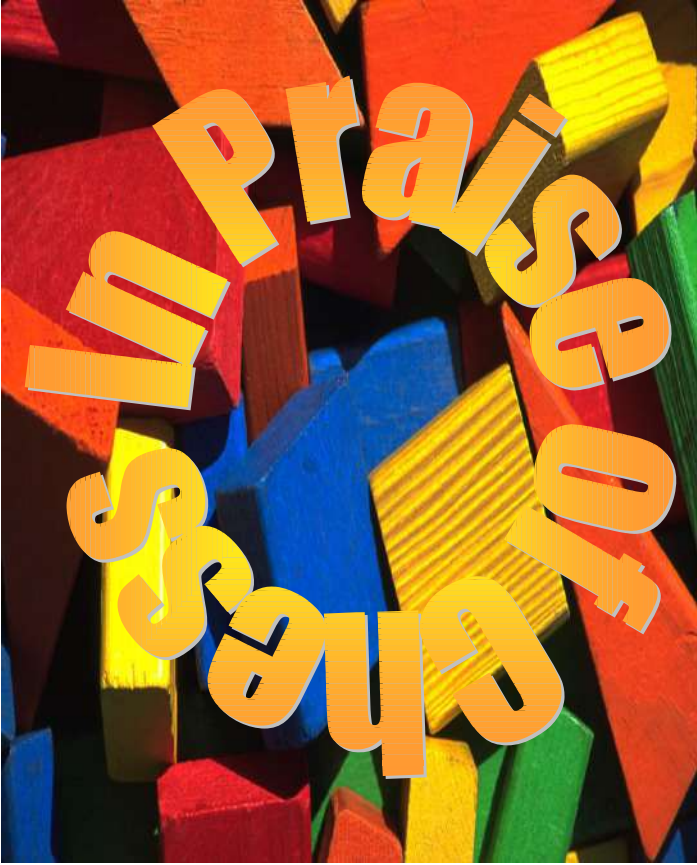


# My Poems



**Gillian A Moore**

## In Praise of Chess

### DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated my fellow chess players everywhere*

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In Praise of Chess

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## In Praise of Chess

### PREFACE

Gillian Moore's beautifully written book of poetry "In Praise of Chess" will delight both chess players and non-chess players alike. Lovers of poetry will find within the book's 10 sections a variety of diverse and appealing topics. All do have some connection with chess, even the delightfully written verses about Gillian's holidays and travels, reflecting upon places visited for her annual tournaments and other chess events. Here her humour and unique style bring such colour and joy to these entertaining adventures that her readers almost feel they are there.

Other sections are more directly dedicated to the deep and varied aspects of the game of chess. It is here that Gillian's deeply philosophical nature and outlook on life become more apparent, as she often compares the game of chess with the game of life. Her observations on both are profound, giving readers much to think about. All her writing reflects her philosophical outlook on all life's many experiences. These she expresses with a simplicity that is only possible from a deep understanding of a lifetime of study of yoga and deep daily meditation.

Gillian's poems along with her humour often have a hidden depth, cleverly crafted and skilfully executed. She is as much an outstanding and skilful poet as she is an outstanding chess player.

Lesley Maybee



## In Praise of Chess

### INTRODUCTION

For most of us, cessation of some our usual activities has been forced upon us, due to the Corona virus pandemic these last two years.

Since March 2020, my Southampton chess club has been closed, with all its matches and those in the local league. In addition, my usual holidays with the British Chess Championships and the Devon County (Paignton) Chess Congress were off. Furthermore, until July this year we did not even have total freedom to visit family members and friends.

Nature abhors a vacuum. Well, into my time gaps I created new meaningful activities at home, since it was those outside of it that were impaired or not possible. So, I have been playing chess by phone and online. Furthermore I wrote this book. Luckily, the muse has been with me non-stop, creating all but four of the poems this year.

The rhythm of my verses is in various forms of traditional meter, and almost all of them are rhyming too. My poems about The Knight and, most fittingly, Stratford upon Avon, are in the format of a Shakespearean sonnet.

Such as I am and such as it is, my aim is to give what I have to give by this latest book, nothing more, nothing less. My hope is that all who read my words are enjoying life as much as you can.

## In Praise of Chess

My previous books are also available for free download on the Hampshire Chess Association website  
<https://www.hampshirechess.co.uk/>

- \* My Chess Career and Holidays
- \* My Chess Revealed – A Book of Selected Games

With best wishes to my readers,

Gillian Moore

October 2021

---

### AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to my long-time special friend and fellow traveller on the spiritual path of Self-realization, Lesley Maybee, for her kind words and praises from the heart in her Preface.

To Jerry Dowlen, my fellow chess player, author and new friend, I am indebted for his labours in proof-reading the whole book, and for his many suggestions, great appreciation and encouragement throughout.

# In Praise of Chess

## PART 1

### HARD TIMES 2020/21

## In Praise of Chess

### FREEDOM FOR ALL

Freedom, we want freedom,  
It is what we all do seek.  
The chessmen too would tell us this,  
If only they could speak.

We feel for them when they're distressed,  
When pinned or kept in thrall.  
For free and easy movement  
Is the nature of us all.

This is a truth of recent times  
We know only too well,  
When the Pandemic came to power  
And liberty did quell.

If chessmen they could march with banners,  
And en masse could chant,  
"We want freedom, we want freedom,  
What do we all want?"

## In Praise of Chess

### SOUTHAMPTON CHESS CLUB

*“As proved by evidence, [chess is] more lasting in its being and presence than all books and achievements; the only game that belongs to all people and all ages; of which none knows the divinity that bestowed it on the world, to slay boredom, to sharpen the senses, to exhilarate the spirit.”*

*– Stefan Zweig*



Southampton Chess Club it was formed  
In eighteen eighty three,  
And ever since has been the hub  
Of much activity.

I joined this venerable club  
After the last century year.<sup>1</sup>  
Alas, its doors are shut now and  
No player ventures near.<sup>2</sup>

---

1 After long breaks from competitive chess, I joined Southampton club in 2001.

2 The club has been closed since March 2020, due to the pandemic.

## In Praise of Chess

But chess is everliving and  
It cannot fade away.  
Its format changed a year ago,  
Yet it is here to stay.

How long it is since I stood inside  
The chess club I hold dear,  
Where every week on a Tuesday night  
I was present, always there.

I gain some comfort in familiar  
Activities and places,  
And the people that I know, with their  
Good cheer-affecting faces.

I do not know when once again  
I'll enter through the door,  
For matches at my club to play  
In-person chess once more.

## In Praise of Chess

### HAMPSHIRE CHESS

Where there is need, there often comes supply.  
So Providence it cast a kindly eye  
On all the clubs in Hampshire and their leagues.  
Thus an association was convened<sup>3</sup>  
To foster and support the game of chess  
With all its pleasure, goodness and finesse.

We put on matches in the Chiltern League,  
With Hampshire versus other counties there.  
And once a year we held our big event:  
The Hampshire Congress with its tournaments,  
Open to all players everywhere,  
Of every level and experience.

In recent years, a comfortable hotel<sup>4</sup>  
In Fareham, it has served the congress well -  
Accommodation, restaurant and bar,  
The spacious playing hall and other rooms  
Spread all over the whole of the first floor.  
Now this is just a pleasant memory.

---

3 Hampshire Chess Association

4 The Lysses House Hotel

## In Praise of Chess



*Gillian Moore officiating at the Hampshire Congress 2013, with Roger Marsh our grading officer.*

And for the service rather than esteem,  
I am an officer within the team  
Of the committee of the HCA.  
I look after the money and accounts.  
I oversee the entries to our Congress,  
And deal with any queries that arise.

Alas, as the pandemic still exists,  
And life is not quite back to normal yet,  
As masks and social distancing persists,  
We are in limbo. For we do not know  
When we will play in-person chess again.  
For now, we still must play the waiting game!<sup>5</sup>

---

5 Due to the pandemic, alas, our annual Hampshire Chess Congress has not been held since November 2019.



## In Praise of Chess

### REMEMBERING THE HAMPSHIRE CONGRESS

The tournaments<sup>6</sup> engross us and  
The tournaments are fun,  
As every round results reveal  
Who's lost and drawn and won.

Our great pursuit nicely allows  
A social side, what's more.  
Not during play but afterwards  
Of course, or else before.

It's good to see the faces of  
The players known to us,  
And catch up with the news and what  
Is pleasing to discuss.

'Post mortems' after every round  
Dissecting games we played,  
We like to note which moves were wrong  
And others rightly made.

And when the congress is all done  
And victories are known,  
A prizes presentation comes  
Before we all go home.

---

6 The HCA congresses consisted of the Open, the Major and the Minor tournaments. I usually completed in the Major, although I have once or twice braved the Open among the toughest opponents!

## In Praise of Chess

We gather for official pomp  
With camera and its flash -  
The Mayor presents the trophies and  
The envelopes of cash.<sup>7</sup>

And whether disappointed or  
We're pleased that we did well,  
We know that chess results are but  
A merry carousel!

---

<sup>7</sup> In the Hampshire Chess Congress we always invited the local Mayor to do the honours of presenting the winners with their prizes.

In Praise of Chess

THE EAST DEVON WEEKEND CONGRESS

EXETER MARCH 2020<sup>8</sup>

The guest house where I stayed provided  
Just a room for me,  
So eating out for all my meals  
Was a necessity.  
Breakfasting at Wetherspoon,  
Each morning it was good  
To start the day before the play  
Replete with vegan food.  
This is my diet now, for I  
Have chosen thus to live,  
And do my bit to help myself  
And animals to thrive.

The congress was towards the end  
Of our in-person chess:  
The national lockdown came anon  
And put us all to test.  
Between the rounds it was a pleasure  
Friends of mine to meet,  
But due to the Corona virus  
Not with hugs could greet.  
And shaking hands with the opponents  
It was banned. Instead,  
A smile, perhaps a thumbs up sign  
Or nodding of the head.

---

8 My last face to face tournament.

## In Praise of Chess

Facial tissues and waste bins  
There was display of these,  
In order to enhance the hygiene  
When we cough or sneeze.  
Regarding frequent hand washes,  
In wash rooms there was fuss  
With notices of how to wash  
For twenty seconds plus!  
Now we all know the story how  
So many lives were lost,  
And change affected all and came at  
Not a little cost.

But as I write<sup>9</sup>, it's looking bright  
With no more 'house arrest'.  
I'm getting out and about again  
And, hoping for the best,  
I look for further stages of  
The world's normality.  
Meanwhile, I embrace each day.  
And my philosophy  
Is working at my game of life,  
In order not to lose,  
Succeeding or else learning by  
Each thought and act I choose<sup>10</sup>.

---

9 In July 2021

10 *"I never lose; I succeed and I learn"*  
~ Nelson Mandela

## In Praise of Chess

### CHESS BY INTERNET AND PHONE

The matches that I now enjoy  
Take place by Internet -  
It's not the same as live opponents  
Sitting opposite.

Yet it is good and keeps me going  
At the game I love,  
As my computer mouse does help  
To execute each move.

But what do players do who have  
No means to go online?  
Or anyone, indeed, how do  
They occupy their time?

A friend of mine without the web -  
He also lives alone -  
Is very glad of chess with me  
Over the telephone!

This national drama will resolve  
In time, for you and me,  
By careful strategy, and faith  
And hope and charity!

## In Praise of Chess

### CHALLENGING TIMES

What strange times we've been living in of late,  
A challenging and most abnormal state.

It's like a cat lady without a cat<sup>11</sup>,  
Or a royal lady with no fancy hat,

As a migratory swift with injured wing,  
Faithfully, with hearts that still could sing,  
In longing did we chant by heaven's door,  
"We want our chess back as it was before!"

The much loved board with squares of sixty four,  
In solitude before us as we pore,  
Some real opponents solid to the sight  
Would help a lot to put our living right.

The signs are there now that the Powers That Be  
Have taken pity on our long-held plea<sup>12</sup>.  
Come chorus, now let's chant by heaven's door,  
"We thank you, we have much to thank you for!"

---

11 I have loved cats all my life, but alas do not have a cat!

12 As at August 2021, some clubs are reopening, and a congress or two is planned once again.

## In Praise of Chess

### GOOD CHANCES OF TOUGH CHALLENGES

I've viewed the lockdowns as a guest to greet;  
It's po-faced challenges with smiles to meet.  
For though with forced restrictions, it is true  
I've not been at a loss for things to do.

Having to spend much time at home alone,  
My 'visits' were over the telephone.  
My chess club friend and I also did play  
Scores of social distanced games this way.<sup>13</sup>

We've made up for in-person matches lost  
And kept ourselves amused without a cost,  
For I've a useful deal with my BT,  
And phone calls are no extra charge to me!

And when for daily exercise I've walked,  
The passers by, unusually, they talked  
At least to say a 'morning' in all weather,  
For feeling we are in this state together.

And in these strange times, lots of poetry  
Was minted from my mind for you and me.  
And that's another thing that's sprung up new,  
Which shows what challenges of change can do.

---

<sup>13</sup> And as at August 2021 we are still playing several times a week over the phone, since the club has not reopened yet.

In Praise of Chess

A DAY TRIP TO WINCHESTER

It's getting better now that we  
May visit whom we please,  
And be with family and friends  
With naturalness and ease.

My Winchester, I've missed you  
When our lives were not so free,  
But I'm coming back to visit  
Now there's more normality.

The statue of King Alfred  
In the High Street sets the scene,  
Reminder that the city  
England's capital has been.

I've walked around the science museum  
On a chess weekend.<sup>14</sup>  
It was most fascinating, and  
To go back I intend.

Now several fine museums here  
I'm eager to explore,  
And the long walk by the river  
I will so enjoy once more.

---

14 The Winchester Congress weekend 2013 or 2014



## In Praise of Chess

My friend it is her birthday soon,<sup>15</sup>  
And we'll celebrate our way:  
To catch up with our latest news  
And have a happy day.

We've been on many outings.  
Now at Winchester, we'll share  
Fine dining at the Japanese,  
With scrumptious vegan fare<sup>16</sup>.

---

15 On 21<sup>st</sup> August 2021

16 The Wagamama Japanese restaurant caters very well for vegans, offering lots of appealing choices.

In Praise of Chess

CASTLE CHESS CONGRESS<sup>17</sup>

FAREHAM.

Return to over the board games

The congresses over the board  
Are something I have missed,  
And entering this one at Fareham  
I could not resist.

Several times before, I've stayed  
At the Lysses House Hotel,  
Competing in the Castle Chess  
At this hotel as well.

I'm coming back, and I am like  
A puppy with two tails,  
Which wags each time that I recall  
The pleasure it entails.

For I am very overdue  
For formal rated play,  
But with a congress that is planned,  
I'm heading soon that way.

---

17 The weekend 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2021

## In Praise of Chess

### My job and friend in Fareham

I'm coming back to Fareham,  
Where so many times I've been.  
I worked there long ago, before  
Retirement changed my scene.

An extra boon is my good friend  
Who lives in Fareham town.  
And she is looking forward, now  
She's heard I'll be around.

Shirley she does not play chess,  
This Fareham friend of mine,  
But we enjoy a good rapport  
And get along just fine.

We'll go out for an evening meal  
At a favourite venue,  
We'll have good food with fun and banter  
Like we always do.

Back at the congress, I'll make sure  
My schedule works out right:  
I'll take a bye on the round four,  
So I'll be free that night.

## In Praise of Chess

### Return to over the board play

Now sat across my table  
A real person there will be,  
And every round results upon  
The player chart we'll see.

I'm coming back, I'm coming back  
To play over the board,  
And everyone will be aware  
How Gillian has scored.

But when we play at chess, results  
They are not everything.  
The satisfaction of the play  
It is a vital thing.

So when the tournament is through,<sup>18</sup>  
I can say, hopefully,  
I have enjoyed the whole event  
And done quite well for me.

---

18 I'm competing in the Major tournament

# In Praise of Chess

## PART 2

### THE PIECES AND PAWNS

## In Praise of Chess

### THE KING



The humble king upon the board stands tall,  
As he's the most important piece of all!  
His modest action his true value hides,  
For when he's lost the game is lost besides.

So in the vastness of a mental screen,  
With vistas of position changes seen,  
We sit for silent hours and, and watching, strive  
Above all else, to keep the king alive.

For with the king in his impending doom,  
The losing player feels the monarch's gloom,  
Though sportsmanlike we try to stifle pain,  
And with a cheerful visage to remain.

Though some there are, for reasons understood  
Of human nature, still do not feel good  
For hours or days beyond the sad lost game.  
Emotions thus have ever been the same!

For if the king lives long and we pursue  
The game until a victory will ensue,  
We feel all praises for the sport that brings  
A pleasure richness more than wealth of kings!

## In Praise of Chess

### THE QUEEN



The powerful queen is consort to the king,  
And all she does is love and care for him.  
And he depends upon his queen to be  
The power behind the throne to great degree.

For he is private with high purpose filled.  
So others work around him, and they shield  
His Majesty. The bishops, rooks and knights  
Are high deserving staff with royal rights.

And these fine chessmen all protect their queen,  
With caring that's unspoken but is seen.  
As bodyguards they clearly have their say  
In shielding her from turmoil and harm's way.

And with the queen, devotedly they give  
Their service, knowing that they cannot live  
Without their king. For with his sad demise,  
It would be death for all of them, likewise!

## In Praise of Chess

### THE KNIGHT



The knight now, he is different from the rest,  
Original, eccentric we could say.  
For in the mighty battle known as chess,  
He serves the cause in his peculiar way.  
Where other chessmen find their passage barred,  
The knight jumps over everything outright.  
And to his target vision is not marred.  
How schemes of his can hide in plainest sight!  
With tricky tactics he's adept, we know;  
Mere sight of him is somewhat worrying.  
Most shocking when he charges near the foe,  
And takes them prisoner for his treasured king.

Of all the chessmen, especially the knight  
Shows us the way to follow our own light.



## In Praise of Chess

### THE BISHOP AND THE KNIGHT



The bishop and the knight, how can it be  
That they are said to have equality,  
When their respective strengths and skills and flaws  
Bear no resemblance to each other at all?

The bishop with his mitre, he is lord  
Of the diagonals across the board.  
One colour only, yet his scope is vast  
To travel where he's needed far and fast!

The knight now with his finely chiselled face,  
Moves nearby only but with agile grace.  
What unique style he has to jump and spring  
With deft delight and over anything!

Of course, as with all chessmen, both are fine  
At thrills, perhaps with tingles up the spine,  
As with their skilful tactics both equate  
With shocking threats of forks and checks and mate.

We say the bishop and the knight are joint  
In having value equal to three points.  
Yet what a paradox to thus declare  
Two chessmen who are so beyond compare!

## In Praise of Chess

### THE ROOK



The rook now, he's a piece of mystery  
With double purpose and identity.  
Like one who shifts his shape in myth or dreams,  
He's magic and not always what he seems!

We look at him sometimes and he is stone -  
A castle that the king can call his home,  
A place wherein His Majesty can go  
In safety with a lookout for the foe.

Another time we see him, and we know  
The rook's alive with plans and schemes to show  
His heart and mind, with strength and will to bring  
His loyal service to his sovereign king.

Now freely like a chariot he moves  
Rolling around the ranks and files, which proves  
Deception sometimes of a casual look  
At him, the splendid piece we call the rook!<sup>19</sup>

---

19 In chess, rook comes from the Persian word *rukh*, meaning a chariot.

## In Praise of Chess

### PAWNS WITH A PURPOSE



The chessmen, as we know, comprise a splendid team  
Whose diverse members differ in the player's esteem.

Yet every piece, no matter what the rank or role,  
Partakes of the potential of the player's whole.

For, on the board there is a place and time for all --  
Each piece has its allotted space and interval.

And every piece is gifted with its strengths to share,  
Yet none has access all the time to everywhere.

True, merest pawns may not assume immediate rights  
And attributes of queens and bishops, rooks and knights.

Instead, those plodding pilgrims, patient questing souls,  
Must tread the files as paths towards their glorious goals.

Remember, pawns are valued least, yet their devotion  
Can crown their service with success of pawn promotion.

When time is ripe and higher purpose supervenes,  
Those pawns might stride as powerful and free as queens!

## In Praise of Chess

### THE ISOLANI



The isolani is a pawn  
Who lives upon his own,  
And yet with proper care and choice  
He need not be alone.

Although he has no pawn support  
On an adjacent file,  
With nearby chessmen for his friends  
He can afford to smile.

His nature is the same as other  
Pawns that seek high goals,  
Moving ahead in twos to find  
And realise their souls.

The nature of a pawn is such,  
Though this might not be seen,  
To vanquish every obstacle  
And one day be a queen!

## In Praise of Chess

### TEAM COOPERATION

When pieces work in harmony  
With others and their plights,  
It augurs well for good results  
And the whole game delights.

But when in selfish thought too much  
The pieces plain forget  
The purpose of the greater good,  
They come to feel regret.

A piece might try a project, that  
It's very keen to do,  
But is the timing right – and others  
Will they like it too?

Alas a punishment is due  
With every sort of crime.  
This makes the pieces keen to learn  
And mend their ways in time.

## In Praise of Chess

Just like we humans with mistakes  
We tend to ruminate,  
And if it's serious, hopefully  
We rehabilitate!

For they are games of give and take,  
Both chess and human lives,  
And everyone is happy when  
Cooperation thrives!

# In Praise of Chess

## PART 3

### THE GAME

In Praise of Chess

THE GAMBIT

*"I have come to the personal conclusion that while all artists  
are not chess players, all chess players are artists."*

*– Marcel Duchamp*

-----

Oh what is it about a gambit  
That attracts me so?  
At first I found the explanation  
Difficult to know.

I see that in the opening stage  
I like a lively game,  
Not holding back my restless pieces  
Feeling cramped and lame.

And so to gain initiative  
A pawn or so I spend.  
The other player thus attacked,  
Is needing to defend.

And sometimes it is hard for him  
To find the best replies,  
And therein the psychology  
Of chess we see arise.



## In Praise of Chess

For we all want some free and easy  
Good development,  
And when a compromise arises  
We don't feel content.

Material worth is not the only  
Sort of wealth, I say,  
But richness of a good position  
And the pieces' play.

And 'oft the one who snatched the pawn  
Might need to give it back,  
So that the gambit player suffered  
Just a short-term lack.

When Black adopts the Dutch Defence,  
My feeling is 'hurray',  
For then my favourite Staunton Gambit  
Comes into the play.

And when he takes my gambit pawn,  
That suits my purpose fine,  
As I pursue with my move four  
The Tartakower line.

## In Praise of Chess

Just try it out! Without a doubt  
This fancy foxy move  
Is fun to play, and in due course  
Its worthiness can prove.<sup>20</sup>

---

20 The Staunton Gambit, Tartakower Line: 1. d4 f5, 2. e4 fxe4, 3. Nc3 Nf6, 4. g4! The threat is for White to push the defending knight away with 5. g5, or else Black allows a nasty hole at his g6 if he responds with 4 ...h6. White then follows up with 5. f3, opening up the line from d3 to the g6-square.

## In Praise of Chess

### TIME CONTROLS

Our chess ability sometimes  
Is not the stumbling block,  
But rather we are beaten by  
The ever-present clock.

In correspondence chess, perhaps,  
We satisfy our need  
For deep analysis, yet might  
Feel guilty for the greed.

For when such time is spent, there comes  
Lament, as it is true  
With everything that life presents  
There's usually much to do!

The opposite is rapidplay,  
Or lightning chess with a scurry  
To move and press the clock, when nerves  
Might jar with too much hurry.

At end of season at my club  
We hold this tournament<sup>21</sup>,  
Which is not serious or graded,  
Just a fun event.

---

21 Southampton chess club Lightning Tournament

## In Praise of Chess

The buzzer dictates when to move,  
With silliness the cost,  
With sundry pieces insecure  
And queens and kings are lost.

And after all the lightning strikes,  
And stress – we need be thrifty -  
The winner he is clapped, perhaps  
Receiving three pounds fifty!

## In Praise of Chess

### THE ONE TRUE OPPONENT

*"I never tried to compete with others, I always competed with myself."*

*- Former world champion Vladimir Kramnik*

-----

Our chess games by the hundred we might play,  
In various competitions countless days,  
    And yet no matter who sits opposite,  
*The opposition is the same, I say!*

My holidays with tournaments are fun,  
And games and trophies sometimes I have won  
    All over England, Wales and Scotland too.  
So how can all these players yet be one?

A new opponent comes with each fresh game,  
And varies in appearance and in name,  
    And young, mature or getting on in years.  
So what's the meaning saying they're the same?

Some players casually dress with ruffled hair,  
Others are tidy, smart and debonair,  
    Some thin, some stout, some sitting straight or bent,  
Some faces pink or bronzed and others fair.

Now, will I clearly see or else be blind,  
And wisely use my time or get behind?  
    Will moves I make be skilful or inept?  
*The Challenger is ever thus My Mind!*

## In Praise of Chess

### EMOTIONS

#### 1. Shock



I turned the tables on the foe  
One day to my delight<sup>22</sup>.  
Etched in my memory this game,  
And the opponent's plight.

His grading it was higher  
And his chances they looked good.  
He'd won material too, but I  
Remained in tranquil mood.

Anon, when it was clear that prospects  
Turned around to me,  
The poor man was astounded and  
Was shaking visibly.

This player shortly he composed  
Himself as best one can,  
And his behaviour towards me  
Was as a gentleman.

---

22 15<sup>th</sup> December 2015 in the Southampton League, playing for Southampton B away to Fareham A

## In Praise of Chess

### EMOTIONS

#### 2. Depression



Another clear example of  
Emotions being expressed,  
Was after I had beaten a man  
Who then became depressed<sup>23</sup>.

It was his third loss in a row,  
And this was hard, I'm sure,  
And the thought of losing yet again  
Was too much to endure.

When looking down the player chart  
The next day in the morn,  
I saw that, sadly, this poor player  
He had been withdrawn.

What happened to him I can't say,  
But wish him all the best,  
And hope he strengthened for the future  
By his three-loss test!

---

23 5<sup>th</sup> August 2007 in the British Seniors Championship at Great Yarmouth.

## In Praise of Chess

### EMOTIONS

#### 3. Annoyance



Another time I played a match<sup>24</sup>,  
In which my castled king  
Was vulnerable to fierce attacks  
The opponent there might bring.

He set his ammunition well  
Aimed at the castle wall,  
Intending to blow it to pieces,  
Castle, king and all.

I knew the sinister intent,  
And ah, I was prepared!  
So when I overthrew the plot<sup>25</sup>,  
The other player declared,

In his annoyance, a choice word  
That I will not repeat!  
For with one oversight of his,  
My win was rather neat.

---

24 1<sup>st</sup> March 2014 in the Chiltern League, playing for Hampshire away to Berkshire at Crowthorne.

25 I call this game, “The Gunpowder Plot”.



## In Praise of Chess

### DYNAMIC WILL POWER

Dynamic will power is a force  
With a promise we can trust,  
When having faith in a great goal:  
“I can, I will, I must”!

With longed-for wins and victories  
In our hearts and minds instilled,  
No forces of obstruction then  
Can bend our iron will.

Let's sally forth with all our worth,  
With the positive power of “yes”,  
And destiny in due course shall  
Our great endeavours bless.

Not every game will be a win,  
Of course that cannot be;  
But with our adamant will,  
The trend we'll upward see!

## In Praise of Chess

### LONGING

Longing has its place in life  
To guide us to our goal,  
Be it perfection in our work  
Or matters of the soul.

And as to chess, we long to conquer  
Trials from game to game.  
To do our best and prove ourselves  
As winners is the aim.

To be successful there's no time  
For wishy-washy play.  
For longing comes before fulfilment  
All along the way.

That concentration, too, it must  
Be steady, there's no doubt,  
With reason and our feeling going  
Hand in hand throughout.

Then we'll be glad and no more sad  
Of aims that went awry,  
When longing and our skills at peak  
Performances we try.

## In Praise of Chess

### PASSION

A person without passion where  
The zest for life has fled,  
That person is just half alive;  
The other half is dead.

Passions there are many, and  
Some harmless, some are not.  
The harmless ones we may pursue  
And worry not a jot.

With me I also love to write.  
Uplifted by the muse,  
I find when inspiration comes,  
I never can refuse!

There are some passions with no harm  
So long as we're aware  
That other things in life also  
Deserve our love and care.

Our chess it is a good passion,  
Certainly not bad,  
So long as we don't let it make us  
Dour, depressed or mad.

## In Praise of Chess

A few, well-known – let's name them not -  
Succumbed to misery,  
Enslaved by chess turned into tyrant  
Lacking clemency!

## In Praise of Chess

### BALANCED LIVING

Other aspects of our lives, no doubt,  
Deserve our rapt attention and our time:  
Relationships with family and friends,  
And with our fellow beings as a whole.

And as to health, in earnest we must tend  
To our well-being, body, mind and soul.  
Also the countless tasks inside the home  
Are helpless of themselves without our aid.

Ah yes, the work in life we undertake,  
Whether paid or as a volunteer,  
Deserves our due attention not to shirk  
From this necessity and benefit.

So how with all these facets of our lives  
Can Chess survive and thrive and be improved?  
I do suggest that balance is a key  
To make all things work well in harmony!

## In Praise of Chess

### HIDE AND SEEK

Imagination brings with it  
A daring turn of mind,  
And there's no telling what fantastic  
Moves by it you'll find.

So why not put the 'what if' option  
Squarely to the test?  
For we all know that obvious moves  
Are not always the best.

At first the brilliant moves are veiled  
From the enquiring mind,  
In this our intellectual sport  
Of hide and seek, and find.

You'll be surprised what meets the eyes  
When peering past the veil  
Of hidden possibilities  
Awaiting to prevail.

If you think 'what if this' and study  
With a piercing look,  
Amazing admirable moves  
Become an open book.

## In Praise of Chess

### IMAGINATION

*“When you see a good move, look for a better one.”*

*– Emanuel Lasker*

-----

Imagination allows we players to see  
The dramas of a new reality.  
With this unfailing ‘crystal ball’ of chess  
We view some future scenes at our behest.

Imagination helps the strategy  
Of knowing where the pieces they should be,  
And visualising new positions, then  
We think about manoeuvring the men.

If I should move my bishop there to pin  
His knight against his vulnerable king,  
That would be good, beginning to unfold  
Good fortunes that my clear foresight foretold.

So there’s a brilliant square to lodge my knight,  
But will the moves to get him there be right?  
If not, I’ll peer again with my mind’s eye  
To analyse another plan to try.

## In Praise of Chess

Or there's a semi-open file, anon  
To place my rook to dominate thereon.  
I'd love to move him there, that would be great,  
So should I seize the chance before too late?

But if immediate threat to me is dire,  
I must prevent calamity and ire  
Of having made my good moves all too fast.  
So patience first, for victory at last.



## In Praise of Chess

### ENDLESSNESS

I love endlessness, the vast  
Expanse of sky above,  
And inwardly unfolding my  
Ability to love.

Endless are the charms of life  
We venture to explore,  
And finding some we are inspired  
To seek and find some more.

Endless are the chess positions  
That we ever reach.  
Endless is the knowledge that  
The game can ever teach.

Endless the mistakes, as well as  
Moves of which we're glad.  
Endless are the ups and downs  
Of chess we've ever had.

Endless is the challenge to  
Our brain's capacity,  
And to this endless longing, seems  
To be no remedy.

## In Praise of Chess

But in this quest, let's do our best,  
And the remedy comes clear:  
The joy of chess, like love, is what  
Forever we hold dear.

We do love chess for its own sake,  
For giving us so much,  
And there's no need to reach beyond  
This endlessness as such.

## In Praise of Chess

### MYSTERIES

Our chess is not only a game,  
But an enigma too  
That causes questioners to seek  
And find why this is true.

Those limitless positions strange  
And beautiful galore  
Do puzzle us with questions, still  
Unanswered evermore.

Our scientists of far-flung space,  
Where galaxies enthrall,  
Discuss the theories of the start  
And meaning of it all.

And divers of the ocean deeps  
Where stunning scenes abound  
Have not yet reached the total spaces  
Of the bottom ground.

And likewise with the grandmasters,  
In deepest thoughtfulness,  
They never have uncovered all  
The mysteries of chess!

## In Praise of Chess

### HOW TO PROGRESS

*“You may learn much more from a game you lose than from a game you win. You will have to lose hundreds of games before becoming a good player.”*

*– José Raúl Capablanca*

-----

If you do love the game and have  
A longing to excel,  
Then practice, study, perseverance:  
These things augur well.

When you have lost a game,  
Then analyse and introspect,  
To ascertain exactly what  
Is needed to correct.

Various are the ways to aid  
Attainment to evolve,  
Like books to play through master games  
And puzzles to be solved.

Or joining to play matches  
In a club or tournament.  
Or even with a chess computer,  
Money is well spent.

## In Praise of Chess

Another way improving players  
Sometimes do approach,  
Is online services of tutoring,  
Or else a coach.

With all this help available,  
And time enough what's more,  
Players of chess can watch and wait  
To see their ratings soar!

## In Praise of Chess

### A DEGREE OF MASTERY



Life is a university  
Of how to live, I say.  
So shall we learn our lessons well,  
Or fritter time away?

Now some there are who introspect  
And realise many a thing,  
But others understand less well  
What their own actions bring.

When losing just one game, far better  
Not to moan or mope,  
But think of better things and keep  
Alive our innate hope.

For it's our overall results  
Of various recent chess  
That gives a truer picture of  
Our level of prowess.

## In Praise of Chess

If disappointed still with losses,  
There's no need to weep,  
But with a positive resolve  
Our confidence to keep.

By analysing what and why  
Our hapless moves were wrong,  
We learn from our mistakes, and then  
Can keep on keeping on.

To study well and play a lot  
Does help us to improve  
And gather up more expertise  
Of finding the strong move.

Let's do our best and leave the rest  
To flourish, and anon  
With passion for our great pursuit,  
Let learning carry on!

For, as in life, it matters not  
So much the happenings,  
But what in time by all of it  
The goodness that it brings.

By understanding chess this way,  
Think 'misery be gone!'  
Just do our best until the day  
Our skill is very strong.

## In Praise of Chess

### CHESS COMPUTERS

*"Chess is thirty to forty percent psychology. You don't have this when you play a computer. I can't confuse it."*

*- Judit Polgar*

---

#### As they are now

The chess computer is a wonderful thing,  
And lots of pleasure and help to us can bring.  
At home it is an ever-ready way  
To get some practice in with extra play.  
For challenging and trying out a line,  
The artificial brain is superfine.

But unlike us, it cannot tiredness know,  
Or faults and foibles in its playing show.  
It is not prone to fumble or forget,  
And pleasure, pride, annoyance and regret  
Is unknown to an electronic mind,  
Despite the genius of superior kind.

And as to playing on the board of wood,  
You make the moves for it, just as you would  
For a blind player with his 'feely' board  
And in his mind's eye the position stored,  
As the software crunches numbers for its meal,  
And no emotions can it ever feel!



## In Praise of Chess

### Being fanciful

Perhaps one day a robot we will make  
That looks alive and hands with us can shake,  
And sit and speak like humans, but instead  
A chess engine is hidden in its head.  
And on its bosom is a lighted screen,  
Where moves and the positions can be seen.

And when a game is finished, it's polite  
To shake the hand of the opponent, right?  
So do it, turn it off, before you share  
The robot's presence with its lifeless stare,  
In suspended animation to remain,  
Until you reach to turn him on again.

## In Praise of Chess

### THE GAME OF LIFE

So many parallels exist  
I notice and could name,  
Within our daily living and  
Our super lifelike game.

Analysing what we face,  
Deciding what to do,  
All this applies to moves of chess,  
And daily living too.

Some lives are strewn with rosy paths  
And charmed until the end,  
Some stricken with the weeds of woes  
We never would intend.

The various tasks that take our time  
At home, at work and yonder -  
No time for boredom on the board  
Of life, at which we ponder.

There's ups and downs and in-betweens,  
Good fortunes and the wins,  
The bad times when your luck is out,  
Or miseries of sins.

## In Praise of Chess

Losses, changes, disappointments,  
Sadness and distress,  
All this is in our human lives  
And in our lifelike chess.

The calm enjoyment of the play  
When troubles do abate,  
And halcyon days when life is good  
Is a most welcome state.

Excitement too of chances new  
Makes energies spring forth,  
Enhancing pleasure of the game  
Of life, and what it's worth.

# In Praise of Chess

## PART 4

### WOMEN AND SENIORS

## In Praise of Chess

### AS A WOMAN PLAYER

My chess career it has been long indeed  
Since teenage years, and has fulfilled some need.  
I've come and gone, but fully now intend  
To keep up playing chess until the end!

In the world of chess predominantly male,  
Where equal opportunities prevail,  
My treatment as a woman has been good,  
Accepted and respected as I should.

I've never felt uncomfortable to be  
A member of the small minority  
Of women players. That's just how things are.  
And at my club it doesn't feel bizarre.

I've mostly been the only woman there.  
These twenty years gone by<sup>26</sup>, it has been rare  
For another female player to appear.  
They briefly stay, alas then disappear!

Here in this book I've detailed many a thing  
About adventures that the game does bring,  
And the various benefits that do assist  
The intellect and psyche to uplift.

---

26 I started playing at age 13 but joined Southampton Chess Club in my 50s.

## In Praise of Chess

### WOMEN PLAYERS

#### The question

Oh why is it within the world  
Of the adult chess contender  
That overall a small percentage  
Is of female gender?

Perhaps it is the hormones  
That affect the female brain,  
Encouraging the men to rule  
The serious chess domain?

And also circumstances of  
The ones who tend to be  
The home-makers and natural carers  
In society?

#### The situation

For in our hospitals where patients  
Have angelic care,  
We see the largely female nurses  
Ministering there.

And it is true in soldiering,  
Forever there has been  
More men than women in the forefront  
Of the fighting scene.

## In Praise of Chess

Those military heroes who  
Risk much in service there  
Perform another sort of vital  
Universal care.

So differences between the sexes  
Do exist for sure,  
Though gender boundaries are now  
More softened than before.

### The conclusion

Both nature and our nurture, therefore  
It appears to me  
As cause of women players being  
The minority.

In neuroscience, though, we know  
Of brain plasticity,  
And passion has a lot to do  
With our capacity.

So, given enough chance, and with  
Her talents all unfurled,  
*A woman one day could emerge  
As champion of the world!*<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> The story of Judit Polgar, generally considered the strongest female chess player of all time, is most interesting.

## In Praise of Chess

### MY GOLDEN YEARS

Now in my golden years, some dreams  
Have been materialised,  
And some of life's deep understandings  
I have realised.

By trial and error, time and learning,  
Life becomes more whole,  
And now at last at least I have  
Serenity of soul.

I bought my home, and sought and found  
At last the right career<sup>28</sup> -  
Fulfilling paid work; also ventures  
As a volunteer.

And gifted with good company  
Along my life's pathway,  
How special friendships do enrich  
With value every day!

---

28 Originally a civil servant in Government Departments, my final career was as a sessional tutor teaching adults uses of the personal computer. The clients were users of the mental health services and those with physical disabilities.



## In Praise of Chess

Some friends are teachers, counsellors,  
A scientist, a nun,  
Yet somehow there's connection to  
Myself in every one.

And chess became a special blessing  
From an early stage,  
And I remain an active player  
In my golden age.

For chess, I've travelled far and wide  
All over the UK,  
To congresses affording, too,  
A welcome holiday.

And still before my life is through,  
More projects I intend.  
As life's a game, come let us play it  
Well until the end!

## In Praise of Chess

### PRODUCTIVE RETIREMENT

Although a senior citizen, they say,  
I'm glad to rise and greet each new-born day,  
And daily breath fresh air amidst the green  
Of nature's semi-rural local scene.  
By grace of Mother Nature it is true,  
I'm lucky to be fit and healthy too.

I'm happy and contented with my age,  
And wouldn't swap it for an earlier stage.  
A minor thing like now my silvery hair,  
My stylist says is pretty, so why care?  
And age is just a number. Far more real  
Seems how within myself I think and feel!

Retirement it can be a useful state,  
And not with idle apathy equate.  
When hectic working life it does abate,  
It's time to spring to action, to create  
Deep thinking and enjoy some forms of art,  
From a relaxed and focused mind and heart.

When to the senior years we have progressed,  
It can be opportunity much blessed,  
To fully be engaged in life and grow,  
Though differently from many years ago,  
With old careers and cluttered living past,  
Pursuing other purposes at last!

## In Praise of Chess

Now with more time and energy to spare,  
See, lately I have written books to share.  
Now various things that I enjoyed before  
Are carried on, and sometimes even more.  
And friendships with our kindred spirits, yes,  
And not forgetting our beloved chess!

## In Praise of Chess

### COMPETING WITH SENIORS

#### 1. The Devon County Congress

In great Torquay on Devon's sandy coast,  
A summer congress here does yearly boast.<sup>29</sup>

A morning tournament in this I play,  
Which gives me free time for a holiday.

And of the morning pairings I faced here,  
Was once a player in his ninetieth year.  
And his great keenness with longevity  
And skill, was inspirational to me.

His play was strong and nearly conquered me,  
Until one 'touch and move' fatality.  
But any player such a slip can make,  
And fall with this regrettable mistake!

I saw this chap again the following year,  
An ardent player still, and it is clear  
For any age-group or capacity  
Caissa<sup>30</sup> blesses every devotee.

---

29 The Devon County chess congress has not, alas, been able to take place in 2020 and 2021, due to the Corona virus pandemic.

30 Caissa, the goddess of chess.

## In Praise of Chess

### 2. The British Seniors Tournament

The British Championships: another way  
To take part in the chess, with holiday.  
In summertime in airy summer-wear,  
I'm glad to be a part of it each year.

And in this multifaceted event,  
I enter in the Seniors tournament.  
Some interesting places thus I've been,  
Which likely otherwise would not have seen.

All over England it has been my my pleasure  
Competing in fine chess and taking leisure!

# In Praise of Chess

PART 5

TORBAY

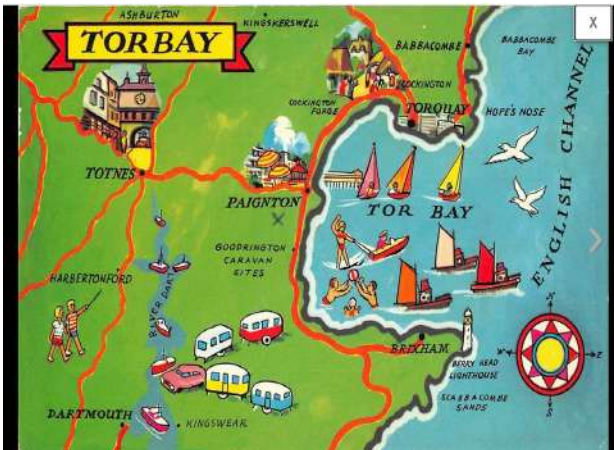
## In Praise of Chess

### INTRODUCTION TO TORBAY

To Devon's red stone coastline in Torbay,  
For the Devon Congress and a holiday,  
In summertime I stay beside the sea  
In Paignton, or its neighbouring Torquay.

The British Championships have sometimes too  
Arranged to have Torquay as its venue,  
Held at the spacious Riviera Centre,  
And always at this chess event I enter<sup>31</sup>.

And many a trip I've taken by bus and train  
To various coastal towns in this domain.  
Here follows just a glimpse of many things  
Of what a holiday in Torbay brings.



31 In the British Seniors tournament

## In Praise of Chess

### PAIGNTON

I've holidayed in Paignton many a year.  
This English seaside venue has it all:  
Amusement arcades, theatre and pier,  
And large white seagulls with their morning call.

The restaurants are within an easy reach  
Of the children's playground and the donkey rides.  
Near to the promenade and sandy beach,  
Are ice-cream parlours, fish and chips besides.

With panoramic views far out to sea,  
I once espied a dolphin in the bay,  
When on the cliff-tops strolling leisurely,  
Near to the Paignton guest house where I stay<sup>32</sup>.

From Paignton harbour sometimes out at night,  
I've taken a small boat around the bay  
Sight-seeing all the charming coloured lights  
Of Torquay and the area of Torbay.

I've visited the spacious Paignton zoo,  
Where birds have vast enclosure nets to fly,  
And certain animals are spaced out too,  
With grass beneath and open to the sky.

---

32 Rosemead Guest House in Garfield Road.



## In Praise of Chess



*Paignton cliff-top gardens*



*Paignton harbour*

## In Praise of Chess

### OLDWAY MANSION

Oldway Mansion was a great location  
To hold a popular chess congress in Paignton.

The Devon County chess for sixty years,  
In the ballroom richly hung with chandeliers,  
Took place each year from nineteen fifty one.  
But then the Mansion closed for everyone.<sup>33</sup>

This loss to all the players is a shame,  
And moving to elsewhere was never the same.

The public still appreciates the grounds,  
But the building with its immediate surrounds  
Is sadly showing signs of much neglect,  
And the pleasure has declined in this respect.  
The Torbay Council hopefully one day  
Will let the congress come again to play.

Hundreds hold nostalgia for this place,  
With all its opulence, its charm and space:  
The wooded winding pathways to the sight  
Of the grand old building in resplendent white.  
Here countless visitors have trod to view  
The gorgeous flower beds, and the Mansion too.

---

33 The last Paignton Chess Congress took place here in 2009.

## In Praise of Chess

Mr Isaac Singer once resided here,  
And Singer sewing machines of yesteryear  
Are on display inside on the ground floor,  
In cabinets of glass just past the door.  
Then at the marble staircase if we stand  
With its balusters of bronze it looks so grand.

But all its history and loveliness  
Is more than words of mine here can express.<sup>34</sup>



*Beautiful Oldway Mansion*

---

34 An excellent book all about Oldway Mansion is:  
Robert H. Jones, *60 Years in the Same Room, A History of the Paignton  
Chess Congress*, Keverel Chess Books, 2010

## In Praise of Chess

### KINGSWEAR

The steam train blows from Paignton to Kingswear,  
A scenic harbour town. My friend and I  
Enjoy some quiet wooded walking here,  
Beside the river and beneath the sky.

The other passengers were ferry-bound  
Across to Dartmouth, pleasantly enough,  
Though with the crowds commotion can be found,  
So we decided on more peaceful stuff.

What could be better than good company,  
A bench to sit on and admire the scene,  
A sandwich and the mind's simplicity,  
Embraced and nourished in dear nature's green.



*Kingswear Harbour*

## In Praise of Chess

### BRIXHAM

Brixham is a fishing harbour town  
Where bobbing, tinkling boats and seagulls meet,  
And tales of former piracy abound,  
And gourmet fish food plentiful to eat.

'Aye my hearty' Thursday pirates day,  
When costumed men with earrings and long hair  
Enact a duel with swords, but all mock play.  
Or there's the evening ghost walk if we dare!

Sir Francis Drake he sailed the Golden Hind  
Around the world, thus making history.  
And in the vessel's replica we find  
A museum packed with much to do and see.



*Brixham – Replica of the famous ship: The Golden Hind*

## In Praise of Chess

### TORQUAY

A coloured little street train here is found,  
To navigate the town delights with ease,  
As tourist fancies everywhere abound,  
Like cafés, shops and Devonshire cream teas.

-----

The open bus-top tour guide he was keen,  
Informative as well as rather funny.  
And with some really stunning coastline scenes,  
Afforded us good value for the money.

Now in this gala summertime event,  
How gusty as we rode on merrily,  
And I had to hold my hat down, to prevent  
It lifting off and blowing out to sea!

-----

Up in the air balloon I soared one day -  
I'm glad that it was safely tethered too -  
To take in the expanses of Torbay,  
In higher reaches of a birds-eye view.

-----

## In Praise of Chess

The prehistoric caves outside Torquay  
I found to be most interesting of all,  
With bones and tools of archaeology,  
Where humans lived with cave bears nine feet tall.

-----

And then of course the foodie things appeal  
When in the area I like to do:  
The dining out for a good evening meal,  
And English breakfasts are most welcome too!



*Torquay Gardens by the seafront*

# In Praise of Chess

## PART 6

### VARIOUS PLACES VISITED



In Praise of Chess

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

*“Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove;”*

*- Shakespeare’s sonnets (from number 116)*

-----

One happy summer day upon vacation,<sup>35</sup>  
Upon the banks of river Avon’s delight,<sup>36</sup>  
The town was redolent with celebration  
In the birthplace of our poet and playwright.  
Immortal Shakespeare of great verse and plays,  
Within your church I’ve stood before your grave  
Where your remains are buried. But always  
The spirit conquers flesh. You live to save  
High purposes of wisdom and pursuit  
Of love. To these all humans are led on  
In their own ways, by wide or narrow route,  
To truth of truths, and love of loves, anon.

Around the town I walked the guided tour,  
And learned and thought about your life much more.

---

35 THE BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS, COVENTRY, 2015, held on the campus of the University of Warwick. I competed in the British Seniors tournament.

36 One morning before the afternoon round started at 2.30 pm, I took a bus trip to Stratford-Upon-Avon.

In Praise of Chess

ABERYSTWYTH

THE BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2014

The journey and destination

My journey in July one day -  
It was so hot and long -  
Was to the British Championships  
In Wales, the land of song.  
Entrained for glorious Aberystwyth,  
Speeding through the miles,  
No air conditioning was on,  
And people crammed in aisles.

And certain passengers were challenged  
Coping with the heat,  
And had there been a need for help,  
No one could leave their seat!  
With health and safety thus ignored,  
It seemed a hell-bent train,  
But once I reached my destination,  
All was well again!

## In Praise of Chess

In Aberystwyth campus  
Of the University,  
I booked a simple student room  
Quite adequate for me.  
Then daily to the Congress hall  
Within the campus still,  
I took some welcome exercise  
Just down a little hill.

### Leisure pursuits

And outside of the playing hours  
My time was free to use  
In exploration of the town,  
And doing what I choose.  
And there was much to see and do  
By way of holiday,  
And I am reminiscing now  
Some highlights of my stay.

-----

Now Dylan Thomas was a man  
Of Welsh poetic fame,  
Who clearly was in love with words,  
Like I can say the same.  
I looked around an exhibition  
In the library  
Of Dylan's life and work – that year  
Was his centenary.

## In Praise of Chess

By film and voice and documents,  
I learned a lot that day,  
Including the sad circumstance  
Of how he passed away.  
This gifted writer was too young  
For him to cease to live,  
And lost forever now, whatever  
More he had to give.

-----

Another day a stage production  
Musical was fun,  
Called 'Sister Act', after the film  
With a singing, dancing nun.  
It was a highly entertaining  
Show for young or old,  
And in this last performance, still  
No ticket went unsold.

-----

The last day of sojourn in Wales,  
I took the mountain train;  
The Vale of Rheidol steam train rode  
Through picturesque terrain.  
And slowly climbing up the hill  
And 'round a scary bend,  
Until the Falls of Devils Bridge,  
Our mountain journey's end.

In Praise of Chess

EDINBURGH

THE BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2003<sup>37</sup>

The anticipation<sup>38</sup>

They say that home is where the heart is;  
Feelings there uplift,  
And when we stay in such a place,  
Our consciousness does shift.

A friend who lives in Michigan,  
She said that she did find  
That Scotland is not just a place,  
But more a state of mind.

Now, for the British Championships  
I travelled there one year,  
And gained a sense of why my friend  
Holds Scotland oh so dear!

Though one week is too short to know  
Scotland entirely,  
Herewith I shall relate some wisps  
Of my clear memory.

---

37 I played in a weekend tournament, a non-championship event.

38 This was my first visit to Scotland.

## In Praise of Chess

### The journey and experience

Entrained for Edinburgh I watched,  
The window seat beside,  
When lo, a mass of purple heather  
Greeted us outside!

And hills with swirling mists, as if  
In fairy town now lost -  
From England to fair Scottish land,  
The border we had crossed.

Beneath the famous Edinburgh Castle,  
Was our chess début -  
The British Championships took place  
At a famous school venue<sup>39</sup>.

One day in Princes Street I strolled  
With time away from chess,  
And saw, delighted, what I'd hoped:  
A man in national dress!

A famous hill called Arthur's Seat  
I climbed another day,  
And in the valley far beneath  
I heard the bagpipes play!

---

39 The historic George Heriot's School founded in 1628.

## In Praise of Chess

### HULL

#### THE BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018

##### A city of culture<sup>40</sup>

To city of Hull I came a week to stay  
For a chess event and pleasant holiday.  
On the banks of the river Humber I did find  
The flow of living waters of the mind.

Yorkshire's city of culture, you do smile  
On visitors who stay with you awhile.  
Art gallery, museums and much more,  
I found engrossing interest to explore.

##### Museums

Here was a man deserving of the height  
Of his great monument's imposing sight.  
Famous citizen, William Wilberforce,  
He caused the abolition in due course,  
By politics and his philanthropy,  
Of the British Empire's shameful slavery.  
Ambling through the museum's fine display,  
I marvelled and I pondered much that day.

-----

---

40 UK's city of culture, 2017

## In Praise of Chess

In the maritime museum I did see  
The details of the fishing industry,  
And whaling in the Arctic history,  
Where man and beast faced perils of the sea.  
Some whaling images displeased my eye,  
But I understand and accept the reason why.  
Some fascinating stories of the wives  
Detailed the hardships of the whalers lives.

### A unique aquarium

The great aquarium they call The Deep,  
Three thousand creatures in their care they keep,  
And at the heart of it is education.  
They also do much work for conservation.  
Spectacular with such variety,  
From seahorse to the sharks enormity,  
I walked what seemed like miles that day, and stood  
For rests, but the experience was good.



In Praise of Chess

SHEFFIELD

THE BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2011

The town and accommodation

Oh why should I of Sheffield write  
Where industry was vast?  
That is an image now more rightly  
Fitting of its past!

It has been granted an award  
For spaces that are green,  
And trams that serve the city well  
Do help the air stay clean.

And when I didn't know the way  
For getting anywhere,  
I found the people oh so helpful -  
Maybe it's the air!

My quest house out of town, it gave  
Good quality though cheap,  
With vibes of peaceful restfulness  
Conducive to sound sleep.

## In Praise of Chess

But friends who stayed at the posh hotel  
And paid the higher price,  
Were vexed by noises of the town  
At night, which was not nice.

And riding to the tournament  
By tramcar every day  
Was quick and easy, and enhanced  
The pleasures of my stay.

### The Botanical Gardens

On certain mornings I relaxed  
Where Botany is shown  
In Gardens full of species rare,  
Or others more well-known.

When settled in a sunny spot  
Or else a shady nook,  
I made escape from chess travail  
By reading a good book.

I go for factual reading matter  
Like biography,  
Where persons of significance  
Hold interest to me.

## In Praise of Chess

### A leisurely barge trip

A barge trip from Victoria Quays  
I found to be a rest  
From mental hard work that's entailed  
In competition chess.

And as we leisurely progressed  
Throughout the long canal,  
We passengers were entertained  
With commentaries as well.

The boat cruised gently as a whisper,  
Hurry put aside,  
No need for pace to reach a place  
When going for the ride.

-----

Competing in the British Seniors  
As I usually do,  
Each afternoon, refreshed, I relished  
Those adventures too!

## In Praise of Chess

OXFORD<sup>41</sup>

City of inspired magnificence,  
Bustling crowds and spacious woodland bowers,  
Where scholars in pursuit of excellence  
Meet river dreams in recreation hours!

The university it does deliver  
Theologian, statesman and their ilk,  
But punters with their long poles on the river  
Are carried on her flow of rippled silk.

By coach and car, day visitors galore  
Here dine and buy, and view the oldest seat  
Of learning in the land. Restaurant and store  
Contrasting with robed choirboys in the street.

City of sudden side street quaint old nooks,  
Romantic walkways, side by side with strife  
And drinkers on the bench, and dreams and books,  
Fatigue of you would be fatigue of life!

---

41 Over the years, I have many times visited Oxford, both for county chess matches in the Chiltern League (Hampshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxon), and for day trips with friends.

## In Praise of Chess

### HASTINGS

#### THE INTERNATIONAL CHESS CONGRESS

Along the Sussex coast lies Hastings town  
Of contemporary and historical renown.  
William the Conqueror once battled here<sup>42</sup>,  
But now the chess congress plays every year.

In these mind contests several times I've played,  
And one year I did venture, unafraid,  
To enter in the Masters tournament<sup>43</sup> -  
A truly international event.

The titled players they did conquer me.  
But some of us of lesser pedigree,  
To master level having no pretence,  
Could enter too for the experience.

And various were the nationalities  
Of those I played, with kinship forged with ease.  
For we were all united in the bond  
Of our great game of which we all were fond.

Apart from those who come from the UK,  
Opponents ranged from Russia to Norway,  
My opposition furthermore it spanned  
Nigeria and France and Switzerland.

---

42 The 1066 Battle of Hastings.

43 A nine-round tournament from 28<sup>th</sup> December 2009 to 5<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

# In Praise of Chess

## PART 7

### PHILOSOPHICAL

## In Praise of Chess

### CAISSA<sup>44</sup>

Did you know we have a goddess,  
Caissa is her name,  
Who deals in destinies of our  
Divine-engendered game?

Though she might be a figment of  
Our fancy, some might feel,  
It's true her inspiration for  
Our chess is very real!

Mythology personifies  
Some qualities in us,  
And to embody these abstractions  
Ever was it thus.

For players whom we could describe  
As chess play devotee,  
It's fitting for them to implore,  
"Oh Caissa, be with me!"

---

44 Lots of detailed and delightful poems about Caissa can be found at  
Caissa's Web: <https://web.archive.org/>

## In Praise of Chess

### WORLD PEACE AND HARMONY

Chess is a silent language understood  
By peoples of the world, and this is good  
To break down barriers of the spoken word  
And clash of cultures, human herd to herd.

International folly of discord,  
Now more than ever needs to be abhorred.  
Asleep for ages to our grave mistake,  
Now is the time for all to come awake!

The openness of chess suggests a way  
To greater peace and harmony one day:  
The brotherhood of one humanity,  
From every country and ethnicity!

Guardians of this fragile earth are we,  
Yet climate change destruction that we see  
We have called forth, and now without a doubt,  
The causes we created must root out.

But let's not give up hope about the state  
Of shocks and horrors of the world of late;  
We're changing over to a better age,  
And shaking up the world is just a stage.



## In Praise of Chess

### THE FINEST CONQUEST

Beyond our chess with all its pleasure filled,  
What is the purpose of this life of ours?  
Are enemies to be curtailed and killed,  
Just as we do in chess, and fill each hour  
With scenes of those we slay beneath our feet,  
So we as victors over them do tower?

Both yes and no, depending what is meant!  
To conquer folly we all can and must,  
And make this higher purpose our intent,  
Commanding our soul selves confront and bust  
The dismal deeds our lower selves would do.  
As humans we are given this sacred trust.

Not to the deadly battles that we find  
That history and current times display,  
Should we devote the powers of the mind,  
But wisdom, peace and goodness need hold sway.  
With joy in all the world as ruling king,  
What finer conquest could there be, I say.

## In Praise of Chess

### A MOST WORTHY PURSUIT

The game of chess is good, so it is said,  
For those who are beset with woes and cares.

For life is full of opposites in pairs:  
The changing states of fortune, and the nights  
And days, and various pleasures and delights  
With pain and grief forever alternate.

Yet with the 'gift of gods', our priceless game,  
The trusty board and men remain the same -  
No matter what our outer lives present,  
The world within our world we know as chess  
Is innocent diversion at its best,  
For those of us who know its calm content.

For though the moves make threats of many kinds,  
With menaces to centre, left and right,  
And sometimes horrors overtake outright,  
And even might end killing the poor king,  
We do not suffer loss of life or limb,  
For all is harmless sport within the mind!

And what a sport engrossing to the core,  
Where silent stillness brings us to a state  
Of peaceful concentration, where we find  
A fathomless enchantment! We are blessed  
Who study, strive, devoted evermore  
In love and wonder of our matchless chess.

## In Praise of Chess

### A CRITIC REBUFFED

But some would say that chess is idleness  
When so much in the world cries out for aid,  
And to be up and doing is the best  
For how humanitarians are made.

A lady long ago once said to me,  
"I thought you were more practical than that!"  
With due respect, I greatly disagreed  
And thought her dumb, but did not answer back.

Now to that lady we can answer back,  
Though she is long since dead, and mute and still,  
And show how uninformed she was, with lack  
Of honour to our greatest game of skill.

Intense and serious chess need not prevent  
A balanced life of body, mind and soul -  
I deal with many things that life presents,  
So all is part of my harmonious whole!

I exercise and relish healthy food,  
I nourish wholesome friendships with like minds,  
And think of others for the greater good,  
And strive to be compassionate and kind.

## In Praise of Chess

### BENEFICIAL TO ALL

So let us put our thesis to the test:  
*Pure logic* has great value as we know,  
And *patient perseverance* at our chess  
Enhances logic that refines and grows.

There also is good opportunity  
Of overcoming our lost games distress,  
By practising an *equanimity*  
By learning from mistakes we make at chess.

All this, *imagination and strong will*  
Are sterling qualities and useful tools  
In daily life, which chess play can instil  
If nurtured on curricular in schools.

Or any stage from childhood to old age  
Is time for chess to feed the higher mind.  
For prince or pauper, simple soul or sage,  
Chess plays its part to succour humankind!

## In Praise of Chess

### THE SUBLIME PURSUIT

To play at chess, I say, makes perfect sense;  
This world needs anything that's good and right.

So let's be studious, ardent and intense,  
Pursuing the sublime and lofty fight.

This ancient game that's evermore in vogue,  
For centuries to come it will endure  
For anyone, be they saint or rogue,  
Innocently 'hooked' by its allure.

Our patron saint, Teresa<sup>45</sup> is her name,  
With raptures of the highest states akin,  
Encouraged sister nuns to play the game,  
As well as checkmate of their Lord to win.

Now chess in prisons is a well-known fact  
To combat boredom and aggressiveness,  
By teaching inmates 'think before you act',  
So they become ennobled by their chess.

---

45 Saint Teresa of Avila, 28<sup>th</sup> March 1515—4<sup>th</sup> October 1582. Teresa advised her sister nuns to play chess in the monasteries, even against the rules, in order to “checkmate the Lord.” She mentioned chess in one of her works, *The Way of Perfection*, a special guidance for fellow sisters of the Carmelite Order. She used an analogy to chess to describe the preparations for prayer and contemplation.

## In Praise of Chess

Ideally when in partnership with love  
For others, and for nature and the earth,  
Then chess can lead us onward and above,  
With our essential goodness given birth.

That chess cannot be everything: agreed,  
But it does supply a part of our great need.

In Praise of Chess

TO BE A CHAMPION

If I should be a champion  
Of all the players on earth,  
I know it makes no difference  
To my essential worth.

No doubt it would give satisfaction,  
Admiration, wealth,  
But what if with such accolades  
I failed in my own health?

Or what if I had flaws and foibles  
Sullyng my name,  
The praise of man and all the money  
Wouldn't mean the same.

But what if I should sweep the roads,  
Or the hungry I should feed,  
This too is praise-deserving work,  
Supplying a human need.

Or ministering to the sick  
In body, soul or mind,  
I thus would demonstrate my love  
For suffering humankind.

## In Praise of Chess

This humble way, my role would play  
As much a valued part,  
Not world-renowned, perhaps, and yet  
A champion of the heart!



## In Praise of Chess

### COMPULSION

Compulsions there are many,  
Some are harmful, some benign.  
To eat when we are hungry,  
For example, that is fine.

But giving up a harmful habit  
That does auger ill,  
Our reasoning can help us,  
And applying strength of will.

We all know we should take our time  
To look before we leap,  
And self-control of brain and hands  
When playing chess should keep.

But sometimes we can feel compelled  
To move the pieces faster  
Than it is prudent, risking  
Disadvantage or disaster!

A compulsive move encounter  
Of ultimate regret  
Is being caught in zugzwang<sup>46</sup>  
With its deadly losing net!

---

46 Zugzwang, meaning the compulsion to move, is a chess position in which whatever you move loses.

In Praise of Chess

CHOICES

*"Chess is the struggle against the error."*

*– Johannes Zukertort*

-----  
Choices, we have choices, all  
Along our life's highway,  
To turn off right or turn off left  
Or straight ahead to stay.

So, will we live angelic lives  
Or more like devils be,  
In goodness and in wisdom steeped,  
Or in ignominy?

Choices, we have choices, every  
Minute we're awake,  
To think and then decide on how  
The best of it to make.

What goes around it comes around.  
The destiny of some  
Is just deserts, because we have  
Invited it to come.

## In Praise of Chess

Certainly there are some matters  
Out of our control,  
Like weather changes, earthquakes, floods  
And problems as a whole.

But even then, we have some choice  
To make the best of it,  
To think and act in helpful ways,  
However we see fit.

It is the same with chess, of course,  
With every single move  
To play it well or face the hell  
Of what bad actions prove.

The choice is all our own, of course,  
With every move we make,  
With gloomy attitude to let  
The horrors overtake.

Or better strive to overcome  
With all our strength and might,  
To turn our prospects right around  
And end in much delight!

## In Praise of Chess

### LIVING FEARLESSLY

I'm confident that I do love the game,  
And if, alas, I lose it is no shame.  
In confidence I strike out with each move,  
For better or for worse that each shall prove.

I'm confident I never really lose  
By how I play, or actions that I choose,  
For as life's student, always I deserve  
Success, or else I'm on a learning curve.

By books and DVDs, and our deep thought  
And practice, comes absorption of what's taught,  
And so for learning help is ever near,  
And fear itself is all that we need fear.

For sure, due caution we must exercise,  
And to ignore all perils is unwise,  
But sagely with this caveat intact,  
With due aplomb and fearlessness let's act.

As advocates of living fearlessly,  
Come friends and colleagues live this way with me!

In Praise of Chess

THE GIFT OF THE PRESENT

To live for the 'eternal now'.  
I vow, and do declare  
This is a way to make the most  
Of minutes, anywhere.

The past it is a history  
For me and everyone.  
Hopefully we gained from it,  
Then it is ticked and done.

The future is a mystery  
That cannot be foretold,  
So let's forget it and just let it  
In due course unfold.

Forget mistakes, that's how we learn,  
No need to make a fuss  
Of 'should have done'. The present minute  
Is the gift to us!

To live for the 'eternal now'  
Can serve our purpose well,  
When we refrain from past or future  
Too much there to dwell.

## In Praise of Chess

### WISDOM AND DEVOTION

As humans we have a component  
That we call emotion,  
But also the more stable traits  
Of wisdom and devotion.

How we are buffeted about  
By emotion frequently,  
Like people cramped in tiny boats  
Upon a stormy sea!

Embarrassed, harassed, worry, sadness,  
Grief, regret and shame,  
These states can get the better of  
Our lives and chess the same.

I know what it is like to lose  
A game I should have won,  
Then briefly to feel anxious lest  
I lose another one.

But then I reason, and don't let  
These feelings overtake  
The calm enjoyment of the game  
I love for its own sake!

## In Praise of Chess

### TIMELESSNESS

Herewith another topic urging  
Me to put in rhyme:  
The need for us to ever pay  
Our due respects to time.

Though out there in eternity  
Where timelessness holds sway,  
Down here upon our busy earth  
We measure night and day.

And every day and every night  
We section off in hours,  
Beneath the sun and living on  
This spinning world of ours.

Out in the great beyond, there is  
No such a thing as time,  
Yet here below it is our constant  
Living paradigm.

So what's the answer to the question  
Of what we yearn to do:  
A balanced life with finest chess  
For players like me and you?

## In Praise of Chess

I only know that we must needs  
Go on as best we can,  
Towards the joy for self and all  
In our allotted span.



## In Praise of Chess

### PLAYERS OF LIFE

This life of ours is made so that  
We learn along the way,  
Whether like a master or  
A *patzer*<sup>47</sup> that we play.

Some souls with aptitude learn fast,  
And others maddening slow,  
Depending on the understanding  
And the skills they show.

But many factors influence  
The levels of prowess,  
As life is complicated,  
As indeed is true of chess.

Some players of life are lucky  
And high purposes acquire,  
Though all at any time can fall  
In misery and mire.

For life is strange, and full of change  
With an unstable mood,  
As see-sawing to bottom bump  
Or swinging up to good.

---

47 A poor player at chess

## In Praise of Chess

But it's a test and manifests  
As Nature does intend,  
To challenge us to do our best  
Throughout it to life's end.

Never mind if we feel blind,  
And mishaps then we earn;  
It is a universal scheme  
That by mistakes we learn.

In Praise of Chess

HERE AND NOW

*“’Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days  
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays:  
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,  
And one by one back in the Closet lays.”*

*- From The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam  
(Translation by Edward FitzGerald)*

-----

It's true that we cannot forever stay  
Down here, but in due course must pass away,  
But each of us with with all our gifted years,  
Let's always do the best we can, I say.

With every minute that brute Time devours,  
Let's answer back by conquering the hours,  
With worthy work and leisure that's attained  
By tapping into our potential powers.

I don't deny the challenges and pain  
When life is full of loss as well as gain,  
But these are everyone's experiences,  
And my philosophy remains the same.

So when the mortal frame is laid to rest,  
It can be said that we have passed the test  
Of having lived a happy, useful life  
And this dear soul was one of nature's best!

## In Praise of Chess

### SILENCE

Silence, oh my silence, you  
Are valued much by me.  
With others or in solitude,  
You are good company.

I need you for my finest chess,  
And for my prosody,  
When inspiration from my Muse  
Dictates some verse to me.

And when in meditation I  
Uplift my consciousness,  
It's you my silence outwardly  
Within me also bless.

And when I sleep, my silence keeps  
Me blanketed in care.  
In waking or in sleeping, I'm  
So peaceful when you're there.

How Speech is silver, it is said,  
And I don't disagree,  
But golden Silence of great price,  
I am your votary.

## In Praise of Chess

### HAPPINESS

*"Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,  
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse – and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness –  
And Wilderness is Paradise enow."*

*- From The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam  
(Translation by Edward FitzGerald)*

-----

We all seek to be happy  
And be free from suffering,  
And many are the ways we try  
This happiness to bring.  
There was a grandmaster who gave  
Our game high praise indeed,  
Regarding this eternal quest  
And universal need.

*He said, like music and like love  
That chess contains the power  
To make men happy<sup>48</sup>, (and, one hopes,  
Our miseries devour).*

---

48 Siegbert Tarrasch, "Chess, like love, like music, has the power to make men happy".

## In Praise of Chess

But though our great endeavours, such as  
Music and the rest  
All make a start and play a part  
To make our lives be blessed,  
We need to search for deeper sources  
To maintain the stance  
Of inner joy, no matter what  
Our outer circumstance.

In Praise of Chess

THE LIGHT OF LOVE

Is there a person in your life  
Who lights the mystic flame?  
Could but the blessing of such love  
Burn in all hearts the same!

A much loved child, a most dear friend,  
A husband or a wife -  
My wish for all is at least one  
Is lighting up each life.

Animal companions with  
Endearing ways so sweet,  
Also bring us love, and part  
Of human needs they meet.

Engrossing interests too, like chess,  
Inspiring forms of art,  
Do banish boredom, offering  
Much solace to the heart.

## In Praise of Chess

### YOGA MEDITATION RESCUE

*“Meditation is neutralisation of the alternating waves of  
consciousness”*

*- Patanjali*

I’ve learned an ancient method to remain  
Content, by turning losses into gain,  
By sacred yoga science<sup>49</sup> of meditation  
That tends to conquer forms of life’s negation.

Once at the Devon Congress in Torquay,  
When my results had disappointed me -  
I usually end about an average score -  
This year my final placement was so poor.

So what to do? I could by reasoning  
Assure myself it was a one-off thing,  
But I embarked on doing something more:  
In my guest house<sup>50</sup> room I sat upon the floor.

Cross-legged, meditating peacefully,  
A joy and stillness soon stole over me.  
And chess results were totally forgot,  
And from that hour they mattered not a jot.

---

49 Kriya yoga is an ancient spiritual science from India, for achieving life-force control (*pranayama*), and higher states of consciousness.

50 I always stayed at Rosemead Guest House, Paignton, and travelled to Torquay by bus for the tournament.



# In Praise of Chess

## PART 8

### MY EARLY YEARS

## In Praise of Chess

### MY SPECIAL TEACHER AND FRIEND

As memory is a magic wand  
To bring back times gone by,  
Now to my early years of chess  
I'll reminisce and try.  
At home as a young child I did  
To pondering incline,  
And father he taught me the moves  
When I was only nine.

At school<sup>51</sup>, I had a teacher,  
Mrs Weston was her name,  
Who watered seeds of learning  
About this enticing game.  
She set up boards and sets each lunchtime  
For our practising,  
And in due course a team of girls  
In the junior league did bring.

Then in my teenage years, when I  
Had victories far and wide<sup>52</sup>,  
So did my teacher, Mrs Weston,  
Glow with mentor's pride!  
Then as an adult, this kind lady  
Was a unique friend,  
Bestowing interest in me  
Until her great life's end.

---

51 Weston Park, Southampton

52 Southampton Girls Champion, The Southern Counties Juniors (at Bognor Regis), and the British Girls Champion (joint) 1962 and 1963.

## In Praise of Chess

Her caring about me continued  
Now I had become  
A British Ladies Champion<sup>53</sup>.  
Invited to her home  
Occasionally on a Saturday,  
It was a treat to spend  
An afternoon in visiting  
My former teacher friend.



*Gillian Moore with the British Ladies Chess trophy 1967*

---

53 In 1966 at Sunderland, jointly with Margaret (Peggy) Clarke.

## In Praise of Chess

What was she like, my erstwhile teacher,  
Bertha now to me?  
Apart from what she taught at school,  
Maths and geography,  
Her gaze was on the heavenly bodies  
Of astronomy<sup>54</sup>,  
And in this world she longed for nations'  
Peace and harmony<sup>55</sup>.

Upon a little table within  
Arms length of her chair,  
Was placed a globe of earth; she called it  
A 'celestial sphere'.  
She loved to view the globe  
Which she could turn by hand with ease,  
To view the countries of the world,  
The oceans and the seas.

---

54 Bertha C Weston was President of the Solent Amateur Astronomers Society.

55 She was also Vice-President of the British Soviet Society and had been welcomed aboard a Russian ship.

## In Praise of Chess

And halfway through the afternoon,  
We'd have a little break  
From talks of chess and love and life.  
A pot of tea she'd make.  
And always was the brew a blend  
Of bergamot Earl Grey,  
With often a delicious cake  
Included on the tray.

Retired from teaching now, in fact  
She was most elderly<sup>56</sup>,  
With sixty years my senior  
Like a grandmother to me.  
Now after a fulfilling life  
And Bertha passed away<sup>57</sup>,  
At her memorial, fittingly,  
The Planets Suite did play<sup>58</sup>.

---

56 Having been a headteacher elsewhere, retired and then came back to teaching at my school, she was over 70 when I first met her.

57 She died in 1981 aged 95 when I was 35.

58 Gustav Holst's Planets Suite

## In Praise of Chess

### WHAT CAME NEXT<sup>59</sup>

Then what became of me after  
The height of my success?  
After this pinnacle was reached,  
I came and went at chess!  
I never entered in the 'British  
Ladies' anymore,  
And it took me decades to become  
As regular as before.

In youth and middle age  
My life was full of many things:  
The duties, joys and sorrows  
That our living usually brings,  
Until once more the game it cast  
Its spell on me to play<sup>60</sup>.  
And this time I am certain that  
My chess is here to stay.

Now mine is the opportunity  
To once again explore  
The mysteries of the precious game  
That devotees adore.  
With contests for the club, the league  
And county<sup>61</sup>, there's no dearth  
Of competitions to pursue  
The greatest game on earth.

---

59 After becoming British Ladies champion in 1966

60 I joined Southampton Chess Club in 2001

61 As at August 2021, a few of these activities are beginning to revive.

# In Praise of Chess

## PART 9

### HUMOROUS

In Praise of Chess

BEDROOM SLIPPERS

Scarborough

Soanes Weekend Tournament 7<sup>th</sup> August 2004

*“She’ll be wearing bedroom slippers when she comes.  
Singing, aye aye yippee yippee aye.”*

*- as from the old song,  
“She’ll Be Coming Round the Mountain When She Comes”*

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Have ever you been locked out of your home?  
Well, I was locked out of my hotel room!  
I needed things inside to take with me,  
But found alas I didn’t have the key  
To get back in the room that had shut tight.  
What a predicament and funny plight!

For now the cliffs below I must explore<sup>62</sup>,  
In summer dress and slippers, nothing more,  
Without the benefit of sturdy shoes,  
Or handbag of necessities to use.  
I would not be a ‘drama queen’ and shout  
With shock and horror, now I was locked out.

---

62 The chess venue was held somewhere down the cliffs.



## In Praise of Chess

Alas there were no other guests about,  
And the hotel staff were also clearly out -  
I rang their phone and pressed the hallway bell.  
No use, I seemed alone in the hotel.  
I reasoned that my play must still go on,  
Though in my state the challenge would be fun!

I had no means to comb my hair in place,  
Or lipstick to add colour to my face,  
No money to assist me down the slope;  
Without the cliff-lift I must somehow cope.  
So just as I presented now instead  
Around the cliff-side pathway I must tread.

Though with improper footwear covering,  
My 'best foot forward' I did gladly bring,  
To play the man who won the Soanes last year.  
Despite no make-up, and my tatty hair,  
I won the game and did enjoy the play.  
Those lucky bedroom slippers won the day!

-----

*"Are you going to Scarborough fair,  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme?  
Remember me to one who lives there,  
For he once was a true love of mine!"*

*- as sung by Nana Mouskouri*

## In Praise of Chess

### CONCENTRATION

Concentration is of course a boon  
To hold the thinking steady, or the spoon.  
For if the hand should waver, or the mind,  
There follows a misdoing of some kind.

The hot delicious soup, alas, could slip.  
In chess, it spells disaster or a blip.  
Over the board, mistakes are ranged about,  
Just waiting for a chance to catch us out,  
And common sense and master moves abound,  
With our complete attention to be found.

To concentrate is a necessity  
In chess as in our lives, we can agree!

## In Praise of Chess

### MEAN PIECES

When we play chess we are not normal,  
And by this I mean  
That though we're harmless people, yet  
Our pieces are so mean!  
We push the chessmen as we choose  
With malice of intent,  
But to the other player nothing  
Personal is meant.  
We shake the hands at start of play  
To demonstrate goodwill,  
Before the chessmen spring to life,  
Their purpose to fulfil.

How patiently we gloat with glee  
To capture his poor men,  
With details of the planning, spanning  
How, and what and when.  
We plot with devious skirmishes.  
Straight-faced we cogitate  
On pins and forks and ambushes,  
Discovered checks and mate.  
But harmless though we players are  
And with a friendly mien,  
The competition does expect  
Those pieces to be mean!

## In Praise of Chess

### THE SWINDLE

A game of mind sport, this is why  
Chess swindling is allowed,  
And when we pull off such a trick  
We may feel justly proud.

Psychology of human nature  
Plays a major part,  
As chess is not only a science,  
Also a fine art.

To snatch a piece he's left en prise,  
We think we should not dither,  
Or else an attractive-looking square  
Beckons to come hither.

Ah ha, he's set a nasty trap  
And hopes it is not seen,  
And we'll be caught out red-faced, as  
Oh dear, we've lost our queen!

## In Praise of Chess

### LADY PLAYERS

In fairest of societies  
Where liberty is good,  
A woman is allowed to live  
Her life just as she should.

So why is it that women players,  
Capable and keen,  
Within the world of serious chess  
So few of them are seen?

Ladies at the local chess club?  
Often there are none,  
Or else if you enquire they say  
Oh yes, we do have one.

The situation reminds me of  
A species that is rare:  
You have to search them out to find them  
Hiding in their lair!

Lest they become extinct, and then  
There follows a lament,  
Women players do, perhaps,  
Need some encouragement.

## In Praise of Chess

### THE TROPHY

In my long chess career, sometimes  
I can say it is true  
That I have won a prize, perhaps  
And with a trophy too.

In recent years I won a trophy,  
The Gibraltar Cup  
As ladies champion, until the time  
I had to give it up.

Someone said about the Cup  
It was appropriate  
To quaff some draughts of champagne from it,  
Thus to celebrate.

Another quipped with grim remark  
That when alas I die,  
My ashes could be placed therein  
To keep a watchful eye.

Now I'm not keen on alcohol,  
But the kindly thought I get,  
And as for what the other said,  
*I'm nowhere near dead yet!*

## In Praise of Chess

### LIMERICKS

#### Alertness

An elderly player from Fleet,  
He dozed at the board due to heat.  
And when he awoke,  
The opponent he spoke,  
“You have lost due to time, I repeat.”

#### Self-control

A junior from Huntington Hoe  
Kept snatching his hands to and fro.  
His coach said, “Young man,  
You must sit on your hands,  
‘Til you’ve found the best move that you know!”

#### Perseverance

There was a keen player from Sway’  
Who’d only just learned how to play.  
Alas, what a shame,  
He got bored with the game,  
Giving too many pieces away.

# In Praise of Chess

## PART 10

### A FANTASY: THE KING AND QUEEN SPEAK



## In Praise of Chess

### THE TRAPPED QUEEN

#### The Queen's last speech

“As I survey our kingdom's vanished power,  
My King reposes in his prison tower,  
And I am trapped and we're condemned to die.  
And this for all our goodness, why oh why?

“Now close to ending of my glorious days -  
I love my king and helped in many ways -  
He loves me too, and many praise my name,  
But now I wonder, 'Were it but a game'?

“I do not know what's given me such a thought,  
Whether by insight or by fancy wrought,  
Though wisdom's guidance ever was my quest.  
I weep now, for I know I've done my best.

“Apart as now my King and I do dwell,  
I question life and ponder heaven and hell.  
To understand it all is now too late,  
Yet I believe we'll meet at heaven's gate!”

## In Praise of Chess

### IMPENDING CHECKMATE

#### The King's Last Speech

“We’ve come to keep you locked up on the board  
Beyond your castle’, said the ruthless hoard  
Of soldiers. What did this strange utterance mean?  
This world’s not made of wood! They stole my queen,  
And forced her far away to foreign parts.  
Ignoble captors with their brutish art!  
I’ve ever loved my lady, cherished dear  
Each golden glimpse. I long to clasp her near  
Again, for she has grown to be a part  
Of me, and reigns supreme within my heart.  
Devoted consort of my blissful years,  
The thought of you now dries my manly tears.

“My kindly subjects try to hide their gloom,  
Amidst an air of my impending doom.  
Ah, who can flee the consequence of fate,  
Whose fleeting joys and sorrows alternate?  
Oh joyous isles where my old griefs were drowned,  
My head is bowed, which once bore up a crown  
For love of countrymen. These sceptred lands,  
Were safe in these my now enfeebled hands,  
As Destiny deals out his dreadful plot,  
Anon to terminate my hapless lot.  
The purple folds will soon be laid about  
My mortal frame, as friends will bear me out.

## In Praise of Chess

“Stiff and sightless in a crypt I’ll lie  
Who once surveyed the world in majesty.  
And since in solitude as now I dwell,  
And stripped of splendour by the enemy,  
I question truth and ponder heaven and hell,  
And ask the eternal question, ‘Who am I’?  
The sages say that life, with happiness  
And sorrow, is a kind of great-gamed chess,  
And we the chessmen in this sport divine  
Will play again, such as this life of mine.  
They say that when we die the soul remains,  
And in due course to incarnate again.”

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

## In Praise of Chess

### REVIEWS

*“Well I can only praise again the very entertaining and impressive body of verse that you have created, Gillian. Written from the heart and from the soul, distilling lots of experience and wisdom learned from life. Very cleverly and imaginatively presented through the filter of the game of chess.”*

*–Jerry Dowlen  
Insurance Chess Club member*