

**SHARING A BOARD WITH ROELOF DOUWE WESTRA.
(10th April 1932 - 26th September 2022.)
By David G. Mills.**

Looking back over my early days playing chess, it still amazes me to think that within six or seven years of learning the moves, I had progressed to defeating players of a similar age and older in contests at school, and on to featuring on board one for the Hull Grammar Schools Chess League team in Division One of the Hull and District Chess Association League. Some of the best exponents of the game in East Yorkshire appeared opposite me during the 1970/71 season, with Roelof Westra at the top of the list. A season return of one win, one draw and seven defeats was far from embarrassing, and the gain in terms of experience, incalculable.

Delving into contemporary Hull and District Chess Association documents in my possession, Roelof's name initially appears in the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Carron House, Beverley Road, Hull on Tuesday 25th May 1965. He had finished first in the Premier Section of the inaugural Hull Congress in 1964. Similar details appear in the Secretary's Report, penned by Sir John Lawson:-

Premier.	1.	R. D. Westra	Holland	4½	
	2.	J. E. Fletcher	Leeds	3½	
	3.	J. W. Atkinson	Hull	3	Joint Hull and District Champions.
		R. P. Ross	Hull	3	
Major.	1.	D. Parker			
		J. Rymchuk	}	4	
		D. Westra			

Hull Junior Championship A. P. Owst

The above indicates that Roelof was not regarded as a local player at this time. The situation had changed by the time of the Fifth Hull Chess Congress in 1968. By finishing first in the Premier Section on that occasion, he became Hull and District Champion.

My first joust with Roelof took place on 15th February 1971 – just over a month after my 19th birthday. The contest lasted 41 moves, with me on the end of a lesson in positional play.

R. D. Westra - D. G. Mills [D64] H.D.C.A. Division 1. 15.02.1971.

Hull 'C' v Hull Grammar Schools Chess League. Board 1.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.Bg5 Nbd7 6.e3 c6 7.Rc1 0–0
8.Qc2 dxc4 9.Bxc4 Nd5 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.0–0 Nxc3 12.Qxc3 Re8 13.Rfd1
b5 14.Be2 Bb7 15.b4 Nb6 16.a3 Rad8 17.Ne5 Rd6 18.e4 f6 19.Nf3 e5
20.dxe5 Rxd1+ 21.Rxd1 fxe5 22.Qd2 a6 23.Ng5 h6 24.Qa2+ Kh8 25.Nf7+
Kh7 26.Nd6 Rd8 27.Nf5 Rxd1+ 28.Bxd1 Qd7 29.Bg4 Nc4 30.h4 Qd3
31.Ne7 Qxa3 32.Qe2 Qc1+ 33.Kh2 Qf4+ 34.g3 Qf6 35.Bf5+ Kh8 36.Ng6+
Kg8 37.Qg4 Nd6 38.Be6+ Kh7 39.f4 Qxg6? 40.Bg8+ Kxg8 41.Qxg6 1–0

Relegation for the Hull Grammar Schools Chess League team at the end of the 1970/71 season, and launching 'Britannia Chess Club' (later 'Hull Civil Service Chess Club') in season 1974/75, meant that our paths did not cross again until season 1975/76. The Hull and District Chess Association Individual Handicap Knockout gave the lower graded player in each pairing the white pieces, and a time control of 12 moves per half hour. The higher graded player had to make a number based upon the difference between the respective grades. In this game, Roelof had to play 38 moves every half hour. If the contest was drawn, a replay was required with colours reversed. Two draws, and the lower graded player went through to the next round, or won the trophy if it occurred in the final. Having been ground down positionally in 1971, I chose a sharp strategy and played quickly. Roelof favoured the King's Indian Defence, and I adopted The Four Pawns Attack, following analysis in the 1973 Batsford publication on that opening. I stayed with the book line up to move 13, by which time he would have realised what was happening. Roelof chose a line leading to equality, according to authors Barden, Hartston and Keene. Unfortunately, I missed 31. Rd5 with a winning position, and a draw was agreed at move 48. This was as near as I ever came to defeating Roelof. A week later, playing the French Defence, the loss of a pawn at move 14 led to resignation on move 43.

D. G. Mills - R. D. Westra [A68]

H.D.C.A. Individual Handicap KO 1975/76. 01.12.1975.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 0–0 5.f4 d6 6.Nf3 c5 7.d5 e6 8.Be2 exd5
9.cxd5 b5 10.e5 dxe5 11.fxe5 Ng4 12.Bg5 f6 13.exf6 Bxf6 14.Qd2 Bxg5
15.Nxg5 b4 16.Nce4 Nf6 17.d6 Bb7 18.Bc4+ Kh8 19.Nxf6 Qxf6 20.0–0–0
Qf4 21.b3 Nd7 22.Ne6 Qxd2+ 23.Rxd2 Rf6 24.Re1 Re8 25.Rde2 Bc6
26.Kd2 Nb6 27.Re5 Nxc4+ 28.bxc4 Bd7 29.Nxc5 Rxe5 30.Rxe5 Rxd6+
31.Kc2? 31.Rd5! 31...Bf5+ 32.Kb3 a5 33.Ka4 Rd2 34.Kxa5 Rxa2+
35.Kxb4 Rxg2 36.Ne6 Bxe6 37.Rxe6 Kg7 38.Re7+ Kh6 39.c5 Rxh2 40.c6
Rc2 41.Kb5 g5 42.Kb6 g4 43.Kb7 g3 44.c7 g2 45.Re1 Kg5 46.Rg1 Rb2+
47.Ka7 Ra2+ 48.Kb7 ½–½

Roelof was always generous in offering his services to the local association and clubs. This frequently involved giving simultaneous displays. At one such event, on 14th January 1976, he took 55 moves to overcome my Dutch Defence without allowing me any prospect of counterplay. A week later, in a Thomas Atkinson Trophy match, Hull Civil Service v Hull 'C', I had white, and gave up a piece for three pawns in the hope that the imbalance might offer chances of a win. This proved not to be the case. I resigned on move 41.

Season 1976/77, and a semi-final game in the Hull and District Chess Association Individual Handicap Trophy. Result – a 28 move loss. Two games in the Hull Chess Club 1977/78 Championship – 28 move loss with white, trying the King's Indian Attack and a 22-move loss with black, trying Owen's Defence. (I was under the influence of a Mike Basman cassette!)

In both 1987 and 1988, I drove to Market Weighton Chess Club for two simultaneous displays. Despite dropping a pawn at the first event, Roelof held a draw in 38 moves. On the second occasion, a solid strategy against my Polish Defence (1.d4 b5) gave him a 43-move win.

R. D. Westra - D. G. Mills [A40]

Market Weighton Simultaneous Display. 19.09.1988.

1.d4 b5 2.Nf3 Bb7 3.e3 a6 4.Be2 e6 5.0-0 Nf6 6.Nbd2 c5 7.c3 h6 8.Qc2 Nc6 9.dxc5 Bxc5 10.Nb3 Be7 11.e4 Qc7 12.Be3 Rc8 13.Nfd2 Ne5 14.Bd4 d5 15.f4 Nc4 16.e5 Ne4 17.Nxe4 dxe4 18.Nd2 Nxd2 19.Qxd2 0-0 20.Qe3 Bd5 21.f5 Bg5 22.Qf2 e3 23.Qg3 exf5 24.Rxf5 Be4 25.Rxg5 hxg5 26.Qxg5 Bd5 27.Rf1 Be6 28.Rf4 b4 29.Rh4 Rfd8 30.Qh5 Kf8 31.Qh8+ Ke7 32.Qxg7 Rf8 33.Qf6+ Ke8 34.Bxa6 bxc3 35.bxc3 Rb8 36.Qf1 Bxa2 37.Bb5+ Kd8 38.Qf6+ Kc8 39.Ba6+ Kd7 40.Bxe3 Rb1+ 41.Kf2 Be6 42.Rd4+ Kc6 43.Rc4+ 1-0

Our next meeting did not take place for nearly ten years, during which period I ceased involvement with Hull and District Chess Association. An ill tempered, alcohol fuelled Hull and District Chess Association Annual General Meeting staged at the Queens Hotel, George Street, made several controversial decisions. Records indicate it to have taken place in 1991. One successful motion introduced allegro finishes to games in league fixtures. (Such a time control had previously only applied in cup matches.) A proposal in the name of R. P. Ross to eject Barton-on-Humber Chess Club from the Association on the grounds that it was located 'on the wrong side of the River Humber' was passed amid scenes of uproar that I had never witnessed before at a chess gathering and hope never to see again. It was clear to me that these actions were the result

of a group of players taking concerted action to force through policies that were unpopular with the members of many other constituent clubs. Barton-on-Humber Chess Club's expulsion from Hull and District Chess Association gave rise to several players, including Robert Dennington (Barton-on-Humber Chess Club Secretary), Andrew Napier and me (both Hull Civil Service) walking out and subsequently founding 'The Humber Chess League', which operated for about 15 years. It included several teams from Hull plus others from Goole and Barton-on-Humber and also organised an individual championship.

A game in the Hull and District Chess Association Individual Handicap Knockout Tournament took place on 1st June 1998. On this occasion we were contesting the final, where a draw with white would have won me the trophy. Sadly, it was not to be. The Trompovski Attack gave rise to a 34-move defeat. Just over 18 months later, the following sharp Najdorf Sicilian game featured in a Hull and District Chess Association Four Board League match.

R. D. Westra - D. G. Mills [B99] R. D. Westra playing for Beverley.

H.D.C.A. 4 Board League Division 1. 24.01.2001.

Sutton Tigers v Beverley.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 Be7
8.Qf3 Qc7 9.0-0-0 Nbd7 10.g4 b5 11.Bxf6 Nxf6 12.g5 Nd7 13.f5 Nc5
14.f6 gxf6 15.gxf6 Bf8 16.a3 Rb8 17.Bh3 b4 18.axb4 Rxb4 19.Nd5 exd5
20.Bxc8 dxe4 21.Qc3 Rxd4 22.Rxd4 Qxc8 23.Rxe4+ Kd8 24.Rc4 Rg8
25.Rd1 Kc7 26.b4 Bh6+ 27.Kb1 Qb7 28.Ka1 Rb8 29.Rxc5+ dxc5
30.Qe5+ Kc8 31.Qe8+ Kc7 32.Qe7+ 1-0

By season 2007/2008, Sutton-on-Hull Chess Club had folded following my departure from that part of East Hull. I was now a member of Beverley Chess Club, as my girlfriend was living there. A Hull and District Summer League match ended in a 27-move defeat.

R. D. Westra - D. G. Mills [A40] R. D. Westra playing for Hull '?'.
H.D.C.A. Under 400 Summer League. 20.06.2007.

Beverley '?' v Hull '?'. Board 1.

1.d4 b5 2.e4 Bb7 3.f3 a6 4.a4 b4 5.Be3 e6 6.Bd3 Nf6 7.Ne2 d5 8.e5 Nfd7

9.c3 c5 10.Nd2 Nc6 11.0-0 c4 12.Bb1 b3 13.Qe1 Qc7 14.f4 g6 15.g4 f5
16.exf6 Nxf6 17.Qh4 Bg7 18.f5 gxf5 19.gxf5 e5 20.dxe5 Nxe5 21.Nd4 Bc8
22.Bf4 Kf7 23.Kh1 Ne4 24.Nxe4 dxe4 25.Qh5+ Kf8 26.Bxe4 Ra7 27.f6
1-0

My final encounter with Roelof took place at the Carnegie Library, Anlaby Road, Hull in December 2008. For a short time, this was the home of Hull Chess Club. The opening transposed into a Trompovski Attack and at move 52 I offered a draw – the first time I had done this against Roelof with any degree of confidence. The proposal was accepted. As we reset the pieces, a smile came across his face, as he commented that I seemed pleased at the outcome of the game. I am convinced that he was recognising my efforts in previous contests, especially as it had taken over 37 years to avoid defeat when playing off level terms. Mentioning this to him generated a hearty laugh and handshake – typical of his respect for the game and his opponents.

D. G. Mills - R. D. Westra [A47] R. D. Westra playing for Hull 'C'.
H.D.C.A. Division 1. 03.12.2008. Hull 'C' v Beverley 'A'. Board 3.
1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 b6 3.Bg5 Bb7 4.Bxf6 exf6 5.Nbd2 d5 6.e3 Bd6 7.Bd3 0–0
8.0–0 Re8 9.a4 a5 10.Nh4 g6 11.g3 Nd7 12.Ng2 f5 13.h4 Nf6 14.Nf4 Ba6
15.Bxa6 Rxa6 16.Qf3 Ne4 17.Rad1 c6 18.Nxe4 fxe4 19.Qe2 Ra7 20.c4
Bxf4 21.exf4 Rd7 22.Rfe1 Rde7 23.cxd5 Qxd5 24.Qe3 f5 25.Kg2 Rd8
26.b3 Red7 27.Kh2 b5 28.Rc1 Qxd4 29.Rxc6 bxa4 30.bxa4 Qxe3
31.Rxe3 Rd2 32.Kg1 Ra2 33.Rb3 Rd1+ 34.Kg2 Rd7 35.Rb8+ Kg7 36.h5
e3 37.hxg6 exf2 38.Rb1 hxg6 39.Rf1 Rxa4 40.Rxf2 Rad4 41.Re2 Rd2
42.Rxd2 Rxd2+ 43.Kf3 a4 44.Ra6 Rd3+ 45.Kf2 a3 46.Kg2 Rd2+ 47.Kh3
a2 48.g4 fxg4+ 49.Kxg4 Kf7 50.f5 gxf5+ 51.Kxf5 Ke7 52.Ke4= ½–½

Although we met occasionally at chess events in the years that followed, there were to be no more games. I always received a warm greeting, handshake and smile on each occasion. Roelof's passing has brought home to me a realisation that I have been fortunate to pit my wits against one of the greats of Hull & District and Yorkshire chess. Some of the games may eventually appear in articles written by future chess historians or in an Eric Fisher publication. I understand that he is currently working to compile a collection of Roelof's games. All 14 of mine are already in his hands. Sometimes, you do not have to be a strong player to appear in game collections. Simply lose against the right person! R.I.P Roelof Douwe Westra – Legend of chess in Hull and District – and beyond.



Market Weighton Chess Club 19th September 1998.
Simultaneous Display by R. D. Westra.



Sutton-on-Hull Chess Club at The Saltshouse Tavern on 28th September 1998.
Simultaneous Display by R. D. Westra.
Opponents – M. Pollard, D. Stothard, J. B. Leason and M. Colebrook.



Sutton-on-Hull Chess Club at The Saltshouse Tavern on 28th September 1998.
Simultaneous Display by R. D. Westra.
Opponents – S. Donoghue, M. S. Bettley, A. D. Bettley, R. L. W. Grant and J. P. Lawson.



Sutton-on-Hull Chess Club at The Saltshouse Tavern on 28th September 1998.
Simultaneous Display by R. D. Westra.
Opponent – M. Pollard.



Sutton-on-Hull Chess Club at The Saltshouse Tavern on 28th September 1998.
Simultaneous Display by R. D. Westra.
Opponent – W. Power.



Sutton-on-Hull Chess Club at The Saltshouse Tavern on 28th September 1998.
Simultaneous Display by R. D. Westra.
Opponent – D. G. Mills.



York & District Chess Association v Hull & District Chess Association.
York Railway Institute. 31st May 2003.
Board 1. White: T. M. Turner v Black: R. D. Westra.



Hull Chess Congress 4th – 6th November 2005.
Quality Royal Station Hotel.
R. D. Westra playing white.



Hull Chess Congress 2006 at Hull University.
J. P. Lawson standing and R. D. Westra seated.



Humber Chess League Robin Pape Memorial Speed Chess Tournament 2006.
Winner: R. D. Westra. H.C.L. Secretary: S. Donoghue.
Tournament Controller: J. P. Lawson.

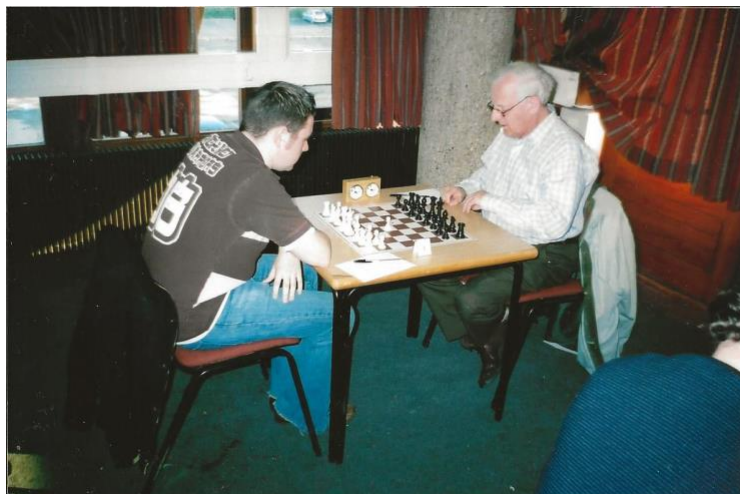
Some of Roelof's titled opponents.



Hull Chess Club Rapid Play 14th February 1998. Black against M. J. Turner.



Hull Chess Congress 1999. White against R. J. D. Palliser



Hull Chess Congress 2006. Black against Craig Hanley.