**T. MARTYN WHITESIDE**

 

 T. Martyn Whiteside 1947-2020

Writing a series of chess club histories for the WCU website I was well aware that Martyn Whiteside was the go-to man in relation to Aberystwyth but tracking him down was another matter. Thankfully I spoke to him by e-mail last October and much of the town’s chess history came from him. He told me that he had not been involved with over-the-board chess for the past 30 years due to the banning of smoking in the 1980s. He carried on playing postal chess but gave that up when he became a single-parent father in 1996.

Martyn was a Yorkshireman and arrived in Aberystwyth in 1966 joining the University chess team and playing for their club for the next three years. Postgraduate he joined the Aberystwyth town club playing in the Mid Wales Chess League. The League degenerated due the withdrawal of teams because of the cost of travel and other difficulties. The club however found some serious competition in the British Club Championships where they were led by George Botterill and Martyn recalled matches against Oxford University and Lerwick! (by phone).

The decline of the league meant local players were mostly bereft of competitive matches so Martyn started an Aberystwyth Chess League for three-man teams. He single-handedly drove this league forward and one article in a national newspaper by George Botterill reckoned that about 10% of the local population was playing chess in the league. At its peak the Aber League had several Divisions of ten teams each and included schools, pubs, colleges etc…

In 1982 Martyn was involved in trying to start a Commonwealth Chess Association. He sent out the invitations for the first Conference in Nigeria but had to personally withdraw as the conference date clashed with the date of his wedding. In his email to me Martyn sounded amazed that his future wife objected even though there was an all expenses paid week in Lagos on offer!!

Martyn was a fine over-the-board player winning the town championship about six times and you only have to read the Club History to see the high standard of opposition. He also organized a Lightning Tournament for the league (which he won twice).

He excelled at postal chess, playing in friendly matches for BCCA and BPCF. Around 1986 he topped the BCCA International Players’ table with a 95% record. He also played for Mid Wales in the Welsh Interzone Postal Chess Championships and, as a result, was selected to play for Wales in a European Team Championships, the preliminaries of the X1 Chess Olympiad (1987) and on Board 2 for the X11Olympiad (1992) ,. In the latter he scored 6/11, a high enough rating to gain the title of Welsh Master and half International Master. He started play in the World Individual Championships but ‘unexpectedly’ became a father in 1996 and his attentions were somewhat diverted. He finished with a score of about 50% which did include the biggest win of his career against World No. 28 Valentinas Normantas of Lithuania (Martyn was at the time rated 503rd). (*The game can be seen on* <https://players.chessbase.com/de/player/whiteside> )

After his retirement from chess he became much involved in running a local quiz league and a Fantasy Football League. He became a single parent again to a son born 2011 and as a result retired from his quizzing activities.

*(Compiled by Martyn Griffiths)*