

# Edinburgh Expedition



**Ever a man for a challenge, Sean Marsh returned to Edinburgh for a long weekend to put some of Chess in Schools and Communities' plans into action**

It is strange how plans can snowball. Edinburgh was not originally in the thoughts of Chess in Schools and Communities ('CSC'), when expansion plans were discussed. In fact, the closest we came in the discussions was Newcastle and I delivered a CSC training day there in April 2017.

Richard Payne, Chairperson of Lothian Junior Chess, attended the Newcastle day and shortly afterwards he contacted me to suggest the innovative plan of adding a training day to his junior chess tournament, with the hope of attracting any parents and teachers who happened to be at the tournament with their juniors at the time.

The tournament in question was in Edinburgh and I delivered the training day there in October 2017. It was a success and it generated a lot of interest. CSC provided some of our new contacts with boards and sets, and I have maintained regular contact with several of the people who attended the courses. Colin Paterson, who is currently helping me with more expansion plans, even made the long trip to the London Chess Classic specifically for one of my full length training days, and Andrew MacQueen joined me on Teesside for a number of shadowing sessions in the Spring term. Meanwhile, we also made more schools aware of the Delancey UK Chess Challenge, which is an important part of the school calendar.

Back to base, and it was time for discussions on how to build upon our initial successes. I always feel it is imperative to strike while the iron is hot; I am not now and never have been interested in token efforts. There was clearly a large amount of interest and enthusiasm in Scotland and it was very important to arrange a follow-up project as quickly as possible.

Here I had help from David Stewart, who had been at the first Edinburgh training day. David is, amongst other things, the organiser of the annual Edinburgh Weekend Congress and he had the ambitious idea of adding four CSC training sessions to the weekend's activities. As time went by and we continued to discuss the plan, we were able to see more strands coming together. David is involved in the Chess in the Park project at the Fountain



*Those playing chess at Edinburgh's Fountain Cafe every Thursday can enjoy a stunning backdrop.*

Cafe, just off Princes Street and the 2018 sessions were due to start over Easter.

Coincidentally, around the time I was putting together the latest Edinburgh plan, I received a note from Jenny Wilson, another of the October 2017 delegates. Jenny informed me of a new, weekly board games club for the homeless that had just been set up at St. Cuthbert's Church in Edinburgh. I began to think of ways we could help them too.

It was with all of the above in mind that I put together a programme of events for my second expedition to Scotland, which turned out to be even more ambitious than the first.

The first part of my Easter excursion was a visit to the Chess in the Park project. The Fountain Cafe, owned by Gary Scott, provides a beautiful environment for chess players of all ages and abilities to simply turn up on a Thursday afternoon to play as much chess as they want. The only stipulation is that players bring their own boards, sets and, if required, clocks.

Edinburgh Castle, perched on the hill above the park, overlooks the Fountain Cafe to provide a stunning backdrop to the chess activity. I arrived early to see for myself just how the players would arrange themselves and how popular the first session would be. It was a very cold (albeit dry) day, which had the potential to prove off-putting, yet before I knew it most of the cafe's outside benches were filled with chess players galore, from the titled International Master Mark Orr to parents with their young children. The offhand games were still played in a competitive spirit, yet the overriding atmosphere was definitely friendliness. I spoke to a lot of the people, played a number of games and was made to feel extremely welcome. I felt I had already made some valuable new contacts while reconnecting with a number of people from my previous visit.



On behalf of CSC, Sean donated materials for the Rev. Sutton's club for the homeless..

The following day I returned to the Fountain Cafe with the inimitable Jim Fisher of Chess and Bridge, to present 10 chess sets and 20 boards (some vinyl, some fold-up).

The next scheduled visit saw Jim and I go to St. Cuthbert's Church. It was built in 1892 and there were already at least six earlier churches on the same site before then. Quite aside from the religious aspects of the impressive building, it also holds a degree of fame among fans of the crime fiction genre, as it is where Agatha Christie married her second husband. Thus there is a crime genre connection to Baker Street.

I had already been in contact with the Reverend Peter Sutton to discuss his board game club for the homeless and to offer our assistance. Jim and I presented Peter with chess sets, boards and a number of other board games for the club. It was wonderful to be at St. Cuthbert's and to discuss the work Peter is doing. I vowed to return one day, perhaps to see the club in action.

It would be great to see both the Chess in the Park project and the St. Cuthbert's Church initiative replicated in other parts of the UK.

Now it was time to focus on the four impending training sessions. For months I had been working closely with my new contacts in Edinburgh to plan the four training sessions to coincide with the Edinburgh Weekend Congress. The sessions were publicised on the Chess Scotland website and on the literature for the congress itself.

This brought in a wider range of delegates than the October sessions, with one delegate – Richard Bowman – travelling all the way from Yorkshire to attend. We were still able to attract casual congress visitors too, making the sessions particularly far-reaching.

The sessions went very well and I made a lot more contacts with whom I am hoping to

develop things much further in Scotland.

There is no doubt about it; attaching CSC training days to congresses has proved to be an excellent innovation, opening up our work to a quite different audience than our standard days attract.

The Congress itself was well attended, with entries just over 200, which was slightly up on the tally for 2017. I was able to spend a little time in the two playing halls between my training sessions and I enjoyed watching the games in each of the sections. I was able to reconnect with a number of the players I had met in the park and I was delighted to be asked so many questions by people curious about the CSC and its activities.

At 2475, International Master Justin Tan was the highest-rated player in the 63-player Open section (ahead of two more IMs, five FMs, one WFM and one CM), and he lived up to his billing, winning all five of his games on the way to clear first place, a full point ahead of IM Dieter Kolbus, FM Sergio Adan Bermudez and Declan Shafi. That is not to say the games were easy; matters are never that simple in weekend congresses.

With plenty of fascinating chess battles in action, intriguing moments were to be found in every phase of the game. Indeed, the very first round brought an interesting clash between two International Masters.

**M.Orr-J.Tan**  
Round 1  
*Queen's Gambit Declined*

1 c4 e6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 c6 4 cxd5 exd5  
5 ♖f3 ♟f5 6 ♟g5 ♟e7 7 ♟xe7 ♘xe7  
8 e3 0-0 9 ♟d3 ♚d6 10 0-0 ♘d7  
11 ♟xf5 ♘xf5 12 ♚d3 g6



On to the training course itself in Edinburgh, and Sean is keen to emphasize how delegates will best be able to teach children completely new to the game about the rook and pawns.

White's opening play has been unambitious, but now, perhaps tempted after seeing Black's last move, which has loosened the dark squares on the kingside, he changes gear. **13 e4 dxe4 14 ♖xe4 ♜f4 15 d5 ♗ad8!?**



**16 dxc6?!**

Tempting – and the pawn does make it to the seventh rank – but Black's counterplay becomes highly significant. 16 ♗f1 would have kept things solid.

**16...♗e5!**

Suddenly White needs to show some fancy footwork.

**17 ♖f6+ ♔g7 18 ♜e4?**

18 ♜c3 would have been much better, as it would have kept an eye and a protective hand on the f6-knight.

**18...♗xf3+ 19 gxf3 ♜g5+ 20 ♖g4**



With ...h5 on the agenda, White is about to lose a piece.

**20...♗fe8 21 c7 ♗c8?!**

21...♗xe4 was simpler, as the queen handily protects d8, thus rendering White's forthcoming promotion futile.

**22 ♜xb7 h5 23 ♗fe1 ♗h8 24 ♜e4 hxg4 25 fxg4 ♗h4 26 f3 ♖d2 27 ♗e2 ♖d4+**

Forcing off the queens, after which White's play is never going to be enough to make up for the missing piece.

**28 ♜xd4+ ♗xd4 29 ♗e7 ♔f6 30 ♗d7 ♗xf3+ 31 ♔g2 ♗e5 32 ♗f1+ ♔e6 33 ♗d8 ♗xg4+ 34 ♔h3 ♗xc7 35 ♗e8+ ♗e7 36 ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 37 ♗e1 ♗g5 0-1**

In the second round a careless queen was trapped.



## J.Tan-F.Noetzel

Round 2



Black has been ambitious with his queen and after Tan's **15 h3** – taking away the g4-square – it should have become clear that she has a big target. Black could have tried 15 ...♗h8 or even 15...♗xe4, but he would still be worse. However, as played, the queen has to leave the board within a few short moves.

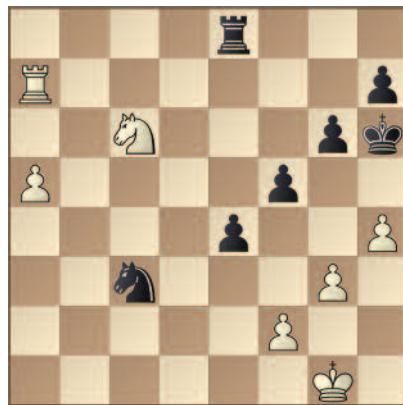
**15...♗b4? 16 ♖f4 ♜f6 17 ♗h5 ♜e7 18 ♖g5**

With 18...f6 impossible due to the pin (which could have been alleviated by 15...♗h8), Black had to give up the queen for two minor pieces, with **18...♗xd5 19 ♖xe7 ♗xe7**, but after that White's victory was never in doubt (1-0, 32).

I was intrigued too by this endgame.

## R.Reimanis-J.Moreby

Round 2



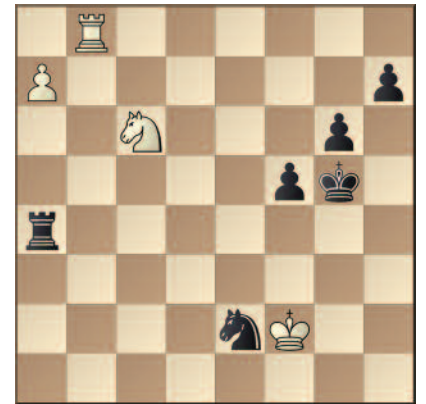
White has just played 42 a4-a5 and it looks very difficult indeed to prevent the a-pawn's march to promotion, especially as knights are the worst pieces to combat rook's pawns. The game continued with Black's attempt to produce some notable counterplay.

**42...e3 43 fxe3 ♗xe3 44 a6**

A natural move, as trying to defend the g-pawn with 44 ♖f2 allows Black to become very active with 44...♗d1+ when it is easy for White to go wrong: for example, 45 ♔g2 ♗e2+ 46 ♔f1 ♗c2! with an important tempo

on White's knight. Meanwhile, an attempt to escape the confines of the back rank with 46 ♔f3?? fails to 46...♗f2 checkmate. As played, White has to give up all of his kingside pawns, but the a-pawn still looks strong.

**44...♗xg3+ 45 ♔h2 ♗f4 46 ♗b7 ♗xh4+ 47 ♔g3 ♗a4 48 a7 ♔g5 49 ♗b8 ♗e2+ 50 ♔f2**



It was only when the smoke had cleared from the flurry of the previous moves that Black's excellent idea became apparent.

**50...♗d4!**

Now White has to agree to give up the prize a-pawn because 51 a8♗ ♗xa8 52 ♗xa8 ♗xc6 is much better for Black.

**51 ♗xd4 ♗xa7 52 ♖f3+ ♔f6 53 ♗b6+ ♔g7 54 ♔g3** and White offered a draw, which was immediately accepted (½-½).

The road to any tournament success is very rarely entirely smooth and the eventual champion had a tough task in the third round.

## S.Bermudez-J.Tan

Round 3



White's knights have been working hard and now, even though they are on the edge, they have reasonable prospects of shepherding the c-pawn further up the board. However, the next move, despite appearing to be a logical connecting of the pieces, is a mistake, allowing Black to tip the balance in his favour.

**29 ♗b1?**

29 ♗c5 and 29 ♗c1 would both be improvements.



A typically busy scene at the start of a round at the 2018 Edinburgh Chess Congress, alongside which Sean ran his CSC training sessions.

**29...♙e5!**

Suddenly White's pieces are in a tangle, with the queen finding it difficult to protect both knights simultaneously.

**30 ♖c4?!**

With the obvious intention of meeting 30...♙a5? with 31 ♖b8, winning the queen. Black now sensibly guards against pins and checks on his back rank.

**30...♙f8 31 ♗c5?!**

This looks reasonable too, with a threat to jump into d7 at some point. In view of what follows, though, White should have preferred to protect the loose knight and safeguard his rook at the same time with 31 ♖a1.

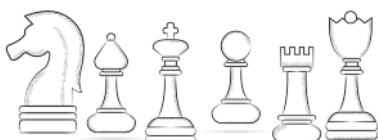
**31...♗xc6 32 ♗cb7 ♖f5!**

Winning material, due to the looseness of both the rook and the knight.

**33 ♖xc6 ♖xb1+ 34 ♗g2 ♖b6 35 ♖a4 ♙e2 0-1**

Attempts to protect d2 with the queen lose quickly to 36...♖f6, with a mating attack.

Finally, here is a tactical mêlée from a game between two female players. There was a time when the London System just led to dull games, but now everyone is playing it aggressively.



**S.Cooke-A.Lampard**

Round 3



White's next move aims to introduce another pin, this time on e5. It does, however, light the blue touch paper and 22 ♖b1 would have been the safer option.

**22 ♙f4 ♗xd4 23 ♙xe8 ♗xc2 24 ♗xe6?**

24 ♙e5! ♙xe8 25 ♗xc2 is the simplest, when Black is struggling to break the pin and 25...♙f8 allows 26 ♗xe6 to land with much greater force.

Black could now have played 24...♙xe8, when 25 ♗xg7 ♙xg7 gains a very useful tempo on the rook. If the rook retreats then 25...♙e2 remarkably rescues the formerly stranded knight. As played, White keeps control and emerges from the tactics with a winning position, despite Black's

best efforts to create further complications. **24...♙e7? 25 ♙xg6 ♗b4 26 ♙f5 ♖c6 27 ♗d4 ♖c4 28 ♙d6 ♗xa2+ 29 ♖b1 ♗xc3+ 30 ♖xc3 ♙e8 31 ♙e6+ 1-0**

An exciting game.

I enjoyed every minute of my time in Edinburgh and it was especially good to be able to address the second 'C' in Chess in Schools and Communities. Discussions are currently taking place to build upon our first very successful year in Scotland and I want to return to help my new friends and colleagues as soon as I can in the Autumn term.

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