

David Woodruff: 1945-2020

I met David at Great George Street where he, Colin Pillinger and Jack Beard ran the Bristol & District Junior League, every Friday during term time. He struck me as someone with a great love for the game and I think this stayed with him all through his life. It was mainly due to his dedication to Junior chess that I joined Keynsham and managed to see first-hand many of his games, he had an awkward but quite effective style and usually made a plus score each season. Along with Nigel Johnson and Phil Telfer, David



and I would often play Bridge. David was a member of Bristol Bridge club and it seemed to be his second home (the first one being the Fear Institute of course!). He was always eccentric, but I never once heard him say anything bad about anyone or behave in anything but an exemplary manner.

Away from chess David worked as a statistician for WD & HO Wills until the Hanson takeover in 1986. I'm not sure what he did afterwards, as we lost touch when I stopped playing chess in the late 80s.

To me, he was a permanent fixture in the Bristol Chess scene and will be missed by those who knew him. Here is a smooth king and pawn win against a Draughts colleague of mine, Keith Spooner from Poole.

[Event "Yeovil Intermediates"]

[Date "2007.06.17"]

[White "Woodruff, David"] [Black "Spooner, Keith"] [Result "1-0"]

[ECO "A36"] [EventDate "1997.10.18"]

<https://share.chessbase.com/SharedGames/share/?p=Stc/wLz+m7v6R7E3RkeMDWPmib4NmjQ6U7x3pi+QoCzYhoLBhvCiA9VNXoeqLRjE>

1. c4 c5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. e3 g6 4. g3 Bg7 5. d3 Nf6 6. Nge2 d6 7. Bg2 O-O 8. O-O e5 9. Rb1 Rb8 10. a3 Bd7 11. d4 cxd4 12. exd4 Nxd4 13. Nxd4 exd4 14. Qxd4 Qc7 15. Bf4 Ne8 16. Qd3 Bf5 17. Be4 Bxc3 18. Bxf5 Bg7 19. Be4 Be5 20. Bh6 Bg7 21. Bxg7 Nxg7 22. Rfc1 Ne6 23. b4 b6 24. Bd5 Rfe8 25. Re1 Ng7 26. Qf3 Rxe1+ 27. Rxe1 Re8 28. Rxe8+ Nxe8 29. Bc6 Ng7 30. b5 Ne6 31. Qf6 Qd8 32. Qxd8+ Nxd8 33. Kf1 Kf8 34. Ke2 Ke7 35. Bd5 h6 36. Ke3 Ne6 37. f4 Nc5 38. g4 f6 39. Be4 Nxe4 40. Kxe4 Ke6 41. f5+ gxf5+ 42. gxf5+ Ke7 43. Kd5 Kd7 44. h3 h5 45. h4 Kc7 46. Ke6 a6 47. bxa6 Kb8 48. Kxd6 Ka7 49. Ke6 Kxa6 50. Kxf6 Ka5 51. Ke5 1-0

George Miller

Keynsham Chess and Draughts Club

I attach a photo of the Bristol League team that went to Hanover on an exchange visit that includes David (probably in the 1970s or 1980s). I am sure he held several positions in Somerset County Chess Association. I believe he was the delegate to the BCF as I remember going with him to meetings when I represented Gloucestershire.

David Jarrett
Keynsham Chess Club



I first met David in connection with Bristol Junior Chess around 1993 as my son James was an active player in the Bristol Junior League as well as being a member of "Opening Moves". Opening Moves operated initially at QEH and had over 100 members at its peak, the main coaches being Jerry Humphries and Ian Bourne.

The Buckleys were members too and David was brought along from Keynsham to help coach less experienced players and beginners. Thus was formed our connection with Keynsham as James and I were able to play in a suitable team – in those days I think we had about six and we usually were in a side with at least one or both Buckley parents as the children David, Melanie and Simon were already alarmingly good and probably already in the 1st team!

James moved on but I continued to play for Keynsham and was usually in the same side as David. Although he usually got lifts from Keynsham to away matches I could often provide transport home as required and on numerous occasions in connection with local congresses – so over time I got to know him well, although he was never what I would call a great conversationalist.

In the late 90s or perhaps the early 00s David suffered a minor stroke and after that I believe his health fell into a slow but steady decline. Likewise his standard started to fall (141 7/1994 to 89 7/2008). The rebasing saw a rise to 127 7/2009 and then reaching a peak of 134 7/2012. Thereafter a fresh decline set in and in latter years his abilities became sadly erratic, not helped by his poor timekeeping. With hindsight, of course, I believe he must have been suffering from some sort of dementia, all very sad.

Duncan MacArthur
B Team Captain, Keynsham Chess Club

I suspect that like a lot of current players 'of a certain age' in the Bristol league I first met David playing at Youth House in Great George Street on a Friday evening (in my case in the early 1980s).

It was run by David along with others, most notably Colin Pillinger and Jack Beard. David and Colin were a particularly amusing couple. David was quiet and unassuming and Colin was ebullient and extrovert and their characters seem to perfectly match their physical appearance with Colin standing about 18 inches taller than David!

Indeed it was David that invited myself to come along and join Keynsham (at that time I lived in Stockwood) and, aside from some time away for university and the like, I have been there pretty much ever since.

At that time David was a stalwart of the club, both in terms of his organisational/administrative input and his playing ability. In the 1980s I recall him playing to a grade in the high 160s but unfortunately in the early 2000s he had a stroke and that clearly had a big impact on both his health and his chess performance.

In the very latter years, being honest, we made an effort to ensure he had a game really out of respect and pastoral care, rather than for his contribution to the overall match score (indeed we saw anything other than a loss as a considerable bonus!).

However that should not in any shape or form tarnish or diminish the huge contribution that he made, both to Keynsham Chess Club and to chess generally.

John Kilmister
Secretary, Keynsham Chess Club