

To all chess friends

I have the sad duty to inform you that Olton Chess Club Life President, Bill Yeomans, passed away 2 weeks ago, aged 94. Bill had played for the club since the mid 1960s and only stopped playing a few years ago due to ill health. Bill went into sheltered accommodation after his wife Jean passed away and later into a home. The pair were inseparable and relied on each other in different ways.



I first met Bill when I started playing in the early eighties in the division 9 team. Bill and Dennis Bishop shared the top boards. Bill was most noted for the 'Bill Yeomans opening' which involved a double-fianchetto against any defence. There wasn't much more of a plan after that but many a time I would see that Bill had grabbed a Rook in the corner. He would have a big grin on his face. He enjoyed chess immensely but would never be anything other than a bottom team player. That said, he would have a go against anyone.

Bill once came into the chess room at Tyseley WMC and asked 'who that scruffy guy was sitting in the lounge?'. It was the late Tony Miles. I am sure Bill knew that.

In the early days, I recall sitting in the back of his builder's van on top of a gas cylinder on the way to matches. There was no preparation or comfort then. I would arrive shaken not stirred and covered in cement dust. I spoke to Bill's son Kevin, one of Olton's former great players and recalled the people who have played for the club since those times and still do. I also met previously Bill's other sons Colin and Michael.

In 1995, Bill was elected club Life President, when the previous incumbent was found to have passed away. He was very honoured to hold this post until his death. Even though dementia set in, the one thing Bill could do was remember the moves in chess and he played his grandson up until recently.

Bill's Funeral will take place at Yardley Crematorium, on Thursday 14th April at 10:45am

Yardley Road, South Yardley, Birmingham, B25 8NA

Then back to Tyseley Working Mens Club (Olton's venue)

573 Warwick Road, Tyseley, Birmingham, B11 2EX (approx. 12 noon)

Richard Reynolds

Olton Chess Club