Lancs. B were 13<sup>th</sup>.= (16.5 pts.) out of 22 teams (the 4<sup>th</sup>. strongest B team in the country). Lancs. C were 4<sup>th</sup>. out of 7 in the Minor (16 pts.). Indeed our playing strength was only similar to 1994, even though we now had 10 players with grades (highest still only 90), thanks to the work Bill Winter and Steve Lamb had put into the Poulton Junior Club and the now developing Cleveleys Junior Club. Manchester entered only one team, and dropped from 2<sup>nd</sup>. to 3<sup>rd</sup>. in the Championship. At least we were providing 36 juniors plus reserves the opportunity to experience County-level chess.

Attendances: 13/1/96 at Chorley (**133**), 3/2/96 at Horwich (**150**), 5/10/96 at Fleetwood (**156**), 9/11/96 at Longridge (**128**). At Fleetwood, 6-year-old James Hanley of Lancaster won the U-11A section with 6/6. The increases in attendances at the Fleetwood congress (which now included U-11 and U-9 sections) were a reflection of the development of the Cleveleys junior club, and the shift of the centre of junior chess activity from the Preston area.

On 23/11/96, at Stoke-on-Trent, the NYCA U-14 event again attracted 39 teams. We now had eight graded players on the A team, led by Craig Hanley (113), aged 12, and 6 other graded players on teams B and C. Lancs. A improved – to 5<sup>th</sup>. place (out of 22) in the Major (24 pts.), one short of promotion, but because Major winners Kent B could not be promoted, we were promoted for the 1997 event. Lancs. B were 11<sup>th</sup>. (18 pts.), and Lancs. C were 3<sup>rd</sup>. (out of 7) in the Minor (22.5 pts.). James Hanley (aged 6) was one of 4 Lancs. players who scored 4/6 in the reserves tournament. Manchester again took only one team (3<sup>rd</sup>.= in the Championship).

Attendances: 11/1/97 at Chorley (**109**), 8/2/97 at Haslingden (**149**), 4/10/97 at Fleetwood (**143**), 15/11/97 at Blackburn (**158**). (We were now receiving many U-9 entries from Blackburn, Euxton (Chorley), Preston, and Ormskirk.)

On 29/11/97 at Stoke-on-Trent, the last NYCA U-14 tournament I was involved in, attracted only 32 teams, with a new format. The Championship section kept its 10 A teams, but 7 more A teams formed the Major section, and all 12 B teams were in the Intermediate section, while the 3 C teams were in the Minor. Lancs. A finished 8<sup>th</sup>., so we had returned to previous standards (but faced relegation despite the improvement in now being ahead of Wiltshire and Somerset), with board 1 Craig Hanley now graded 155 and 23 other members of the three teams now with BCF grades. James Hanley, now 7, was board 9 on the B team, graded 55, and scored 2/3. Lancs. B were 5<sup>th</sup>. in the Intermediate, and Lancs. C were 2<sup>nd</sup>. in the Minor.

Attendances: 10/1/98 at Chorley (**152**), 7/2/98 at Rawtenstall (**162**).

Rawtenstall was the tournament at which I took my retirement and was presented with a commemorative inscribed glass bowl by Bill Winter on behalf of the LCA. I am grateful to have such an attractive souvenir of my stewardship. At a later committee meeting, to my surprise I was made an honorary vice-president of the LCA. I was delighted to be honoured in this way.

#### LANCASHIRE U-12 and U-15 CHAMPIONSHIPS

As the Lancs. U-15 Championship had not been held for some years, I decided to incorporate it into my annual February Congress, starting in 1994. From 1995 I ran the U-12 Championship in my annual January Congress.

**Lancs. U-12 Champions:**

1995: Craig Hanley (Lancaster)  
 1996: Craig Hanley  
 1997: Jan-Pang Cheung (Bolton), Cory Hazlehurst  
 (Saddleworth), Craig Lythgoe (Fleetwood)  
 1998: Toby Greenwood (Thornton Cleveleys)

**Lancs. U-15 Champions:**

1994: Lorna Burrows (St. Helens)  
 1995: Philip Pugh (Preston)  
 1996: Craig Hanley  
 1997: Craig Hanley  
 1998: Craig Hanley

CRAIG HANLEY and STEWART HASLINGER

In mid-2002, Craig Hanley (FM) was ranked 67<sup>th</sup>. in England with an Elo of 2331 (216 BCF). Stewart Haslinger was 80<sup>th</sup>. with an Elo of 2310 (214 BCF).

**HELPERS**

From 1987 regular help on tournament days (essential for running the sections, making the draw for each round) came for a few years from Walter Cottier of Poulton Chess Club, but who was giving up club chess about that time. Walter was especially helpful on the trip to Leningrad. Later Bill Winter (Poulton Chess Club) became a regular announcer in the body of the hall, plus section controller. Jon Persson of the Lancaster Club was a helper for many years, as also Mrs. Yvonne Dickinson of Q.E.G.S., Blackburn. Angela and Dermot Hanley were among the most supportive parents, bringing Craig and James to my junior tournaments whenever possible, even when Craig was British U-14 Champion. Among the many supportive teachers, Mrs. Baxter, head of Balshaw Lane Primary, Euxton, always brought pupils whenever she could. In my 11 years, I ran a total of 44 main tournaments (plus others, such as U-12 Trials in September). I am amazed that I was never too sick to miss even one of these tournaments. This could have presented problems for others. Each of the 44 tournaments needed an average of 5 people to make the draw for the sections. I always managed to find enough people for this, sometimes only just, but I usually had to run one section myself, the smallest section if I could manage it, in view of the work involved in the previous few days. So there were very many helpers in fact, and I can just express my thanks and thanks on behalf of the juniors.

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