

## Glenrothes Chess Club - History

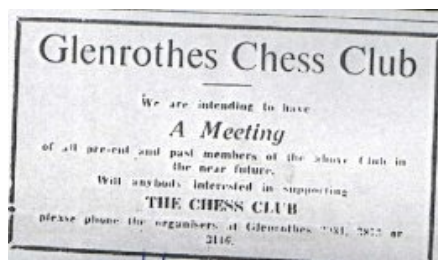
The history of our chess club is not so easy to write. For one thing, there have been several 'Glenrothes Chess Clubs' and, for another, there is a distinct lack of information. As with any history this is 'work in progress' that will change according to future events and additional information that becomes available about the past. *Please note that any press reports mentioned can be found in the club archive.*

### 1960s

The earliest mention I can find is from 1964, where a *Glenrothes Gazette* report mentions Glenrothes Chess Club as playing in the local chess league the fact that Glenrothes was able to enter both an A and B team suggests are reasonably healthy club though finishing bottom and next-to-bottom indicates no great strength!

The club next appears some five years later in 1969, when notice is given in the *Glenrothes Gazette* of a

meeting at Beckmans Ltd. canteen. The fortunes of the club in the intervening years



are not clear while the report mentions the club 'reforming', it also appears the club did play regular games over the preceding five years. Perhaps the club suffered from those perennial problems lack of premises and regular members (some things never change!) and met only sporadically. Certainly, it mentions membership had 'never been large', but hoped having a 'permanent home' would lead to an increase. The driving force behind the club in sixties seems to have been a Mr Crowther.

One claim did strike me as dubious Glenrothes is described as one of the 'first chess clubs in Fife' given that the town itself was founded only in the post-war period, this seems hard to believe!

### 1970s

As the moment, even less is known about the 1970s than sixties. Anecdotal evidence suggests a chess club

did exist in Glenrothes, but no more details are known at the present time.

### 1980s

If there is reason to believe a club existed into the seventies, this was not so by the time we reach the mid-eighties. Glenrothes residents who are now members of the present club speak of having to go to Kirkcaldy to play chess. On top of this, the *Gazette* in 1985 reports on an attempt by future secretary Walter Pearson to form a chess club in Newcastle Community School. No further details are available, but it seems clear the venture was not a success.

In many ways, the lack of a new town chess club is surprising. The school chess scene was blooming in this period Walter Pearson was running a strong club at Glenrothes High School, with players like Walter and Andrew Burnett and Gavin Saxton and the town played host to national junior tournaments. Add to this the 1988 Lightning tournament featuring Tal, Spassky and Suba, and the 1989 inaugural Glenrothes Chess Congress, and the lack of a chess club is hard to explain.



In fact, the re-emergence of a new town chess club would have to await developments elsewhere.

### 1990s

In 1995, Kirkcaldy Chess Club<sup>1</sup> found itself in need of new premises following the news that Nairn's Social Club would no longer be available as premises. The immediate challenge was to find somewhere new to play. Though the Polish Club was considered one possibility, Walter Pearson, now secretary, acted quickly and secured the current premises at the CISWO social club in Glenrothes. It has been rumoured that certain Kirkcaldy members felt Walter, himself a resident of

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<sup>1</sup> Kirkcaldy Chess Club itself had a long chess history, it's final form emerging from a 1986 amalgamation of the existing Kirkcaldy Chess Club (which had existed for many years) and the Nairns Chess Club (Nairns being a famous linoleum business).

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Glenrothes, had been a bit too keen to see the club move up the road to the new town!

How permanent the move to Glenrothes was intended to be is difficult to work out at any rate, though playing out of Glenrothes, the club remained known as 'Kirkcaldy Chess Club' until 1998. However, whatever the initial aims, the move became permanent and the club became known as Glenrothes Chess Club from around 1998.

It seems clear that not all Kirkcaldy members stayed with the club some may have chosen to play at the Dunfermline club, while others may have been lost to club chess. Certainly, lack of numbers would soon become a real problem.

In the following years the club could be described as being very strong in terms of playing strength the B team won the TAFCA 2 title with a 100% record in 2000 and the A team won the top division in 2002, dropping only one point. However, this was only part of the story. Numbers were dropping, with only two TAFCA teams and membership around a dozen. In addition, the relative strength of the players and, it must be said, an at times rather serious attitude to playing chess, made it difficult to attract new/inexperienced members.

While it's probably fair to say that a majority of members were coming to accept the need for change, there was less consensus on how to achieve this. As a result, some members proposed various changes a website was created; the club tried (with a degree of success) to achieve a bigger presence in the media; the club was made more welcoming to new/young/weaker players; better organisational structures were developed.

Some members, long-standing in the main, considered the pace of change too quick and too critical (implicitly or

otherwise) of the previous management of the club. This, along with the fact that Glenrothes Chess Club is no different to most and is composed of some strong personalities, led to some interesting 'debates'!

In terms of personnel, Walter Pearson effectively stood down in 2003 as secretary after many years in the post. Initially Ben Jenkins, followed, briefly, by Pete Selbie took up the reins but in 2004 Stuart Blyth who, in many respects, had been carrying out many of the secretarial duties anyway, took over the post. Bruce Geddes stepped in as treasurer, while George Pyrich remained president. Given that the new secretary and the president hadn't always seen eye to eye on the changes, it's fair to say that committee discussions were somewhat lively for a period!

### **Glenrothes Juniors**

In the eighties and early nineties, Glenrothes mainly through the work of Walter Pearson did a lot to promote junior and school chess. One of the most pleasing developments of the last few years has been the re-emergence of this tradition. In 2004 a junior chess club was re-established. The main organising force was Paul McDonald, and through his work, some outstanding juniors like his son Calum, Francis Bachelor and Liam Ingram developed a great interest and ability so much so that, not only was a Glenrothes Junior team entered in the TAFCA League, but also the existing crop of juniors soon outgrew the junior club. In 2005 Stuart Blyth, along with Bruce Geddes, took over the running of the junior club, though from a slightly different premise, which put greater emphasis on local and younger kids, with the result that we now have a junior club of anything up to twenty five youngsters of varying strengths and ages.

Year	Champion	Grayson Cup	Major	Minor	Allegro Cup	Other
2006	M. Perez-Carballo	?	P. Selbie	F. Bachelor	S. Blyth	
2005	B. Jenkins	S. Blyth	B. Simeonov	P. McDonald	B. Jenkins	
2004	G Pyrich	P Selbie		P Selbie	S Blyth	Spens Cup Runners Up
2003	B Jenkins	S Blyth				

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2002	B Jenkins	J Baillie/S Blyth		-	-	Glenrothes A: TAFCA Div1 Champions W Pearson (Glenrothes Major) S Blyth (Glenrothes Minor)
2001	G Pyrich	A Straub				W Pearson (Hawick Major) Jackie Campbell Rose bowl winners
2000	W Pearson	W Pearson				Glenrothes B: TAFCA Div. 2 Champions (100% record)
1999	T Thomson	G Saxton				?
1998	?	?				Spens Cup (as Kirkcaldy Chess Club)