

The Appleby Frodingham Chess Club Individual Lightning Championship 2016.

On Monday 10th December 2016 I drove to Scunthorpe to play in the Appleby Frodingham Chess Club Individual Lightning Championship. Meetings are held at the Appleby Frodingham Works Athletic Club, Brumby Hall, Ashby Road, Scunthorpe, which caters for a large variety of other sports including football, hockey, tennis, cricket, table tennis and snooker. There is a bar upstairs and several car parks. I have been a member for about 18 months and this was my first opportunity to participate in the event. Living off Anlaby High Road, Hull, the 21-mile journey via the Humber Bridge, South Ferriby, Winterton and Roxby takes under 40 minutes. At stake was The Findlay Cup which I was told dates back to the 1970s. Unfortunately, the trophy has never been engraved with details of the winners, so no historical data can be gleaned from that source. As often happens, I had a camera to hand and agreed to supply a report of the competition from a personal perspective plus photograph to the Hull & District Chess Association website.

Ten players attended the 5 round Swiss tournament, moves being made at 10 second intervals in response to a buzzer. Denis Georgiou (ECF 165) and reigning Club Champion, Steve Lewis (ECF 160) were strong favourites to take the title. I recalled that third seed, Jo Hutchinson (ECF 139), had won The Scunthorpe League Individual Lightning in 2014 with 5/5. I was fourth seed on ECF 138.

Round 1. R. Stokes (106) 0 – 1 D. G. Mills (138).

I opted for The English Defence (1. d4 e6 2. 4 b6 3. Nc3 Bb7 4. e4 Bb4) in the hope of forcing Robert onto what I thought might be unfamiliar ground. His standard play chess at the moment is significantly above his grade which should increase when the next ECF list is published in late January 2017. At such a fast rate of play, white can easily go wrong in the opening against this somewhat off beat system. Despite coming out of the opening a pawn to the good, some inaccurate responses to tactical threats against my kingside left me a pawn down. Fortunately I was able to consolidate and a skewer along white's second rank won sufficient material to force resignation. A bullet successfully dodged. Steve Lewis was not so lucky, sustaining an unexpected reverse.

Round 2., D. G. Mills (138) 1 – 0 J. Mainwaring (Ungraded).

John has returned to competitive chess in recent months and is a fellow member of the Bishops team in the Scunthorpe League. He has an estimated grade of 125 and when I occupy board 2 he is usually on board 3. This was the first time we had faced each other in any form of chess. My London System (1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Bf4) was met with an early ... c5 and ... c4. Play in the centre resulted in multiple exchanges, however I gained material in the process. On entering an untenable endgame, black resigned.

Round 3. D. Georgiou (165) ½ - ½ D. G. Mills (138).

Denis is board one for the Bishops team in The Scunthorpe & District League. I play board 2. My record against him is poor. In our first five games, when I was playing for Barton Chess Club, I lost just one and drew four. In the next five I earned a solitary draw and four defeats. Not so much me playing poorly as him performing very well. In a five round Swiss, with both of us on 100 %, a loss would probably have ended my chances of taking the title. I opted for a slightly off beat variation in the French Defence popularised 35 or 40 years ago by Oleg Romanishin. (1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Be7) On this occasion it paid dividends. Exchanges gave rise to an ending where we each had king, queen and half a dozen pawns. Denis proposed a draw as either of us had the opportunity of giving multiple checks to the opposing monarch. The offer was accepted.

Round 4. D. G. Mills (138) 1 – 0 Mike Liddle (125).

A Torre System this time, whereby white adopts the moves 1. d4 2. Nf3 3. Bg5. I generated attacking chances in the centre and against black's kingside, saddling him with a backward pawn on e6 in front of his king. My advanced 'f' pawn eventually forked black's king on e8 and rook on g8, soon afterwards prompting resignation. Elsewhere, Denis Georgiou lost to Steve Lewis.

Round 5. D. G. Mills (138) 1 – 0 Steve Lewis. (160).

Steve Lewis returned to competitive chess in season 2015/2016 following a period of ill health. He won the 2015/2016 Appleby Frodingham Club Championship with 9/12, half a point ahead of Denis Georgiou on 8½. After a first round loss, three wins had put him just ½ point behind me. A win would give Steve the title while a draw would be sufficient for me. In many respects this situation helped me. Steve would not accept a draw under any circumstances, so I also had to play for a win.

In our two standard play games, I had twice come close to draws playing white, only to let the ½ point slip through my fingers. As we were both due to play black, Steve – as the higher graded player – maintained his colour sequence. Another Torre System faced the King's Indian Defence. Piece exchanges resulted in equality, each of us having king, queen, 2 rooks plus multiple pawns. With a black rook on e5 the black queen moved to g5, only to be hit with a pawn fork via f4. A policy of offering exchanges that Steve could not afford gave me a winning position. Alert to the end, he deliberately played an unsound tactic that might have been successful at this speed. Fortunately, I found the correct move rather than the wrong one. A queen down, he resigned, conceding the title.

To the best of my knowledge, the last time I won an individual lightning chess tournament was in the 20th century whilst Secretary of Hull Civil Service Chess Club. John Mainwaring completed a 'Bishops' 1-2 by taking the runners-up place on 3½. As far as could be established, this is the first time that The Findlay Cup has journeyed outside Lincolnshire. Many thanks to Mike Liddle who took the photograph and Denis Georgiou who organised the tournament and pairings.



Club Secretary, Denis Georgiou, (right) presents 'The Findlay Trophy' to David Mills.