

Dave Rowe, 1948-2012

It is difficult from a mere recitation of the posts Dave Rowe held over the years to convey the extent to which he dominated organisation of the Birmingham & District Chess League for around thirty years. Others whose memory stretches back to those days would have to tell of when he first played in the League as a member of Smethwick (or possibly by then Warley) Chess Club. As far as I can trace his name first appeared in the League Handbook in 1967, in the possibly slightly unexpected role of winner of the League Individual for Division Five; he only became an official of any sort in 1974 when, unsurprisingly in view of his profession of accountancy, he became one of the League's auditors.

A couple of years later he took over the critical role of Record Secretary, a post which probably suited his temperament better than any other he did. I was told once – by whom I cannot remember – that playing games with Dave in his younger years was always likely to end up organising some sort of league with tables and the like! He held the post on that occasion for four seasons, which given the size of the league at the height of the Fischer-inspired boom in chess was an impressive achievement, particularly for someone who was also running a successful accountancy practice. However, when he gave it up, having found a suitable replacement who had just retired and fancied something to occupy his time, Dave was only out of the hot seat for a very short time: the General Secretary of the day was seconded to Saudi Arabia, and Dave was parachuted in as a replacement.

After seven years in that post, which I am certain he enjoyed less than doing Records, I was persuaded to replace him and he reverted to Records Secretary. There followed several years when the League was almost run from his house, as his then partner Maureen was editing the Bulletin! He had also successfully qualified as a BCF arbiter and during this period was heavily involved in the organisation and running of most of the local congresses, notably the Midland Opens which he persuaded his club to take over as a franchise in the 1990s, and the Warwickshire Championships. It was when he collapsed during one of the latter that I, at least, became aware of how his health was starting to fail. We can all mutter about over-fondness for tobacco and alcohol, but few should not follow that with a quick sotto voce “there but for the grace of God go I”.

Despite failing health, when I finally insisted on giving up the post League Secretary, Dave was the only person who was willing to step in and take the job on: he took over from the person to whom he had handed the reins sixteen years earlier! But he was like that: if a job needed doing and he felt he could do it he would always give it a go, and do it to the best of his ability. Having found another willing replacement he even took the job on for a third time when it became vacant again in more controversial circumstances.

The Dave I will remember is the Dave of the late night phone calls in the eighties and nineties, with the sharp brain, ready wit, and a stock of anecdotes. The slightly sad figure to which his illness reduced him in the last few years did him no justice. He was a great character, and without him the BDCL would not be what it is, and we should remember him for that.

Dave Thomas

David Rowe

It is with deep regret that the Birmingham Chess Club records the death of David, our club Secretary, during a further operation at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

He is renowned for his services over many years to the B.D.C.L. and wider chess circles and will be sorely missed, as an organiser, his knowledge of the League Rules, his willingness to help out in any crisis and as a player of dependability.

David joined Birmingham when he learned that we were so short of players that we were having to consider folding the club. He stated that he did not want to see club with a history in excess of 150 years losing support and having to withdraw from the League.

As well as playing David proved his willingness to take over the job as secretary and add his support for all activities. As a result of his earlier operation David felt that his playing ability was affected and would need to give up as secretary at the end of this season.

The members of Birmingham Chess Club have valued his contribution and dedication to our club and to the game of chess which he loved and supported over so many years.

B. D. Hopkins
Acting Secretary
Birmingham Chess Club