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First Edition

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# CAPITAL CHESS

CANBERRA CHESS CLUB to 1954

BY

DENIS JESSOP

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CANBERRA 2012

# **CAPITAL CHESS**

**A Brief History of**

**CANBERRA CHESS CLUB**

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**until 1954**

**by**

**DENIS JESSOP**

**Sometime President of the Canberra Chess Club,**

**ACT Chess Association and Australian Chess Federation**

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## PREFACE

I have for some time wanted to record the history of the Canberra Chess Club. It is by far the oldest Chess Club in Canberra and almost all of its records are lost. The recent digitalisation by the National Library of *The Canberra Times* has made this undertaking practicable though only to 1954. Canberra's sole daily newspaper is virtually the only source of information about the history of chess in Canberra, especially in those early years. I am indebted to *The Canberra Times* and to the National Library for the opportunity readily to access this invaluable source through the Library's Trove Program

The history of the Club is supplemented by available material on the history of chess in Canberra before the Canberra Chess Club was formed in 1941. I have added as appendices lists of Club Presidents to 1954, Club Champions to 2011, taken from the impressive Club Championship Trophy, and Club Tournaments results to 1954 where available.

I joined the Canberra Chess Club in December 1952 as a 17 year old just after matriculating from Canberra High School. There was a chess club in the school but junior chess did not become organised in Canberra until much more recently. Nevertheless, there were four juniors in the Canberra Chess Club and this is mentioned in the text.

I had learnt chess basics from my father some years before. By 1953 I was self-taught via *A Guide to Good Chess* by Cecil Purdy, then recently published. I was a very raw young player in those years at the Canberra Chess Club.

I was also a member in 1954 but then left for Melbourne to study, playing occasionally at the Club in University holidays until the end of 1957.

I was able to meet many of the Club members mentioned though I knew very few of them well. Where my memory is good enough, I have given my recollections of them and of the Club at appropriate points in the text.

Denis Jessop

February 2012

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## PART 1

### CHESS IN CANBERRA – BEGINNINGS

Canberra was chosen as the site for the capital city of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1908. It was officially established and named on 12 March 1913 in a ceremony on Capitol Hill. That was not a propitious time as World War I broke out the following year and progress on building the new city was delayed. Nevertheless, it was sufficient for the Commonwealth Parliament to move to Canberra from Melbourne upon the opening of the provisional Parliament House by the Duke of York (later King George VI) on 9 May 1927. Construction of the city was further delayed first by the Great Depression in the 1930s and then by World War II. Only the minimum number of buildings necessary was built. The city's population at the beginning of World War II was about 10,000.



King O'Malley drives the first peg at Canberra, 1913

There was interest in chess in the area from an early stage. *The Australian Chess Annual* (1896) edited by H. B. Bignold records (at p. 36) the existence of a Queanbeyan chess club called The Queanbeyan School of Arts Chess and Draughts Club with a membership of 20. It met on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at its club rooms at the Queanbeyan School of Arts. Chess even received some attention locally in a series of sermons preached in a Queanbeyan church and based on chess pieces and a humorous mention (1910 style) in the *Queanbeyan Age* on 5 August 1910. [1](#)

#### A Chess Club for Canberra - Early Steps

The *Federal Capital Pioneer* of 25 July 1925 carried a notice from Mr George Meyers, P.O., The Gap [2](#), seeking expressions of interest from persons wishing to form a chess club in Canberra. There is no record of any response. Yet it may have had some effect as *The Canberra Times* reported on 2 August 1927 that

Chess enthusiasts in the Territory are anxious to revive the almost moribund Canberra Chess Club, which has declined into a niche of things forgotten with the inauguration of new institutions, clubs, associations and societies. One of the few remaining strongholds of chess is the Bachelors' Quarters [3](#) and here enthusiasm for the ancient game remains in the ascendant.

The forthcoming influx of civil servants should include a large number of chess players and the club may be assured of a satisfactory membership.

Persons interested in the rejuvenation of the chess club should communicate with Mr. C. Pike, Social Service office.



The Bachelors' Quarters in 1912 (Photographer unknown)

Apparently a club had been formed in 1926 though there is no report of it in the local press. The 1927 call must to have gone unheeded. It was not mentioned again though interest in the idea remained.

*The Canberra Times* reported on 23 March 1928

Proposals for reviving the Canberra Chess Club are receiving the approval of chess enthusiasts in the Territory. It is intended to hold a meeting shortly to place matters on a sound basis, preparatory to the long winter evenings.

Again, on 31 March,

Chess players in Canberra are endeavouring to arrange a championship tournament to take place, probably, in the early winter.

Rules governing play are now being prepared and the promoters of the tournament are anxious to discover a chess enthusiast who will present a cup for annual competition.

The Canberra Chess Club is being revived and all intending members are invited to communicate with the secretary *c/o* Social Service Office, Acton.

It may be speculated that the Secretary was Mr. C. Pike mentioned in the newspaper report of 2 August 1927.

A short time later, on 5 May 1928, *The Canberra Times* said

To stimulate interest in the proposed formation of a chess club in the Federal Capital Territory, Mr. Spencer Crakanthorp, chess champion of New South Wales, will play two correspondence games against Mr. Leslie Saunders, a former Middlesex County chess player and the secretary of the Canberra sub-branch of the R.S.S.L.L.A.

The moves, as received, will appear in "*The Canberra Times*" and we feel convinced that residents who are interested in chess will follow with keenness the progress of the games. Mr. Crakanthorp has expressed a wish to bring a team of Sydney players to Canberra in the near future and the date of the proposed visit will be announced later.

In November last the Bachelors' Quarters played a six-board aside match with the Parliamentary staff, which resulted in a narrow win for the latter team by half a point. Chess enthusiasts are invited to communicate with Mr. Saunders, Box 44, P.O., Canberra.

On 23 May it said,

Two correspondence chess matches are at present proceeding ... The first match in which Mr. Crakanthorp has played the Vienna opening, promises some interesting developments. Mr. Saunders commenced the second match with the Ruy Lopez opening. The games are creating considerable interest among chess players in the territory, and it is hoped shortly to inaugurate a chess club.

Three days later the early moves were given in each game and further moves promised in the following Saturday's edition. Unfortunately no more moves were published. <sup>4</sup>

By 11 July 1928 *The Canberra Times* could say

the two games have now reached a most interesting stage. In No. 1 game, with two minor pieces, and two pawns only exchanged, positional advantage rests with the champion; while in No. 2 game, with the major pieces and all the pawns left, Mr. Saunders' position is considered favourable.

continuing, ruefully

Unless Mr. Crakanthorp springs a surprise, these games are not likely to be finished until September.

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The same report announced that

Senator J. Thomas, a keen chess enthusiast, who crossed swords with Mr. Saunders at the Senate, a few nights ago, has kindly promised to give a special trophy to the winner of the forthcoming tournament, to be held amongst players in the Federal Capital, in the near future.

I have not found any record of the tournament having taken place or of the promised trophy.

### **A New Chess Club Formed**

On 29 July 1929 *The Canberra Times* reported a proposed meeting of interested players at Mr Harry Notaras' <sup>5</sup> cafe at Kingston to revive interest in the formation of another club, following the demise of the 1926 club.

The formation of the club was announced in *The Canberra Times* on 31 July 1929:

A meeting of chess enthusiasts was held at Mr. H. Notaras' cafe, Kingston, last night when it was decided to form a chess club to be named the Canberra Chess Club.

A committee was elected comprising Messrs. W. E. Miller, captain, Mr H. Notaras, treasurer, and A. E. W. (name indecipherable) and G. Byrnes secretaries. Other members include Mr. W. Farmer Whyte, Mr. and Mrs. Monohan, Mr. W. J. Moore and Mr. R. T. Why? And several others have promised their support. A yearly subscription of 5/- will be charged, which includes admittance and membership. Weekly meetings will be held on Tuesday evenings at 7p.m. At Mr H. Notaras' cafe, Kingston, commencing on August 6.

This club apparently also lapsed as it is not mentioned again. But one of those involved in the formation was Mr W. Farmer Whyte <sup>6</sup> who was to become a prominent member of the present Canberra Chess Club when it was formed 12 years later.



Giles Street, Kingston in 1928

### **A proposed Chess and Draughts Club**

The next mention of a chess club in Canberra appears on 7 September 1933 when a body called the Canberra Chess and Draughts Club was formed by Canberra chess enthusiasts again including Mr H. Notaras – clear evidence that the 1929 club had failed.

*The Canberra Times* said

As a result of a meeting of chess enthusiasts, which was held this week, a Canberra Chess and Draughts Club has been formed.

There was a large attendance at the meeting which was held at Kingston, and the following office-bearers were elected: President. Mr. W. Miller; secretary, Mr. G. Butcher; assistant-secretary, Mr. Price; treasurer, Mr. H. Notaras.

It was decided that there should be a meeting of the club every Monday night, when competition games will be arranged. The meetings will take place at Manuka Arcade. Several strong



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chess players have been found among the members of the club, and it is hoped that when the club becomes sufficiently organised, a challenge may be sent to Goulburn enthusiasts.

Yet the efforts of the chess enthusiasts seem to have led to nothing as chess is not mentioned again until 1941 except to record that James Watson, the 14-year-old son of Dr Watson, of Gungahleen, Canberra<sup>Z</sup>, was the runner-up in the Metropolitan Chess Club's junior championship held in Sydney on Thursday, 19 December 1935.

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## PART 2

### THE CANBERRA CHESS CLUB IS FORMED

#### 1941

Late in 1941, a burst of activity saw the formation of the Canberra Chess Club that still exists. This was reported in some detail in *The Canberra Times*:

Mr. R. W. Pascoe, Lockyer Street, Griffith, is endeavouring to form a club in Canberra, and is anxious to get in touch with local players.

If sufficient support can be secured for a Club it is proposed to arrange visits of instruction and simultaneous play from Messrs. Koshnitsky and Purdy, who have promised their interest and help (4 September 1941)

At a well attended meeting at the Hotel Canberra the Canberra Chess Club was formed, and there are several strong players available. The office-bearers, to be confirmed at a general meeting on October 10, are: President, Mr. W. Farmer Whyte; treasurer, Mr. H. A. Fuller; secretary, Mr. R. W. Pascoe; committee, Messrs. Eddy, Edwards, Moore and Sergeant Pomeroy <sup>8</sup>, R.A.A.F. The objective will be the formation of groups in the various suburbs. (23 September 1941)

Encouraging support is forthcoming for the formation of a Chess Club in Canberra. Mr. R. W. Pascoe, of Lockyer St. Griffith, reports that small social groups which have been meeting at players' homes for years past, have been strengthened by Army, Navy, and Air Force players. Four new groups have been formed, and many players have not yet been contacted. The Canberra Chess Club will hold its next meeting on October 10 and Mr. Pascoe will welcome new players. (2 October 1941)

The first meeting of players in the newly-formed Canberra Chess Club will be held in the Blue Room, Hotel Canberra, tonight. Play will begin at 8 o'clock and visitors will be welcomed. (10 October 1941)

The first playing night of the Canberra Chess Club was held in the smoke room of Hotel Canberra last Friday. Twenty players attended and the first lady member proved herself a strong

player. An unexpected visitor was one of the Netherlands East Indies Mission, who was a skilful chessist. The president of the Club (Mr. W. Farmer Whyte) welcomed members and visitors. The next meeting will be on November 7 at Hotel Ainslie. (15 October 1941)

The committee of the Canberra Chess Club has drafted a constitution to be presented to the Club at the next meeting on November 7. A Club ladder is being prepared, and match games will be played as soon as possible. The preliminary grading will be approximate only and members will soon find their real level. Immediately after the ladder is temporarily stationary, tournament games will be instituted. (29 October 1941)

On Friday the Canberra Chess Club was formally inaugurated, a constitution was adopted, and officers elected. Mr. W. Farmer Whyte is the president and Mr. L. J. Eddy vice president, Messrs. Edwards, Moore, Nette and Sgt. Pomeroy the committee, Mr. Fuller treasurer, Mr. Pascoe secretary, and Mr. Cumming auditor. The holding of meetings on the first and third Fridays in each month is to be given a three months trial. (13 November 1941)

It is proposed to inaugurate a club ladder and arrange match games at the next meeting of the Chess Club, which will be held at Hotel Canberra on Friday. (19 November 1941)

Mr. Gregory Kosknitsky, the Australian chess champion, paid a visit to Canberra yesterday and last evening was entertained by members of the Canberra Chess Club at Hotel Canberra. Mr. Farmer Whyte, president of the club, extended a welcome and in responding Mr. Kosknitsky expressed his pleasure at the formation of the Canberra Club and promised to give it all the assistance possible. At the conclusion Mr. Kosknitsky gave an exhibition of simultaneous chess against 24 players, being successful in winning 21 of the games. Mr. Eddy, of the club, was the only player to secure an outright win against the champion, while Mr. Fuller secured a win on adjudication after a draw, and Mr. Lord scored a draw. (29 November 1941)

So, when it finally happened, the Canberra Chess Club was established twice – first on 23 September 1941 when it was “formed” and then on 13 November 1941 when it was “formally inaugurated” with slightly different office-bearers. With such a solid beginning, it could be expected to prosper.

The Club met first at the Hotel Canberra but soon transferred to the Croquet Pavilion of the Canberra Croquet Club that was adjacent to the Hotel Canberra. Meetings were held on Fridays at 8pm.



The Croquet Pavilion at the Canberra Croquet Club (photographer unknown)

### 1942

The first Annual Meeting was held at the Croquet Pavilion on Friday, 23 October 1942. It was reported that it had been a successful year. The President (Mr W. Farmer Whyte) reviewed the Club's activities. The annual report showed that the membership had grown from 11 to 42 at the close of the year and, despite calls for war service, was still 36. It was hoped that ladder games would be continued during the ensuing year and, in view of the loss of personnel to the services, a drive for new members was recommended to the incoming committee.

The following office-bearers were elected:

President, Mr W. Farmer Whyte;

Vice-president, Mr J. E. Edwards [9](#);

Secretary and treasurer, Mr H. A. Fuller [10](#);

Captain, Mr E. B. Smith;

Committee, Messrs C. Lane-Poole [11](#), R. A. Broinowski [12](#), P. W. Nette [13](#) and R. W. Pascoe.

A presentation of a giant king was made by the President to the Club Champion, Mr R. W. Pascoe. [14](#)

### The Championship Trophy

The king trophy has been awarded to every club champion since. It is, in essence, the Club's token of authenticity as well as now being virtually a Canberra heritage item.



The Club Championship Trophy (photo by D. A. Jessop)

### 1943

At the Annual Meeting on 29 October 1943 the membership was stated to be 32 and the bank balance £24/13/5. It was decided to invest £20 in war savings certificates.

Mr R.W. Pascoe again won the Club Championship.

The possibility of the Club's obtaining more adequate accommodation was discussed, as it was thought likely that there would be an increase in membership after the war. A sub-committee was appointed to consider the matter and discuss it with the government authorities. It may be that this went the way of many sub-committees as I have not found a trace of any of its deliberations or discussions with government, if they occurred.

The Annual Report stated:

An ideal plan would be to have its own premises in some central position. Post-war expansion in Canberra must take place and, as the civic authorities should not neglect the cultural side of the city's activities, it may be possible to get a suitable building constructed on a somewhat similar basis to that which applies in the case of the Croquet Club. It may be that such a building could be obtained in conjunction with one or two other cultural or social organisations.

This idealistic optimism was misplaced. No such premises were ever obtained although cultural and other community groups were given the temporary use of premises at the Riverside Hostel a few years later. Also, many years later, the Canberra Bridge Club secured its own premises in Deakin which it still uses – but bridge players notoriously spend more money on their game than do chess players. An interesting light on the thinking then customary is the apparent assumption that the government would make a building available. In those days, that was a valid assumption as Canberra's development relied almost entirely on government action.

The following office-bearers were elected:

President: Mr J. E. Edwards;

Vice-president: Mr C. Lane Poole;

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Secretary-treasurer: Mr J. Wilde;

Auditor: Mr J. R. Odgers [15](#); and

Committee: Messrs H. A. Fuller, W. Farmer Whyte, E. W. Norsa [16](#) and W. J. Garnett.

#### 1944

##### **Affiliation with the NSWCA**

In September, an application was made to the N.S.W. Chess Association for affiliation. This was accepted, the Club's delegate in Sydney being Mr. R. W. Pascoe. I wonder why that affiliation was undertaken as Canberra is not in New South Wales. It was probably to allow the club to play in country events run under the NSWCA. The affiliation must have ceased some time not much later. In the following year affiliation with the Australian Chess Federation (ACF) was mooted and some time later the Club had limited affiliation. By the mid-1960s a separate ACT Chess Association had been established.

The Annual Meeting was held on 27 October 1944. Membership had increased to 36. That was 4 more than the previous year and the same as in 1942.

The Club's credit balance was £22 in addition to the £20 held in war savings certificates.

Mr E. W. Norsa presented a trophy for a handicap competition that was won by Mr. W. J. Garnett. The current whereabouts of the trophy are unknown.

Mr R. W. Pascoe was elected a life member of the club in recognition of his conspicuous services.

The following office-bearers were elected:

President: Mr J. E. Edwards;

Vice-president: Mr W. J. Garnett;

Secretary-treasurer: Mr J. R. Odgers;

Captain: Mr E. W. Norsa;

Committee: Messrs S. R. Phippard [17](#), D. Price, W. Farmer Whyte, and Miss D. M. Holmes;

Auditor: Mr B. Bray

#### 1945

In February 1945, the Club decided to allow draughts players to play at the Club provided that they brought their own draughts men. There is no evidence that this aspect of the club's activities ever took root. Although, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, clubs for both Chess and Draughts were commonly formed, the two games did not ever seem to get along well. The difficulties faced by such a situation in Melbourne are considered by Mr Justice Brooking in his story of the Melbourne Chess Club *Care for a Game* (circa 1986) at pp 9 ff. It is not surprising that the idea did not catch on here. As we have seen, it was tried and failed some years earlier.

The Annual Meeting was held on Friday, 19 October 1945. The report in *The Canberra Times* does not mention the membership or the financial situation. But it appears that the Club had by then settled into an active routine.

The annual report revealed that in addition to individual play on the club nights special activities were arranged during the year. In the lightning tournament following the distribution of prizes won by members in the 1944 championships, the winner was Mr. Cusack. A correspondence match was arranged between teams representing the New South Wales Chess Association and the Canberra Chess Club but had to be abandoned with only one game completed. A handicap tournament attracted 13 players and was won by Mr. Price with Dr. Stevens runner-up. Play is in progress for the 1945 championship tournament for which 23 players entered. The committee reported increased attendances during the past two months, particularly since the commencement of the championship tournament, and hoped that members would continue to attend regularly on club nights. [18](#)

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The following officer-bearers were elected:

President: Mr W. J- Garnett;

Vice-president: Dr Stevens;

Captain: Mr E. Norsa;

Secretary-treasurer: Mr M. A. Bodkin;

Committee: Messrs J. E. Edwards and D. Price and Misses D. M. Holmes and L. Hedberg.

#### **Proposed ACF Affiliation**

The Annual Report mentioned an application by the Club for affiliation with the ACF. The Club had in mind applying for ACF permission to hold the Australian Championships in Canberra in 1946. The ACF Secretary, Mr Harold Mercer, was sympathetic to the idea as the Championships would be the first since the War and Canberra would be a fitting venue. Unfortunately, the ACF found that it had no power to affiliate a Territory without amending its Constitution so neither ACF affiliation nor the proposed Championships went ahead. It is not clear that anything prevented the ACF from amending its Constitution so as to allow Territory affiliation. It allowed it some years later.

By 1955 the Club had affiliated with the ACF but without a vote. That situation was mentioned in *Chess World*, 1955, p. 162 and probably the affiliation occurred that year. There was then no mention of any Constitutional question. Full ACF affiliation for the ACT did not occur for some years thereafter. By then, a second chess club had been formed in Canberra and the ACT Chess Association had been established.

*The Canberra Times* reported on 22 October 1945, that

Members watched with interest the progress in the recent Australian championship of the club champion, Mr. Martin Green. After a "rusty" beginning, Mr. Green, on leave from the army for the tournament put up a fine performance to finish fifth with nine points, the winner being Lajos Steiner with 12 points. There were 16 contestants for the title. Mr. Green is to be commended for his effort, particularly as he has had little match practice while in the army.

The presence of Martin Green in the Club was an example of a Canberra phenomenon – membership of very strong players who are transient. Not long after the War, Martin Green returned to Melbourne. In the ACF's inaugural ranking of Australian players in 1947, he was ranked seventh in Australia. [19](#)

Towards the end of the year the Club began a series of beginners' nights including instruction in the rules, standard openings, tactics and other features of the game. At the first of these nights there were 6 visitors who, after some preliminaries, were given a brief account of the Giuoco Piano opening and a consultation game was played between the beginners and two club members based on that Opening. The venture was generally considered a success.

#### **1946**

##### **A Change of Venue**

In mid-1946 the Club moved, as reported in *The Canberra Times* on 24 July 1946, from its previous meeting place at the Croquet Club to the 2CA Theatrette. The reason was an increase in membership. Many new members were ex-servicemen who had learnt the game in the forces during the war.

At that time 2CA was the only commercial radio station in Canberra. Its Theatrette was available as a meeting place for organisations.

The Club continued to meet on Friday nights.

A Special Meeting was held on 24 May 1946 to present the prizes for 1945.

The Handicap Tournament was held again beginning on 14 June. The method of handicapping was not mentioned.

The Annual Meeting was held on Friday, 18 October 1946.

The following office-bearers were elected:

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President: Mr W. J. Garnett;

Vice-president: Mr W. Farmer Whyte;

Captain: Mr J. B. Pomeroy;

Secretary-treasurer: Mr A. C. J. Russell;

Auditor: Mr B. Bray; and

Committee: Messrs E C. Smith, J. Cusack, B. Asman [20](#), Miss D. Holmes.

No information about the Club's membership or financial position was published.

#### 1947

In April 1947 some changes took place in the membership of the Committee. Mr John Pomeroy resigned as Captain being replaced by Mr E. Norsa. Mr A.C.J. Russell and Miss D Holmes exchanged positions and Mr J. E. Edwards replaced Mr E.C. Smith on the Committee, Mr Smith having left Canberra.

A Lightning Tournament, held on 6 June in conjunction with the 1945 prize presentations, attracted a field of 24. It was won by Mr J. Garbasz.

The Club Championship began on 4 July. There were 27 entries divided into A and B Grades. The players originally were:

A grade: B. Asman, J. E. Edwards, J. Garbasz, W. J. Garnett, M. Kuner, E. Norsa. L. Ogier, J. Pascoe. D Price. D. White, C. Whyte [21](#), W. F. Whyte.

B grade: E. K. Abraham, E. Crichton. J. Cusack, R. M. Duncan. C. B. Edwards. D. T. Latin, E. McPherson, A. C. Russell.

It appears that a C Grade was also contested though the names of all the players are not available. Two of them were Mrs K. M. McBride and Mr J. Small. Mrs McBride, the winner, had left to live overseas before the prize presentation.

The Annual Meeting was held on Friday, 24 October 1947.

The business included discussion of an invitation to Mr Gary Koshnitsky to give a simultaneous exhibition and of a visit by 5 Sydney A Grade players.

The membership of the Club was now 48.

The following office-bearers were elected:

President: Mr W. J. Garnett;

Vice-president: Mr W. Farmer Whyte;

Secretary-treasurer: Miss D.M. Holmes;

Captain: Mr C. Whyte; and

Committee: Messrs E. K. Abraham, B. Asman, J. Garbasz and E. H. Harry [22](#).

The simul by Gary Koshnitsky took place on Friday, 21 November at the 2CA Theatre. There were 31 players. Koshnitsky won 27 games, lost one to Mr P. D. Mantle and drew 3. Members of the public had been invited to play though it is not clear if any accepted the invitation. The exhibition concluded after midnight. Mr Koshnitsky described the evening as "tough". He said that twice as many Australians were playing chess because of the war, and a high standard had been attained in the country. He also drew attention to the performance of a former junior member of the Canberra Club, R. Fuller, who returned to England to win the British Junior Championship, a title he held for two years.

Mr. Koshnitsky had recently toured New South Wales, stimulating the growth of chess clubs, and said that on a number of occasions practically all the townspeople pitted their skill against him in simultaneous matches.

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**1948**

### **A Year of Travel**

Until now the Club had been the only chess club in Canberra. That remained so until the 1960s. To relieve the dullness of continually playing the same people, the Club arranged visits to and by clubs from surrounding areas and from Sydney. Simultaneous exhibitions ("simuls") by some of Australia's top players were also fairly frequent. There were some clubs nearby, such as in Queanbeyan and Captain's Flat (formed in 1951) but none apparently in Yass, Cooma or Goulburn at this time. Later, on 9 June 1957, the Club played a match against Goulburn Chess Club in Goulburn. If I remember rightly, the match was played at Goulburn High School on the weekend.

The number of those interchanges increased as things settled down after the war.

The year began with a visit by four Sydney A Grade players chosen by the NSWCA arriving on 23 January to play a series of matches against Canberra CC players with a possible match in Queanbeyan on Sunday, 25 January.

On the same weekend a group of Croydon-Concord players visited for friendly games on the Saturday and a competitive match at Gorman House on the Sunday.

The four NSWCA players teamed with four from Croydon-Concord for a match with Canberra CC that was drawn 4 – 4. The results (Canberra players first) were B. Asman d. T. E. Healy, D. White d. A. R. De Coek, K. Schreiner lost to T. Carter, V. Balley d. G. Evans, C. Whyte d. H. G. Lee, W. Farmer Whyte drew with W. H. Levey, R. Duncan lost to R. J. Curran, and E. Mc Pherson drew with R. Pollock.

Playing on its own the Croydon-Concord Club won by three games to one with three games drawn in the Sunday competition. Results (Croydon players first): T. Carter drew with B. Asman, G. Evans drew with D. White, H. G. Lee drew with V. Balley, W. H. Levey defeated K. Schreiner <sup>23</sup>, K. Payne defeated C. Whyte, N. Allen defeated W. Farmer Whyte and P. Berry lost to S. Atkinson.

The above account of these matches has inconsistencies. It is a combination of reports in *The Canberra Times* (26 January 1948) and *Chess World* (1948, page 53), both usually reliable sources. Also Chess World gives the Croydon – Canberra result as 5 – 2 with G. Evans beating D. White.

The Club Championship began on Friday, 4 June. This year there were so many entries that each of the 3 grades was divided into two sections of approximately equal strength. The first stage was played within those sections. The section-winners and runners-up played a second stage amongst themselves, to decide the winner and runner-up of the grade.

The Queanbeyan Chess Club sent a challenge to Canberra. A team of mixed grading visited Queanbeyan on Thursday, 10 June, the match resulting in a draw. The games (Canberra players first) were: W. J. Garnett v. C. Knight, C. Whyte v. M. Ellis, E. McPherson v. J. Cranswick, J. Cusack v. R. Woodridge, G. R. Macdonald, v. J. Eaton and A. D. Ross v. T. Jones. Unfortunately the results of the games are not available. It seems unlikely that all were draws.

Another encounter with Queanbeyan took place when six members of Canberra CC of mixed grading visited Queanbeyan on the weekend of 7-8 August to play a two-round match. The result was a 6 – 6 draw. On the following Thursday, 12 August, a return match was played at Gorman House, Canberra, with different players. In a two-round match, Canberra defeated Queanbeyan; 10-6, as follows (Canberra players first): A. Strauks v. G. Knight 1-1; D. White v. M. Ellis 2-0, S. Blair v. J. Cranswick 1-1; S. Atkinson v. W. Jones 1-1, L. Ogier v. G. Baxter 1-1, K. Schreiner v. J. Eaton 2-0, C. B. Edwards v. T. Jones 2-0. J. Somerville v. J. Bourke 0-2.

The Annual Meeting was held on Friday 22 October.

Mr John Pascoe, the founder of the High School Chess Club, was presented with six chess sets and six cardboard sets for the school.

Miss D. M. Holmes was elected a Life Member of the Club on the motion of Messrs J. Cusack and B. Asman for her services as Secretary and organiser.

A motion to increase the Club fees to 10/- for adults and 5/- for juniors was amended to 7/6 and 3/6 respectively and carried.



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Chess World (1948, p. 178) notes that Canberra CC donated £5/ 5/- to the fund to send Lajos Steiner to Europe for the 1948 Interzonal Tournament in Saltsjöbaden, Sweden.

The Club membership was 62.

Five new chess sets [24](#) and four books were added to the Club's library.



A "Gambit" chess set and board as used at the Club in the 1950s (photo by D. A. Jessop)

The following office-bearers were elected:

President: Mr W. J. Garnett;

Vice-president: Mr W. Farmer Whyte;

Secretary-treasurer: Miss D. M. Holmes;

Captain: Mr J. Hamilton;

Committee: Messrs J. Small, S. Blair and H. Dunford;

Auditor: Mr E. McPherson.

A team from Leeton visited Canberra on 12 November. In winning the match 7 – 0, Canberra maintained an undefeated record against visiting clubs. The Canberra CC Champion, Mr Ben Asman, defeated the NSW country champion, Mr A. G. Shoebridge. Mr Shoebridge was a very strong player, finishing 9<sup>th</sup> in the Australian Championship in 1948 – 1949. A return visit was planned for the following autumn.

On 16 November a 4-man team visited Eastlake Hostel [25](#) for a two-round match. The result was a 4 – 4 draw. The details were as follows (Canberra players first): J. Hamilton v A. Strauks 1-0, C. Whyte v E. Narbutas 1-1, E. McPherson v F. Pawlucki 1-2, J. Small v N. Sprintall 1-1. It was noted that many newcomers resident in the hostel were from Eastern Europe and were strong players.

A North v. South match was played at the Club on Friday, 20 November, with 26 players taking part. As often happens with these events, one side – North in this case – is smaller than the other. Two Southsiders played for North. Three Northsiders won their games but the remaining 10 lost to their Southern opponents. The winning North players were Messrs Hamilton, Norsa and Alps who defeated Messrs Garnett, Fish and C. Whyte respectively.

On 26 November, *The Canberra Times* announced the impending return to England of Mr W. J. Garnett OBE. Mr Garnett was Joint Official Secretary of the United Kingdom High Commission and a prominent member of the Royal Canberra Golf Club as well as the Canberra Chess Club. He had been in Australia for 7 years. Before returning to England, he presented his set and board to the Club. Its present whereabouts are unknown.

The year ended with another double-round match against Queanbeyan in Queanbeyan early in December. Canberra defeated Queanbeyan 9 - 1. Results (Canberra players first): J. B. Alps [26](#) 2 v. M. Ellis 0. A. Straucks 2 v. R Woodbridge 0, W. G. Monson 2 v. J. Cranswick 0, J. Cusack 1 v. W. Jones 1, J. Small 2 v. J. Bourke 0.

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1949

### Travel Unabated

A simultaneous exhibition on 14 January given by Maurice Goldstein, President of the NSW Chess Association, started the year on a significant note. Mr. Goldstein, who was born in England, emigrated to Australia about 1929. Whilst in England he was third in the English championship and won the Middlesex championship four times. He also edited an edition of Modern Chess Openings in 1925. He had won the championships of New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and New Zealand. At the Australian championships in Melbourne in December/January he finished sixth. It was thus to the credit of the Club that, of the 24 members who played him, 7 won. The winners were J. B. Alps, W. Bowe, E. Chmay, J. Hamilton, A. Strauks, D. White and C. Whyte.

After an interval of a year, the Croydon-Concord Chess Club sent a team to Canberra for the Australia Day holiday weekend. Canberra won three games, drawing three and lost one. A. Strauks drew with T. Carter, J. Hamilton drew with G. Elliott, J. B. Alps defeated G. A. Evans, D. White defeated H: G. Lee, G. Whyte drew with L. Berry, E. McPherson lost to W. Levey, and W. Bowe defeated A. Burns (Canberra players mentioned first).

A lightning tournament was won by Mr T. Carter.

The visitors' President, Mr W. Levey, gave a box of chocolates to Miss D. M. Holmes (Secretary- treasurer) who, on behalf of the Canberra CC, also received a silver cup for competition. The club no longer has the trophy.

A tournament for players of all grades began on 1 April. The trophy was the silver cup presented by the Croydon-Concord Club. There were 30 entrants divided into four groups. The finals were played as a handicap. There is no record of the results.

A match of 10 boards was played against Queanbeyan on Friday, 3 June, at the 2CA Theatre. Canberra won 7 of the 10. In reporting the names of the players who took part, *The Canberra Times* named only six from each Club. They were:

Canberra: J. Pomeroy, T.H. Fish, W. Masson, E. G. Jenkins, I. R. Dunstan and W. Farmer Whyte. Queanbeyan: W. R. Stewart, M. Ellis. J. Cranswick, W. Jones, G. Baxter and J. B. Eaton. No individual results were given.

The Club Championship began on 10 June with 28 entrants divided into three grades. The Croydon-Concord event was still in progress.

Another South v. North match was played on Friday, 16 September. South was again successful. Of the 13 games played, South won 11 and North 2. The two games for North were won by B. Weatherstone so it is unclear what form the event took. Cold weather kept several members away.

On Monday, 26 September, a Club team again visited Queanbeyan. The rules were "friendly" as the Canberra team included Mr W. H. Levey, President of the Croydon-Concord Club, who had been travelling in the area with a Metropolitan Chess Club team from Sydney. Other members of the Canberra team were Messrs. E. McPherson, J. J. Cusack, B. Weatherstone and Miss D. M. Holmes. Their opponents were Messrs. M. Ellis, J. Cranswick, W. Jones, T. Jones and W. Stewart. Canberra won 6 – 4 in a double-round event.

The Annual Meeting was held on Friday, 21 October. A loss of 24 members was reported but the Club remained in a healthy position with 57 members. Interest was stimulated by the various matches played against other clubs. The Treasurer reported a credit balance of £7/-/-. Miss D. M. Holmes retired as Secretary after many years service and the Club recorded its appreciation of her services.

The following office-bearers were elected:

President: Mr W. Farmer Whyte;

Vice-president: Mr J. Pomeroy;

Secretary-treasurer: Mr C. Ham;

Captain: Mr E. H. Harry and

Committee: Messrs. C.W. Buckley, K. Schreiner and B. Weatherstone.

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**1950**

### **Another Change of Venue**

The first recorded event for 1950 was another match against Croydon-Concord Chess Club. Played at the 2CA Theatrette on Saturday 28 January, the match was won by Canberra 5 – 2 with 4 games drawn. On the Sunday night a return “friendly” match of 16 games was played with Croydon-Concord winning though the score was not recorded.

There was a brief announcement in *The Canberra Times* on 16 May that the Club now met weekly at the YMCA clubrooms on Wednesday nights at 8pm. It is not clear what prompted the change. It seems not to have been popular.

On Friday 6 October, the President, Mr W. Farmer Whyte, presented Miss D. M. Holmes with a fitted writing case in appreciation of the work that she had done for the Club. Miss Holmes responded that she hoped that the Club would soon acquire its own quarters which, *The Canberra Times* reported, would “be an international asset in Canberra”. This reflects the optimistic mood of the time at its highest. When the Club’s own quarters were acquired a while later, they were much more humble.

The Annual Meeting was held on Friday 17 October. The Club’s membership was reported to have dropped from 42 to 19. This was attributed to the change of club rooms and the departure of several “New Australians” from Canberra. The change of meeting night from Friday to Wednesday apparently did not occur. The figures are difficult to reconcile as the membership reported at the previous Annual Meeting was 57.

It was hoped to resume matches with the Leeton CC in the following 12 months. A match planned for earlier in the year appears not to have taken place.

The following office-bearers were elected:

President: Mr W. Farmer Whyte;

Vice-president: Mr C. E.W. Ham;

Captain: Mr E. H. Harry;

Secretary-treasurer: Mr J. L. Pascoe:

Committee: Messrs. A. G. F. Weatherstone, E. E. McPherson, K. Buckley, and Dr A. A. Öpik [27](#).

**1951**

### **A Quiet Year**

The apparent temporary decline in the Club’s fortunes may have extended into 1951 as almost no reports of its activities appear in *The Canberra Times*.

There was a successful visit on 20 February to the newly-formed Chess Club at Captain’s Flat. The teams were paired according to playing strength. Captain’s Flat won 4.5 – 3.5.

On 6 March it was announced that Mr A. G. Weatherstone had been appointed Secretary-treasurer following the resignation of Mr J. L. Pascoe. Mr Pascoe was about to move to Sydney.

The Annual Meeting was held on Friday, 9 November. The President noted that all the major prizes had been won by “New Australians” whose membership had greatly improved the standard of play in the Club.

The following office-bearers were elected:

President: Mr E. Harry;

Vice-president: Mr Farmer Whyte;

Captain: Mr E. McPherson;

Secretary-treasurer: Mr A. Weatherstone;

Auditor: Mr C Edwards;

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Committee: Messrs J. Cusack, J. Pomeroy, J. Zilinskas [28](#) and Dr A. A. Öpik.

**1952**

### **Riverside - A Big Change for the Club**

This year was to be a significant one promoting a resurgence of the Club.

It began with a President's v. Captain's Teams match. The results were (President's team named first):

Dr Öpik – Michniewicz 0-1; Baumann – Pomeroy 0-1; Norsa – McPherson 1-0; Harry – Farmer Whyte 0-1; Tiffin – Crawcour 1-0; King – Soper 0-1; Foster – Swain 1-0

A visit to Captain's Flat had been arranged for 22 February. A simultaneous exhibition by Gary Koshnitsky was planned for March and a further match against Croydon-Concord CC at Easter.

The simul by Gary Koshnitsky took place on Wednesday, 5 March at the Albert Hall. He was to play 25 selected players. One purpose of the event was to stimulate interest in chess in Canberra, hence the choice of the Albert Hall, then a prestigious venue being the only public hall of any size or repute in Canberra. In fact only 23 boards were played of which Koshnitsky won 18.



The Albert Hall, nearest the front of the picture, with the Hotel Canberra behind it and, beyond that, the croquet lawn and Croquet Pavilion. The pines on the left line Commonwealth Avenue. (photographer unknown)

On 5 July it was announced that the Canberra Chess Club had been allocated a hut - Hut 13 - at the Riverside Hostel.

The first event played in the new premises was a Lightning tournament on 28 November. The winner was Dr A. A. Öpik who defeated Dr Rudi Brunnschweiler [29](#) in the final. This suggests that the event was a knock-out tournament. In those days, lightning tournaments were confusing affairs as the Club had no clocks. Play usually was at 5 or 10 seconds per move, the order to move being given by the tournament director. For timing purposes he used a big clock also visible to the players. Surprisingly, there were no disputes that I remember, perhaps because the players were too confused to protest.

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The Annual Meeting was held on Friday, 17 October.

An impending visit by Lajos Steiner, Australia's strongest player, for a simultaneous exhibition was announced.

Mr W. Farmer Whyte was made a Life Member.

The following office-bearers were elected:

President: Mr J. B. Pomeroy;

Vice-president: Mr W. Farmer Whyte;

Captain: Mr J. F. Smith;

Secretary-treasurer: Mr A. Weatherstone,

Committee: Messrs. E. E. McPherson, C. Edwards, J. Cusack, J. Zilinskas;

Auditor: Mr E. H. Harry.

### **Riverside Hostel**

Riverside Hostel was one of several workers' hostels built after World War II to house migrant workers from the UK and Europe who had moved here to work on the construction of Canberra.

The hostels were of fibro construction comprising many rectangular huts, a mess hall and rather primitive outdoor toilet facilities. They are to be distinguished from the more up-market facilities, such as Gorman House and Narellan House, built to accommodate single public servants who had moved here. Each hut comprised a number of rooms for sleeping and a kitchen.

Riverside Hostel housed migrants from the UK. For many years its main claim to fame was that its residents were frequently mentioned in the press for minor criminal offences, brawling or the occasional suicide. Life was not easy in those establishments

and there was virtually no Canberra nightlife. The population was still only about 20000.

The Hostel was closed in 1951. There followed some debate about its fate. The government finally decided to use it to house Canberra's many cultural bodies. This was formally announced in December 1952. The Canberra Repertory Society was allocated the mess hall which it converted to a theatre. The other the huts were allocated to groups as varied as the Canberra Chess Club, the Canberra Photographic Society, the Radio Club, the Table Tennis Club, the Boy Scouts and the Poultry Club. There was a nominal rental of one shilling a month.

Responsibility for adapting the huts to their individual requirements lay with the clubs. Almost all of this was done by voluntary labour.

The premises were a blessing, though a mixed one, for the Canberra Chess Club. The Club had sole use of the rooms seven days a week at a nominal rent. The contrary features were poor heating and no cooling in an uninsulated hut, poor lighting outside and, for chess players, a dire matter – very primitive outdoor toilet facilities. At least they were too inhospitable even for red-backs. It converted Hut 13 by removing all the sleeping rooms leaving about two-thirds of the hut as a playing area. The kitchen, already in place, was next to that and beyond the kitchen the rest of the hut made up a committee and analysis room.



Riverside Hostel from the air. (photographer unknown)

The hostel is the group of rectangular huts on the right side. The cluster of buildings in the centre is the old Public Service Barton Offices, known as the Woolsheds (long since demolished). The small building above that is the old National Library on King's Avenue - the core of a much larger building that had been planned. The site is now occupied by the Barton Office building recently converted for use by the AFP. The Molonglo River is in flood. The road heading towards the river from beyond the National Library and continuing on the other side of the river is the Scott's Crossing road. The crossing itself is flooded. I cannot remember the exact location of Hut 13 .

### 1953

The first big event of the year was a simultaneous exhibition given by Mr Lajos Steiner against 24 opponents at the Riverside Club rooms. It began at 8.00pm and was open to the public at an entry fee of 1/6, children no charge, and a free supper.

Steiner won 21 of the games with the other three drawn. Those who gained a draw were Dr A. A. Öpik, Mr John. B. Pomeroy and Mr Ben. Asman. Lajos Steiner had, at that time, won the Australian Championship four times and the NSW Championship seven times. Before emigrating to Australia from Hungary in 1939, Steiner was very highly regarded in Europe and was even spoken of as a possible World Champion. The Second World War put an end to that.

This simul was the third staged by the Club since 1947.



The Lajos Steiner Simul. (photographer unknown)

Identification of the players is not easy, partly because the photo quality is not good and partly due to the passage of time. Those I think I recognise are: Left side from front – W. A. Jessop, x, x, Mark Bram, x obs., Ettore Norsa, x, x, x.; Right side – J. (George) Zilinkas, possibly Z. Klegeris, Dr Rudi Brunnschweiler, x, D. A. Jessop, x obs., W. Farmer Whyte, remainder obscured.

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A further simul was held on 18 April when Mr Maurice Goldstein again faced the Club. There were 24 selected opponents. The Club Secretary, Mr Albert Weatherstone, said he hoped that the event would help Canberra secure the holding of the Australian Championships. This did not happen until nearly 50 years later.

The Club Championships began on Friday, 12 June and in three divisions: (1) Championship (eight players); (2) Major Reserve (11 players); (3) Minor Reserve (six players).

Mr Zigmunds Klegeris <sup>30</sup>, the current champion, defended his title against seven of the club's strongest players, including Mr. John Hamilton, ex-champion.

*The Canberra Times* reported that, of the eleven contestants in the Major Reserve, four were under the age of 21 years, and one, Jurij Kit, a 14-year-old school-boy. Two of the other three were David Rien and myself. The fourth junior was possibly Peter McNicol. I didn't know the other juniors very well. We all went to Canberra High School (now the site of the ANU School of Art) but things were very hierarchical there. David Rien and Peter McNicol were older than I and Jurij Kit was younger so, in the order of things at school, we didn't mix. Such was Canberra in those days!

One woman, Mrs S. Pomeroy, competed in the Minor Reserve.

One round was played each week.

#### **ACT Politics – A Minor Diversion**

In *The Canberra Times* of 7 September, the list of candidates for the ACT Advisory Council Elections was announced. It included Mr John Joseph Cusack, described as coach-builder of Manuka. Mr Cusack was a long-standing member of the Canberra Chess Club and was in at least his 80s at the time. Accepting a lift home from the Club with him was a hazardous undertaking even on the under-populated roads of the time. Mr Cusack had been the federal member for Eden Monaro in the 1930s and clearly his interest in politics had not waned. As a chess player his style was pure coffee house relying entirely on tactics, sometimes quite fiendish. His attempt to return to politics did not succeed.

Early in September, the Club played an inter-club match against the Hungarian Chess Club of Queanbeyan. Canberra won by 24 – 11 with one draw. The most successful players were reported as being Mr J. Zilinskas (Canberra) and Mr K. Satrapa (Hungarian). That indicated that there must have been multiple games.

The Annual Meeting was held on Friday, 9 October. The Annual Report stated that the Club rooms had been used by 82 players on 1,100 occasions in the previous 11 months. It is not clear what constituted an "occasion" but the indication was that the move to the Riverside Hostel rooms had been beneficial for the Club.

The following office-bearers were elected:

President; Mr A. Weatherstone;

Vice-president: Mr W. Farmer Whyte;

Secretary-treasurer: Mr J. B. Pomeroy;

Captain: Mr J. Smith;

Committee; Mrs S. Pomeroy, Messrs J. J. Cusack and W. Schenk.

On Friday, 13 November, the Club farewelled its President, Mr Albert Weatherstone who, with his family, was about to move to Köln, Germany, on a posting with the Department of Immigration. Mr Weatherstone had been a Club member since 1946 being active both as a player and administrator.

On the next Friday, 20 November, the Club Champion, Mr Zigmunds Klegeris, gave a simultaneous display against 14 Club members of the Major and Minor reserve grades. He won 9 games, drew 2 and lost 3. It was announced that, in future, the reigning Club Champion would give such a display each year.

#### **NSW Country Championship**

The final announcement for the year was that the NSW Chess Association had allocated the holding of the first NSW Country Championship to the Canberra Chess Club.

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The event began on 28 December with eight contestants including Mr Walter Poder of Cowra (NSW Correspondence Champion), Mr J. G. Stocks of Young (a Sydney University A Grade player), Mr Z. Klegeris (Canberra CC Champion for the last three years), and Dr A. A. Öpik (Canberra CC Lightning Champion). The NSWCA donated £5/- towards the prize fund as part of its policy of encouraging and popularising chess in country areas.

The Championship was held in the week from 28 December 1953 to 1 January 1954. The winner was J.G. Stocks with 7/7 followed by Z. Klegeris 5, W. Poder 4.5, Dr Öpik 3.5, K. Cahill 3, Dr Brunnschweiler 2.5, N. McDonald 2 and David Rien (18yo) 0.5. All but three of the players were from Canberra. N. McDonald was from Coonabarabran.

The Championship was directed by Mr J. B. Pomeroy. Mr W Farmer Whyte, one of the three Canberra CC Life Members, made the presentations at the end of the event.

The winner remarked

“As the play of the week in Canberra unfolded, the idea gradually came to me that most of the games in this tournament were rather like those of more than a century ago. The style of the Canberra players is almost exclusively tactical; they play for a king-side attack right from the word go.” [31](#)

## 1954

Judging by the press reports, the first six months of 1954 were very active with the second half of the year returning to a more routine format.

The Club was open every night from 12 to 20 January to allow those attending the ANZAAS Conference to play chess in their leisure time. There was little else to do in Canberra in those days anyway.

Mr Maurice Goldstein was at the Conference in his capacity as a scientist but happily gave a simultaneous exhibition against 24 Club players on Saturday 16 January. Mr Goldstein won 15 games, lost 3 (C. Whyte, J. Smith. W. Farmer Whyte) and drew 6 (S. R. Phippard, D. Jessop, Z. Klegeris, E. Norsa, P. K. Chen, Mrs S. Pomeroy).

He said he was very impressed with the play of several of the younger players and the good job the Canberra Chess Club was doing in the promotion and popularising of chess in country areas. In particular, he congratulated Mr. Farmer Whyte and Mr. Stan Phippard, two old friends, on a win and a draw respectively. (The Canberra Times, 18 January 1954)

On Friday 5 March the Club Lightning Championship was played. There were 22 players paired according to the Swiss System ( a very early version). The time limit was 6 moves a minute though I cannot remember how that was regulated. The Club still had no clocks so I think the time keeping was done by the Director of Play. The winner was Mr Z. Klegeris, the Club Champion, with 6/6.

## A Centre for Spooks?!

On 14 April 1954, the *Courier Mail*, Brisbane, announced the establishment of the Petrov Royal Commission. In the course of its report it said:

... Soviet diplomats make few individual contacts with Canberra citizens. They attend official diplomatic parties and occasionally, in groups, private parties. One of their few incursions into community life is at the Canberra Chess Club.

I do not remember any of the Canberra CC members being from the Soviet Embassy, though Mr P. K. Chen was from the Chinese Legation (Taiwan).

FIDE International Master, World Correspondence Champion and joint Australian Champion, Mr C. J. S. (Cecil) Purdy gave a simultaneous exhibition against 24 Club members on Saturday, 24 April. Cecil was never a quick player so this was a marathon with only 2 games completed by midnight and the last finishing at 2.32 am. That was against Mr Ben Asman, himself a strong correspondence player, and was won by Mr Asman. Also a winner was Mr Mark Bram. Three players, Messrs J. Pascoe, C. Whyte and P. K. Chen obtained draws.

*The Canberra Times* reported that Mr Purdy said

the playing strength of his opponents was of a high average level, especially for a non-metropolitan club. This accounted to a great extent for the unusually long time it had taken him to complete the 24 games...



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In his report of the event in *Chess World* (1954, p. 112) Cecil Purdy remarked that the Canberra Chess Club “is well known by now as one of the toughest spots in Australia for “simul” experts – so much so that Lajos Steiner’s result there in 1953 (21 wins, 3 draws, no loss) has never been approached”.

On the following Tuesday, Mr Purdy gave a talk to the Canberra High School Chess Club on chess in schools. Writing in *Chess World* (1954, p. 272) about girls’ tourneys in Australia, Cecil Purdy mentioned that his talk was attended by about 70 pupils interested in chess and that a good percentage of those were girls.

An indication of the make-up of the Club in 1954 was given in a *Canberra Times* report on 8 June announcing the commencement of the Club Championships. It said that nationals, or former nationals, of Poland, Austria, Germany, Cyprus, China, Switzerland, Russia, Ukraine, Holland, Estonia, Latvia and Hungary were expected to play. It also remarked that keen competition was expected in the three events making up the Championships due to large attendances throughout the year.

The Annual Meeting was held on 29 October. It was reported that the highlights of the year were the staging of the NSW Country Championship and the visits of players of international standing. As well as the Club tournaments, Ladder games were popular. This is the first mention of ladder games since the first years of the Club though I remember them as a feature of the Club’s activities and it may be that the ladder was that established in those early years. Club membership was 70.

The following office-bearers were elected:

President: Mr E. E. McPherson;

Vice-President: Mr W. Farmer Whyte;

Secretary-treasurer: Dr W. K. Joklik;

Captain: Mr J. B; Pomeroy;

Committee: Dr A. A. Öpik, Messrs W. A. Jessop, W. Schenk, C. Whyte;

Auditor: Mr. E. H. Harry.

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## PART 3

### CONCLUSION

#### WHERE WE STOOD IN 1954

By the end of 1954 the Canberra Chess Club was well established with its own meeting place and a substantial strong and vigorous membership. Along the way there had been some problems, mainly a fluctuating membership and one unsuccessful venue change. But in time those problems had proved to be relatively minor.

One surprising thing was the very formation of the Club, after several unsuccessful peacetime attempts, in the middle of World War II.

The view of the early members was that membership would be boosted after the War by returned servicemen. Though some may have joined – the records are not clear on this – the boost both in numbers and strength came from an unforeseen source. That was the arrival in Australia of thousands of displaced persons from Eastern Europe where chess is a cultural heritage. Also many more thousands came from Britain where chess also had a stronger presence than in Australia. The coming of European migrants strengthened chess throughout Australia. Canberra was well placed to receive its share because of its closeness to the Snowy Mountains Project on which many European migrants were employed. They came here after serving their time in the Snowy.

Canberra Chess Club, being the only chess club in Canberra, suffered somewhat from isolation. It overcame this by arranging the many visits to or by the Club that are recorded in this history. Moreover, the popularity of simultaneous exhibitions saw visits by the top three Australian chess players of the time – Steiner, Cecil Purdy and Koshnitsky and several by the strong Maurice Goldstein.

The strength of the Canberra Chess Club was acknowledged by Cecil Purdy not only in his comments after his simul but also in his report of the NSW Country Championship

won here by J. G Stocks. He said “the federal capital ... is stronger at chess than any city of comparable population in Australia”. [32](#)

It is a sign of the changes in community and social attitudes since 1954 that, although Canberra's population is now almost twenty times greater than then, the number of chess club members is almost exactly the same. Moreover, the kinds of persons who then occupied the offices on the Club Committee are, these days, far too busy to hold them or even to belong to a chess club. It must be some kind of record for a club to have had three Clerks of the Senate in quick succession on its Committee.

Indications are that the Club continued to operate along the same lines for at least the next few years. My score sheets from 1955 – 1957 show that I played in the President's v Captain's team match on 16 December 1955, in two matches against Croydon-Concord and Goulburn Chess Clubs on 2 June 1956 and 9 June 1957 respectively and in two simuls given by Gary Koshnitsky and John Purdy on 19 January and 24 February 1956 respectively. John Purdy was Cecil's son. He had just won the Australian Championship, the first of two such titles.

When I returned full-time to Canberra in 1968 the scene had changed radically. In many ways the Club of the 1950s was that of a bygone era more akin to a 19<sup>th</sup> Century chess club. In about 1966 the Club had moved to the Griffin Centre where it remained for the next 40 years. Almost all of the players from the 1950s had gone one way or another. The Club had clocks and Swiss tournaments and generally the air of a modern chess club much as it is now though more vibrant. The story of those more recent times remains to be told.

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## END NOTES

### PART 1 - CHESS IN CANBERRA – BEGINNINGS

#### [1](#) SOMETHING LACKING

A certain Bishop, staying at a country house during an episcopal visit to the neighbourhood, noticed that he was closely observed by a little maiden of the household, who kept a severely attentive eye upon him, apron and gaiters and all, until she found a quiet opportunity to inquire of him: "Are you really a Bishop?" "Yes, of course I am--really," answered the amused prelate. "Well, I don't believe it," returned the candid and critical eight-year-old daughter of his chess-playing host, " 'cos I've watched you ever since you came and your head isn't split down the middle and you don't walk corner ways. "

[2](#) The Gap was an area near Yarralumla then known as Westlake where 61 small four-roomed, unlined timber cottages were built in 1924 for married tradesmen.

[3](#) The Bachelors' Quarters still exists as Lennox House, Acton. It was built in 1911 and occupied by single officials including surveyors engaged on the early construction of Canberra. In 1935 it became the Acton Guest House.

[4](#) The only moves I have found were those mentioned above. Game 1 C v S 1.e4 e5; 2.Nc3 Nf6; 3.f4 d6; 4.d4 ed; 5. Qxd4 Nc6; 6.Bb5 Bc7. Game 2 S v C 1.e4 e5; 2.Nf3 Nc6; 3.Nf6 Bb4; 4.0-0 0-0; 5.d3.

[5](#) The Notaras family has been in business in Canberra since the earliest days, first as cafe owners and later in real estate.

[6](#) W. Farmer Whyte (1877-1958) was a prominent journalist and author who had joined the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery in 1927. He is described in the *Australian Dictionary of National Biography* as "tall and prematurely greying [with] sensitive features dominated by an aquiline nose. His engaging personality, professional ability and varied interests won him a wide range of friends." That description accords with my impressions when I knew him as a Canberra CC member in the 1950s though by then his hair was quite white.

[7](#) A property in what is now the Gungahlin area bounded by the Barton Highway, Bellenden Street and Gungahlin Drive. A sketch of the home is at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an3776756> There was a Gungahleen settlement in the area. Gungahleen School (formerly Stone Hut School), located in what is now North Lyneham, is the oldest timber school building from the period before the creation of the ACT.

### PART 2 -THE CANBERRA CHESS CLUB IS FORMED

[8](#) John Pomeroy was active as a player and administrator from the establishment of the Club to beyond the end of the period covered by this history. He was a friendly, pleasant man always prepared to give advice. He was one of the stronger players. In the late 1950s or early 1960s he moved to Melbourne where he was a member of, I believe, the Box Hill Chess Club.

[9](#) Later Clerk of the Senate.

[10](#) H. A. Fuller was employed at the British High Commission. He also was the first person to be called the "Choir Conductor" at the Canberra Baptist Church being a fine singer. He took on the job in early 1942, after coming out from Harrow on the Hill Baptist Church in England. He returned to England in 1945.

[11](#) Charles Lane Poole (1885-1970) of Westridge House, Yarralumla, Principal of the Forestry School and Head of the Forestry Bureau 1927 - 1945; moved to Sydney on retirement in 1945.

[12](#) Robert Arthur Broinowski (1877-1959), public servant and poet, Clerk of the Senate 1938 - 1942.

[13](#) Percy Nette, an early resident of Canberra, public servant with the Department of the Treasury.

[14](#) *The Canberra Times*, 24 October 1942

[15](#) James Rowland Odgers (1914-1985), parliamentary officer and Clerk of the Senate, author of the standard reference on Australian Senate Practice.

[16](#) Ettore Norsa, draftsman, one of the gentlemen of the Club, quiet and courteous.

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[17](#) Stan Phippard, solicitor and founding member of the ACT Law Society. His firm, by evolution, became, and is now, Macphillamy's.

[18](#) *The Canberra Times* 22 October 1945

[19](#) *Chess World*, December 1947, p.275

[20](#) Ben Asman was for many years one of the strongest Canberra chess players though he did not play regularly, preferring correspondence chess at which he was among Australia's strongest players, winning the NSW Correspondence Championship in 1951 and finishing 8<sup>th</sup> in the Australian Championship in 1953.

[21](#) Charlie Whyte, son of Farmer Whyte and a good player.

[22](#) E. H. Harry was a senior officer of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics.

[23](#) Karl Schreiner was a prominent Canberra builder at the time.

[24](#) The chess sets used by the Club were mostly the large "Gambit" plastic black and white sets sold by Cecil Purdy's "Chess World", Sydney (see illustration). They were full tournament size but the plastic of the day was more akin to bakelite being hard and prone to breakage.

[25](#) Eastlake Hostel was located near Kingston. It was one of a group of hostels built to house migrant workers after World War II. The occupants were mostly from Eastern Europe.

[26](#) This is the first mention I could find of John Alps who was one of Canberra's strongest players over many years and was an active player until quite recently. He was a quiet, gentle, man who was greatly respected by his fellow players. He died only recently and will be remembered by quite a few of those still playing chess in Canberra.

[27](#) Dr Armin Aleksander Öpik (1898-1983) was a world-renowned scientist in the field of Earth Sciences. At this time he was with the Bureau of Mineral Resources. He was born in Estonia and died in Canberra. A memorial note describes him as "a scientist who was also a philosopher, linguist, poet, chess player, and above all, a true friend and mentor to many of his colleagues in the scientific community. He was a quiet man, devoted to his family and above all to his work" (Australian Academy of Science Biographical Memoirs). To the extent that I knew him – not very well – that description fits my recollection of him. He was one of the stronger players in the Club.

[28](#) "George" Zilinskas was a jovial man who clearly enjoyed his chess. I recall that he was especially keen on skittles games, then played without clocks. They were frequently accompanied by his war cry "Make it mate!"

[29](#) Dr Rudolf Oskar (Rudi) Brunnschweiler (born 1915) was then a geologist with the Bureau of Mineral Resources who was a keen and good chess player as well as author of many scientific publications including a geological history of Australia (1969).

[30](#) Zigmunds Klegeris, Club Champion from 1951 - 1954 (incl.) was easily the strongest player in the Club at this time. I did not know him well and remember him as a rather taciturn man of few words but perhaps that is only a long distance impression. He later switched to bridge playing.

[31](#) *Chess World*, April 1954, p.94

### **PART 3 – CONCLUSION - WHERE WE STOOD IN 1954**

[32](#) *Chess World*, February 1954, p.35

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**APPENDIX 1**

**CLUB PRESIDENTS 1941 TO 1955**

1941 W. Farmer Whyte

1942 W. Farmer Whyte

1943 W. Farmer Whyte

1944 J. E. Edwards

1945 J. E. Edwards

1946 W. J. Garnett

1947 W. J. Garnett

1948 W. J. Garnett

1949 W. J. Garnett

1950 W. Farmer Whyte

1951 W. Farmer Whyte

1952 E. Harry

1953 J. B. Pomeroy

1954 A. Weatherstone

1955 E. E. McPherson

*Note:* Except for 1941, the President was elected for the nominated year at the Annual Meeting held in October of the previous year.

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**APPENDIX 2**

**CANBERRA CHESS CLUB CHAMPIONS**

1942 R.W. Pascoe  
1943 R.W. Pascoe  
1944 Martin Green  
1945 W. J. Garnett  
1946 David White  
1947 Ben Asman  
1948 Ben Asman  
1949 John Hamilton  
1950 Dr A.A. Öpik  
1951 Zigmunds Klegeris  
1952 Zigmunds Klegeris  
1953 Zigmunds Klegeris  
1954 Zigmunds Klegeris  
1955 Lothar Albrecht  
1956 John B. Alps  
1957 no record  
1958 Tony Wiedenhofer

1959 John B. Alps  
1960 Tony Wiedenhofer  
1961 Tony Wiedenhofer  
1962 Nigel F. Nettheim  
1963 Tony Wiedenhofer  
1964 Brian Robson  
1965 Ken Creech  
1966 George Karoly  
1967 Tony Wiedenhofer  
1968 Thomas Mautner  
1969 Grant Berriman  
1970 Tony Wiedenhofer  
1971 Doug J. Kewley  
1972 Ken Creech  
1973 Richard Brent  
1974 Doug J. Kewley  
1975 Kim P. Hassall  
1976 Tony Wiedenhofer  
1977 Roger S. Farrell  
1978 Haydn Barber

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1979 David Ferris  
1980 Leon Kempen  
1981 Ken Creech  
1982 Peter Gmizic  
1983 Milan Grcic  
1984 Ken Creech  
1985 Peter Gmizic  
1986 Peter Nijssen  
1987 Richard Hills  
1988 Michael Mescher  
1989 Brian Butler  
1990 Milan Grcic  
1991 Milan Grcic  
1992 Milan Grcic  
1993 Gogulapati Ramakrishna  
1994 Ken Creech  
1995 Milan Grcic  
1996 Peter Gmizic  
1997 Milan Grcic  
1998 Ian Rout

1999 Kazimir Kolossovski  
2000 Kazimir Kolossovski  
2001 Henk Doel  
2002 Ian Rout  
2003 Adrian de Noskowski  
2004 Andrey Blizynuk  
2005 Brian Fitzpatrick  
2006 Mosaddeque Ali  
2007 Milan Grcic; Stephen Roberts  
2008 Stephen Bartlett  
2009 Stephen Bartlett  
2010 Mosaddeque Ali; Stephen Bartlett; Milan Grcic  
2011 Stephen Bartlett; Milan Grcic

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**APPENDIX 3**

**CANBERRA CHESS CLUB**

**COMPETITION RESULTS 1942 to 1954**

**1942**

Club Championship: winner R. W. Pascoe

**1943**

Club Championship:

A Grade: 1st R. W Pascoe 12/16; 2nd H. A. Fuller

B Grade: 1st C. E. Lane Poole; 2nd M. A. Bodkin

C Grade: 1st J. Enfield; 2nd Mrs K. W. Ward

**1944**

Norsa Trophy: 1st W. J. Garnett

**1945**

Lightning tournament 1: 1st J. J. Cusack

Lightning tournament 2: 1st E. Norsa

Handicap Tournament: 1st Mr Price; 2nd Dr Stevens

Club Championship:

A Grade: 1st W. J. Garnett; 2nd W.. Farmer Whyte

B Grade: 1st M. A. Bodkin; 2nd J. R. Hocking

C Grade: 1st W. Jamieson; 2nd J. Pascoe

Leading scores were:

A Grade: Garnett 7.5/10; Farmer Whyte 7, K. Schreiner 5.5

B Grade: Bodkin 7/7, Hocking 6, Cusack 4

C Grade: Jamieson 4/5, Pascoe 3.

**1946**

Handicap Tournament Final: A section: E.C. Smith d. E. Norsa

B section: 1st A. R. Wingfield

Lightning Championship: 1st Ben Asman

Club Championship:

A Grade: 1st David White; 2nd B. Asman

B Grade: 1st John Pascoe; 2nd L. Ogier

**1947**

June Lightning Tournament: 1st J. Garbasz

Club Championship:



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A Grade: 1st B. Asman; 2nd W. J. Garnett

B Grade: 1st R. Duncan; 2nd E, McPherson

C Grade: 1st Mrs K. M. McBride; J. Small

Entrants for the A and B Grades were:

A grade: B. Asman, J. E. Edwards, J. Garbasz, W. J. Garnett, M. Kuner, E. Norsa. L. Ogier, J. Pascoe. D Price. D. White, C. Whyte, W. F. Whyte.

B grade: E. K. Abraham, E. Crichton. J. Cusack, R. M. Duncan. C. B. Edwards. D. T. Latin, E. McPherson, A. C. Russell.

#### 1948

Club Championships: Champion Ben Asman, Book Trophies Ben Asman, W. J. Garnett, E. McPherson, G. R. Mcdonald, A. M. Leahy, J. Small.

#### 1949

The Club championship had 28 entries. No results are recorded. The Championship Trophy records the Champion as John Hamilton

#### 1950

No results recorded. The Championship Trophy records the Club Champion as Dr A. A. Öpik.

#### 1951

No results recorded. The Championship trophy records the Club Champion as Zigmunds Klegeris.

#### 1952

Lightning Tournament (first event in the new Riverside Rooms): Final Dr A. A. Öpik d. Dr R. O. Brunnschweiler.

#### 1953

Club Championships:

Championship: 1st Z. Klegeris;

Major reserve: 1st E. Norsa;

Minor reserve: J. J. Cusack.

Lightning Championship: 1st Dr A. A. Öpik

#### 1954

Club Championships:

Championship: 1st Z. Klegeris;

Major Reserve: 1st W.A. Jessop.

Lightning championship: 1st Z. Klegeris 6/6, then R. O. Brunnschweiler 5, C. Whyte 4.5, W. Schenk 4, J. Zilinskas 4, J. B. Pomeroy.

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## POSTSCRIPT

This brief history was made possible, as has been acknowledged, by the existence of *Trove* and reports in *The Canberra Times*. So far *Trove* stops at 1954 and it seems likely that it will be some time before it goes much further because of cuts in government funding. Moreover, as time passed, *The Canberra Times* was less inclined to publish detailed accounts of local cultural societies. The increasing Canberra population which surged from 1963 onwards, made such matters of ever lesser newsworthiness. For many years from the 1960s onwards, *The Canberra Times* contained a weekly chess column written by Tony Wiedenhofer<sup>i</sup>, then Thomas Mautner<sup>ii</sup> and finally George Stern<sup>iii</sup>. Some useful information should be able to be gleaned from those columns. There are no Canberra Chess Club records until quite recently. There are almost no Club members around to provide reminiscences of the days between 1954 and 1994 and few even since then. Research to take the Canberra Chess Club's history any further would be laborious. Scouring *The Canberra Times* in some form of hard copy and interviewing the few former members who may be available are really the only possibilities. Both would be time consuming and exhausting. So it seems unlikely that any further history will be written in the near future.

I was not involved in Club activities for two substantial periods after 1954. I studied and worked in Melbourne from 1955 to mid-1968, playing a few games in the Club during University holidays in 1955 to 1957. I re-joined the Club in mid-1968 and then took a further absence from 1983 to 1996.

By 1968 the Club had moved to the Griffin Centre in Bunda Street, Canberra City. It was built by the Commonwealth Government for Canberra's Cultural Societies, replacing the Riverside Hostel. Those bodies received adequate accommodation at reasonable rents. Unfortunately as time went by the building was not properly maintained and the permissible occupiers were expanded to include social service groups so to increase the revenue. Rents rose and, even had a new Griffin Centre not been built in 2006, the Club could not have afforded to remain there. The rents asked for space in

the new building were preposterous for small cultural groups that had no alternative but to move elsewhere.

In 1968 the Club occupied Room 2 on the ground floor of the Griffin Centre. This was a long narrow room with storage cupboards down one side one of which was used by the Club to store its equipment. Yet again, toilet facilities were unsatisfactory as the only available ones were on the first floor at the other end of the building. That was some distance from the playing venue. The room was not particularly well ventilated. In those days of hard-smoking chess players, it was frequently the case that the air in the room was dense with cigarette smoke. The question of passive smoking was not then a public issue but in any case most players were actively smoking so it was an academic matter. It was a reasonable, but spartan, venue. Occasionally, the Club was able to use the adjoining Room 1. It was more spacious, carpeted and well ventilated. Unfortunately it was not normally available and in any case the Club was unable to afford it except occasionally.

The club's activities were much the same as those of any other chess club of the time. Most of the events were tournaments. Some members attended just to play social games. Notably, the inter-club visits from and to other towns that marked the 1940s and 50s had ceased as had the fairly regular simuls by leading Sydney players. On the other hand there was an inter-club competition for the Larko Cup. Because of the small number of clubs many of the teams were ad hoc gatherings of players with peculiar names. From memory a team comprised four or, possibly five, players. The competition was not ever very successful. It finally exploded in acrimony some time in the 1990s by which time acrimonious personal disputes in Canberra chess had become very common. To some extent, sadly, these persist.

Almost all the players were different people from those playing in the 1950s. John Alps and Ken Creech were two of the old guard. Each was among the strongest players in the Club. There were several other strong players including Tony Wiedenhofer, Thomas Mautner, Grant Berriman<sup>iv</sup>, Brian Robson<sup>v</sup> and John Mackie<sup>vi</sup>. The overall strength in the

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Club was very high; probably higher in comparison than in any current ACT Club. Then the strong players played regularly whereas today Canberra has many strong players who rarely bother to play club chess. Later, other strong players joined, most notably Richard Brent<sup>vii</sup>. Keith Robertson<sup>viii</sup> was another strong player who also contributed equally strongly to the administration of the Club.

At the time there were only two adult clubs in Canberra. The other was the Civic Chess Club that also met in the city – in the Reading Room of the Goethe Institute. The ANU Chess Club existed but was confined to students and, perhaps, staff of the ANU. It was unseen except in inter-club matches.

The 1970s saw a marked change in Club atmosphere as, mainly following the 1972 Federal Elections, the Public Service grew, populated by many young people. At the same time some particularly strong ACT juniors joined. Outstanding here were Roger Farrell<sup>ix</sup> and Kim Hassall<sup>x</sup>. Others included John Quiggan and Andrew Blakers. Also to be mentioned is Ian Douglas, a promising and strong young player and a fine person who tragically died of cancer. The "imports" included Haydn Barber<sup>xi</sup>, since many times Western Australian Champion, David Ferris<sup>xii</sup>, Douglas Kewley<sup>xiii</sup> and Leon Kempen<sup>xiv</sup>.

The Club program was very much as it is today. Some of the events are still contested. For example, the Charity Cup was donated by Leon Kempen. Time limits were slower, usually 40 moves in 90 minutes followed by 24 moves in 60 minutes. Adjournments were supposed to occur after move 40 but they were disliked by many players and games often continued until the small hours with the arbiter's consent. BHB analogue clocks were generally used. They were tough and reliable, at least more so than any alternative. They are still used in some clubs with probably the same parts as were used in them 70 years ago. The Club was notable for its friendly atmosphere with disputes being either uncommon or not terribly acrimonious.

By the time I returned for a second time in 1996, the Club had moved to Room 4 in the Griffin Centre. This was a better venue in most respects. There was more space and better ventilation. Also there were toilets adjoining. The Club had a small storage cupboard that became both inadequate and unsecured. Eventually the club was able to hire an adjoining secure storage room. Late in its history there was loud competition from what apparently was a Youth Centre rock band next door. This was, surprisingly, tolerated by the players perhaps because the rock singers conveyed the agony that the players felt from their positions.

The Club was about to move on to the digital age with new DGT clocks and the use of time limits such as game in 90 minutes plus 30 seconds per move from move one (Fischer). Swiss Perfect also became available for Swiss pairings. These changes made the arbiter's task easier and made adjournments a thing of the past.

Otherwise much was the same including some of the players (Milan Grcic, Keith Robertson, Ken Creech<sup>xv</sup>, Bob Meyer<sup>xvi</sup>, Haralds Petersons and Gunars Lamberts come to mind). A colourful club member was Patrick Connell who had also created Street Chess in Garema Place.

The demographic of the Club had changed. I later found this to be so in the other Canberra clubs. It seemed that most of the members were students, retirees or the unemployed. The age group 25 - 50 was much underrepresented compared with earlier years. The Club, though, had its usual contingent of strong mature juniors including Laura Moylan, Peter and Maria Jovanovic. Svetozar and Dusan Stojic and Shervin Rafizadeh. Later we had Sherab Guo-Yuthok and Junta Ikeda. Among the newer strong adults were Mosaddeque Ali, Victor Bragin and Andrey Bliznyuk (occasionally) and, later, Vlad Smirnov, Brian Fitzpatrick. Kazimir Kolossovski and Chris Kevork. <sup>xvii</sup>

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In the 1970s the Civic Club lost the use of the Goethe Institute which closed. It moved first, appropriately for a chess club, to the psychiatric ward of the Woden Valley Hospital and later, and equally appropriately, to the Woden Senior Citizens' Club. Its name was changed to the Woden Chess Club. Gradually its fortunes failed and it merged with the Tuggeranong Chess Club that had been formed in the meantime. Also in the 1970s the Belconnen Chess Club was formed with encouragement from the Canberra Chess Club. It flourished for a time at the Belconnen Library but later moved to the Wests Rugby Club with bad consequences until the Club almost collapsed. Then it moved to the Belconnen Community Centre where, by dint of an informal alliance with the Northside Junior Chess group, its membership increased dramatically touching 60. The downside of this was that about 45 of the 60 were juniors, many of them noisy ankle biters, and when that arrangement ended the club membership fell disastrously and has since remained below that necessary for a successful club.

Active Canberra Chess Club membership in the 90s and to 2006 fluctuated from around 30 at the highest in the mid 1990s but averaging about 25. Towards the end of its time at the Griffin Centre, membership was falling to about 20.

It may be that the day of the vibrant chess club has passed. Had it not, one would expect there to be flourishing chess clubs in Canberra City, Belconnen, Gungahlin, Woden Valley, Tuggeranong and Weston Creek. Instead, there are two clubs in the City meeting on the same night of the week (an absurdity brought about by local chess politics, mentioned above) one club in Belconnen that is almost dead and one in Tuggeranong that is of modest size and strength, about the same as that of Canberra CC. The number of active adult players is little more than in 1954 despite an increase in population from 20,000 to something like 350,000 in the meantime. I have long expressed the view that Canberra now has only enough players for two really good chess clubs. Paradoxically, the numbers are now such that we could even return to the 1954 position of only one club without noticeable harm to chess in the ACT. But again, chess politics would preclude that course.

## End Notes

<sup>i</sup> **Tony Wiedenhofer** was a very strong player, 7 times Club Champion, Australian representative correspondence player and the only Canberran to win the Doeberl Cup. His friendship with Eric Doeberl was also responsible for the Cup's creation.

<sup>ii</sup> **Thomas Mautner** was another very strong Canberra CC player and an ANU Staff member.

<sup>iii</sup> **George Stern** was a leading member of the Civic/Woden Chess Club, several times ACTCA President and a co-organiser of the Doeberl Cup for many years in the 1960s to 1980s.

<sup>iv</sup> **Grant Berriman** was Club Champion in 1969. He was 5<sup>th</sup> in the Australian Junior (then Schoolboys) Championship 1949 and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, respectively in the South Australian Championships of 1949 and 1950.

<sup>v</sup> **Brian Robson** was Club champion in 1964 and has also been a strong junior in Victoria. He was also active in chess administration being ACTCA President for several years. He was an ANU Staff member.

<sup>vi</sup> **John Mackie** was a strong player with very good theoretical knowledge assisted by knowledge of Russian and accessibility to Russian Chess publications. He was also the principal DOP for Club tournaments at the time and an expert on the then new Swiss Pairing System.

<sup>vii</sup> **Richard Brent** was Club Champion in 1973 by when he was pretty much a part-time player. He had finished equal 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> in the Australian Championship 1964 tied with Wolfgang Leonhardt and Phil Viner behind Cecil Purdy and Doug Hamilton who tied for first. He pursued an eminent academic career and was on the ANU staff.

<sup>viii</sup> **Keith Robertson** is still active in Canberra chess but not at the Canberra CC. For many years he was the backbone of the Canberra CC's administration. He was also a strong player and finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Australian Junior in which Berriman was 5<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>ix</sup> **Roger Farrell** was Club champion in 1977 and one of the strongest juniors to have come from Canberra. He still plays occasionally. He was a founder member of Belconnen CC.

**Kim Hassall** was Club Champion in 1975 and on a par with Roger Farrell. He later moved to Melbourne and, though I think he has returned to Canberra, he does not now play chess.

<sup>xi</sup> **Haydn Barber** was Club Champion in 1978. Apart from his talents as a player, he was one of the first in Canberra to take an interest in junior chess. He moved from Canberra in 1979 eventually back to Western Australia where he has successfully combined administration and playing. He has played in a wide range of tournaments in Australia and overseas and has been Western Australian Champion 14 times from 1970 to 2006. He is a Life member of the CAWA. He has also been involved in WA in general administration and junior chess. To this add administration at the ACF level and the recipient of the ACF Koshnitsky Medal for Chess administration in 1986.

<sup>xii</sup> **David Ferris** was a player of Australian Championship standard. He played in the 1983-84 Australian Championship. He was also Club Champion in 1979.

<sup>xiii</sup> **Doug Kewley** has disappeared from the chess scene. He was best known at the Canberra CC for his encyclopaedic knowledge of chess openings in the days before computers made it easy. He was Club Champion in 1971 and 1974

<sup>xiv</sup> **Leon Kempen** was Club Champion in 1980. He was a fine all-round player. He is still active in the Box Hill CC in Melbourne and in weekends including the Doeberl Cup. He donated the Charity Cup to the Club.

<sup>xv</sup> **Ken Creech** was a Club member for many years. He won the Club Championship in 1961, 1972, 1981, 1984 and 1994. A feature of his play was great tenacity and the ability to maintain high quality form for many years. He moved some years ago to the North Coast of New South Wales.

<sup>xvi</sup> **Bob Meyer** was another Club member from the ANU staff. He was a world-recognised logician who on one occasion apparently remarked that, despite that, he was losing to juniors. He was not alone in that regard. Bob was also a formidable player.

<sup>xvii</sup> I have not included comments about the more recent players mentioned in the last two paragraphs especially those still living and playing in Canberra.

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**PHOTO GALLERY: A FEW SHOTS FROM 1980**



A Club night in Room 1 in the Griffin Centre





Leon Kempen



Milan Grcic



Stefan Baker



Gunars Lamberts





Bob Meyer



Jeff Wood (later ACTCA President)



Brian Butler (Club Champion 1989) (L) v Leon Kempen



Jeff Hurst



David Ferris



John Alps



Nick Ansky (R) v David Ferris

All photos © Denis Jessop