

## SUTTON COLDFIELD STATION – STATION MASTER’S HOUSE 1960 - 1987

### “CHESS MAGAZINE AND HAROLD BARUCH WOOD”

By Yvonne Moore and Paul Harrison © 2025



Photograph by Peter Moore 26 June 2025

**“Chess Magazine” premises in 1985 taken by Dave Barton (knobbyhead). Shared with his permission via Birmingham History Forum – with many thanks**

### Introduction

Yvonne’s interest in this old building came from a couple of photographs on page 35 in the 1990 book *“Cross City Connections”* by local historian John Bassett.

The main photograph in the book shows the building above with a **‘CHESS’** logo above the middle door and two jaguar cars parked in front. The second photograph shows employee Mr Alan Thomas working in the offices of the former station master’s house<sup>1</sup>. See below.

When Yvonne mentioned this to co-author Paul, he could remember visiting the *“Chess”* office as a boy in the mid 1980’s with his headmaster father, who was purchasing replacement pieces for his school’s chess team.

He can vaguely recollect the offices being quite small inside and packed with chess related equipment and books, though the passage of time may have led to inaccuracies in his power of recall.

As Paul and Yvonne looked into the history of *‘Chess’* and its quirky founder, it became apparent that it was a subject worthy of further study.

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<sup>1</sup> Contact was made with the publisher to find out if permission could be obtained to reproduce the photographs. An email reply from Brewin Books was received on 28 July 2025 giving permission, with credits – with many thanks.



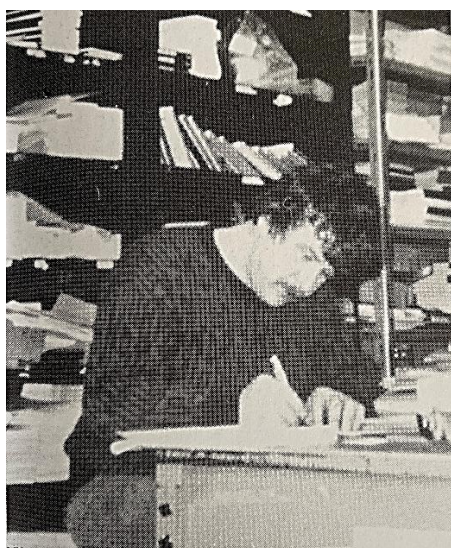
External view of the *Chess* building in 1987 (John Bassett)

## Chess

Mr. Reg Hollins of Westwood Press informed me that “the accommodation occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Overton and their two daughters was taken over by *Chess* Magazine in November, 1960. The late Mr. B.H. Wood, OBE, owner and editor of *Chess*, set up his own printing works and office here for his international Chess business, which he ran until shortly before his death in April, 1989. It was in recognition of Mr. B.H. Wood, an internationally known Chess Master, that the Chess theme was used to name the courts of the Gracechurch Centre when it opened in 1974”.

During my Spring, 1987 revisit to that part of Sutton Coldfield station I met Alan Thomas who joined *Chess* at the present location in 1968. Mr. Thomas is seen working; in a room of the former Station Master’s house.

Mr. Thomas confirmed that the staff in the *Chess* buildings could clearly hear folk using the incline. When I called again in 1989, *Chess* had been part of the Pergamon Press group since August, 1987.



Mr. Thomas in former station master’s house (John Bassett)

**Page 35 of “*Cross City Connections*” by John Bassett**

**Published in 1990 and a paperback edition in 2008 by Brewin Books**

**ISBN:978-1-85858-434-8**

## Final Days of the Station Master’s House

The station master’s house was occupied in the early mid 1950’s by a Mr Carter, and then Mr George Overton, his wife and two daughters. George Overton was a railway inspector based at New Street Station. In a circa 1955 Sutton Coldfield Directory, Mr G W Overton resided at “Station House,” Station Street, Sutton Coldfield.

John Bassett suggests that the Overton family were living under what he called the ‘Woodenhill’, now the covered ramp that passengers use to reach the booking hall from the car park. In those times, many parcels would have been moved up the ramp from 6 am to at least 11.15 pm daily. The noise for the family must have been substantial at times.

John Bassett describes how the Overton family were at the accommodation until November 1960 when it was taken over by the “*Chess Magazine*”.



## Chess Magazine is founded

The magazine, known also as "*Chess Monthly and Chess Magazine*" was founded in 1935 by Baruch Harold Wood in Sutton Coldfield. The original premises were at the Masonic Chambers, Mill Street.



**Masonic Chambers, Mill Street, Sutton Coldfield**

**Wikimedia by 'Brianboru', taken in 2014. Creative Commons Attribution – Share Alike 3.0**

### Unported licence

The first edition of "*Chess*" was published in 1935 and contained games and problems as well as various articles. The subscription rate was 12 shillings for 12 monthly copies, sent post free. The address was "*Chess*", Sutton Coldfield and it seems that correspondence always found the offices.

In a circa 1955 Sutton Coldfield Trade Directory (undated but estimated by owner Yvonne Moore), Baruch Harold Wood OBE was the proprietor and editor of the magazine and originally operated out of the Masonic Chambers, Mill Street, as Chess - Publishers B. Wood. In the same directory, B H Wood was residing at 146 Rectory Road, Sutton Coldfield.

Baruch H Wood later moved his offices and printing works to the building at the railway station for his internationally known "*Chess Magazine*". He also sold many items related to chess. Many locals will probably remember visiting the offices to buy chess related pieces.

Stephen John Mann, the author of the Yorkshire Chess History website, visited the offices at the station and described them as resembling a wastepaper establishment and a general untidiness was to be found.

Another photograph of the "*Chess Magazine*" building appearing to date from the 1970's, was posted on the Birmingham History Forum in 2023, but permission to use this has not been received. However, Dave Barton, another forum member, gave permission to use his photograph as seen above.

Alan Thomas, an employee at "*Chess Magazine*" met John Bassett in 1987 and confirmed that inside the offices they could clearly hear people moving up and down the incline.

Baruch Harold Wood ran his business until 1987, a couple of years before his death in April 1989.

Another publisher took over the magazine. Pergamon Press acquired the magazine in 1987 and renamed it as "*Pergamon Chess*" and in 1989, "*Macmillan Chess*".

In 1991, it became known as "*Maxwell Macmillan Chess*".

Currently it is sold under the title of "*Chess and Bridge Magazine*".

Many back copies and ephemera of "*Chess Magazine*" can be found to buy on the internet.

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## Baruch Harold Wood, a brief biography

Baruch Harold Wood, informally known as Barry, was born on 13 July 1909 at Nether Edge, Sheffield. He was the son of Baruch Talbot Wood and Florence Muriel Herington.

His birth was officially registered as Harold Baruch Wood.

In 1911, the family lived at 34 Violet Bank Road in Sheffield. Baruch Talbot Wood was 30 and from Sheffield. He was a bank clerk. Florence Muriel was 29 and from London. Harold Baruch Wood was aged one and born in Sheffield.

In 1921, Baruch Talbot Wood was not found. However, Florence Muriel, aged 39, along with sons Harold Baruch, 11, and William Reginald, 2, were still living at 34 Violet Bank Road, Sheffield.

According to the Yorkshire Chess History website (<https://mannchess.org.uk>), Baruch was sent to school in Wales, possibly as a boarder at Friar's School, Bangor. He then went to the University College of North Wales, Bangor, and received a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Honours B.Sc. degree in Chemistry.

The "*Western Mail & South Wales News*", dated 13 July 1931, reported that he was awarded a scholarship to read for an M.Sc.

However, it appears that he went to Birmingham University to read for his M.Sc. in chemistry. He gained a job in chemical research at Lichfield and set down roots in the area.

Baruch Harold Wood was by then an excellent chess player. He also had an uncle, Harold Victor Wood, who was a journalist. Possibly this is where the idea of setting up a chess based magazine was born.

At the time there was a Yorkshire based rival monthly magazine known as "*British Chess Magazine*", established by John Watkinson.

Source <https://mannchess.org.uk> – with thanks

## Marriage

Baruch Harold Wood married Marjory Elizabeth Farrington in 1936 at Ross, Herefordshire. (FreeBMD marriage listed as Baruch H Wood December quarter 1936 Ross 6a 1243).

In 1936, Baruch H Wood was listed in a Sutton Coldfield Trade Directory as M.Sc. Birmingham and B.Sc. at Masonic Buildings, Mill Street, Sutton Coldfield. He was a journalist.

He was also listed at the same address in the 1940 Trade Directory. He was a journalist.

So far, no trace of Harold Baruch Wood has been found on the 1939 Register.

In 1939, he represented England at a chess Olympiad in Buenos Aires so probably was not in the country at the outbreak of World War 2.

In 1939, his wife was living with her mother Elizabeth Farrington at School House, Pencraig, Ross and Whitchurch, Herefordshire.

Elizabeth Farrington was born on 18 February 1877 and was the head mistress and certified teacher at the school.

Marjory E Wood was born on 18 November 1909 and had no occupation.

Her daughter Margaret was living with her and was born on 29 November 1937.

In 1939, his father Baruch T Wood was residing at Courtlands Nursing Home, Liberty Lane, Ottershaw, Chertsey in Surrey. His date of birth is given as 6 August 1881. He was recorded as a widower. He was a bank clerk, now residing as a patient in the nursing home.

It appears that Baruch's mother Florence Muriel Wood died between 1921 and 1939, but her year of death is not known.

Baruch's wife Marjory Wood was a director of Chess Ltd. The couple had four children.

Margaret Eileen Elizabeth Wood was born in Sutton Coldfield. Christopher Baruch Wood was born on 11 December 1940 at Ross on Wye. Rex Frank T Wood was born in 1942 at Sutton Coldfield. Philip R C Wood was born on 26 July 1944 in Birmingham.

### **Ancestry.co.uk - Family Trees, with thanks**

The children were all notable chess players.

Marjory Wood died on 7 November 1977. She is buried in Sutton Coldfield Cemetery along with her husband.



**Gravestone at Sutton Coldfield Cemetery, Rectory Road**

"Known as B H Wood he was an English chess player, editor and author.

He founded the *Chess* magazine and was the chess correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Illustrated London News*".



Findagrave Memorial ID 198025990, merged and uploaded by Glenlivet on 2 April 2019

# Chess expert dies at 79

Internationally-known chess expert Mr Baruch Wood, who put Sutton Coldfield on the map, died yesterday at the age of 79.

A chess player, tournament organiser and writer, he received the OBE in 1984 for his services to the game.

Mr Wood, who was a diabetic, died at Sutton's Good Hope Hospital, two weeks after he broke his arm in a fall at his Rectory Road home.

*Chess* magazine, which he founded in 1935, is read by enthusiasts all over the world and is still based in Sutton. Mr Wood edited the monthly magazine until he sold out to Pergamon Press plc in 1987.

Sutton's Gracechurch Shopping Centre was given a chess theme be-

cause of the town's connection with the game.

Mr Wood was chess correspondent for *The Birmingham Post* from 1946-67. Mr Peter Gibbs, the current chess correspondent, said: "I don't know what chess is going to do without him. If I was walking down the street in Moscow and said 'Chess, Sutton Coldfield', the people would know what I meant."

"He was a great friend and a marvellous chess player. He still enjoyed his chess. It's fairly rare to find someone who is both a notable player and a notable organiser."

Sheffield-born Mr Wood was widowed in 1977. He leaves a daughter, three sons and 11 grandchildren. The funeral is at Holy Trinity Parish Church, Sutton Coldfield, on Tuesday, April 11, at 11.30 am.

Mr Wood was a former chess correspondent for *The Illustrated*



Mr Baruch Wood.

*London News* and the *Daily Telegraph*. He was president of the British Universities Chess Association and an International Chess Federation judge.

He represented England in an international tournament in Buenos Aires in 1939.

In 1944 Mr Wood started a mail order business selling chess boards, books, trophies, cufflinks, ashtrays, and chess booklets.

**Course for budding writers**

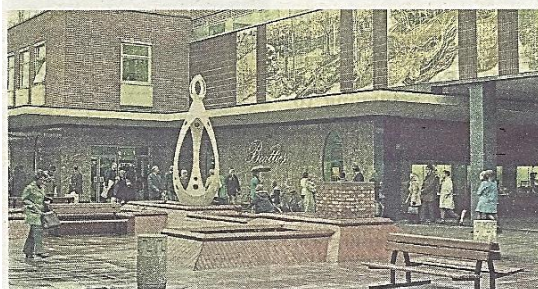
Sutton Coldfield News 7 April 1989

Findmypast Newspapers



In earlier times, the Gracechurch Centre featured chess sculptures in honour of the links to "Chess".

## Nostalgic glimpse of town centre history



Mike's photograph of The Gracechurch Centre taken during the 1970s

A former Sutton resident has shared a picture of the Gracechurch Centre from the past.

Mike Dean, who now lives in Andover, got in touch with Chronicle Week to give readers a look at life while shopping in the town centre during the 1970s.

The image shows shoppers heading to Beatties and Mike said: "It is an image I took on November 9, 1974.

"I like the fact it illustrates the Sutton Park murals that featured above the shops. It was a drizzly day which is why most people are close to the shop fronts and underneath the concrete awnings.

"I was born in Sutton and my parents lived in New Oscott from 1947 onwards. As an ex-Bishop Vesey Gram-

mar School pupil I used to come back through Sutton and my parents and I regularly visited Sutton for shopping and a coffee in the mornings.

"I used to play chess and was always fascinated by the 'Chess' offices on Sutton railway station so when the 'bishop' chess piece appeared in the Gracechurch Centre I had to take a picture. It was a great place to be and the one thing I regret is not taking many pictures of the Parade at that time."

You can share memories via email at [chronicleweek@mnamedia.co.uk](mailto:chronicleweek@mnamedia.co.uk) or you can write to us by post at Readers' letters, Chronicle Week, Waterloo Road, Ketley, TF1 5HU. Letters must include a full name and address.

### "Chronical Week" free newspapers (MNA) 20 November 2021

The photograph was originally taken on 9 November 1974 by Mike Dean.

From Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group, author "Webmaster". With thanks.

In 1984, Baruch Harold Wood was awarded the Order of the British Empire for services to chess.

Prof. Derek Williams,  
Director of the Health  
Services Management  
Centre at Birmingham  
University, is made an  
O.B.E., as is Mr. Baruch  
Harold Wood, of Sutton  
Coldfield, who is  
honoured for services to  
chess.

### New Year Honours List 1984

Birmingham Weekly Mercury 1 January 1984

British Newspaper Archive

Probate

WOOD, Baruch Harold of 146 Rectory Rd Sutton Coldfield  
West Midlands died 4 April 1989 Administration  
Birmingham 14 June £118352 8951206964K

England & Wales National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills & Administrations) 1858 – 1995

## **Chess career**

As well as running his chess business, Baruch Wood attended many chess tournaments. Examples of his wins included Baarn in 1947; Paignton in 1954; Whitby in 1963, Torshavn in 1967 and Jersey in 1975.

During the 1930's, he was a vice-president of the Warwickshire Chess Association.

Between 1935 and 1957, Baruch was the Warwickshire champion eight times.

The first time he got into the British Championships was in 1936 at Bournemouth. He finished 6<sup>th</sup> out of 12.

In 1937, he played in a Birmingham international event where he finished 10<sup>th</sup> out of 11. He never won the British Championship it seems.

All of the tournaments he took part in are too numerous to be listed here, but he was a prolific competitor in world chess.

He was the chess correspondent for the "*Daily Telegraph*" and "*The Illustrated London News*", and between 1948 and 1967, he wrote a chess column for the "*Birmingham Daily Post*".

Between 1946 and 1951, he was the president of the International Correspondence Chess Foundation (I.C.C.F.), and he was also a judge and international chess arbiter for FIDE – International Chess Federation.

### **Sutton Coldfield Chess Club – from the website**

Barry Wood co-founded the Sutton Coldfield Chess Club in 1937, based at the YMCA. He was a leading administrator and one of the club's strongest players.

The Sutton Coldfield Chess Club played in various venues including Boldmere Junior School, Veseyan Sports Club, British Legion, Erdington Conservative Club and the Jaguar Sports and Social Club .

### **Wikipedia archive creative commons CC BY-SA 4.0**

#### **Chess history in Sutton Coldfield**

In his book "Glimpses into Sutton's Past Part III", page 56, Stephen Roberts wrote about chess clubs in the town.

In December 1886, John Skelton (1845 – 1927) had set up the Chess and Draft Club and was the secretary.

The club met at the Sutton Coldfield town hall library. At that time there were sixteen members of the chess club, both male and female.

The club did not last long, and another chess club was launched in 1888 with C. J. Gilbert as secretary.

Annual subscriptions were 5 shillings and 2 shillings and sixpence.

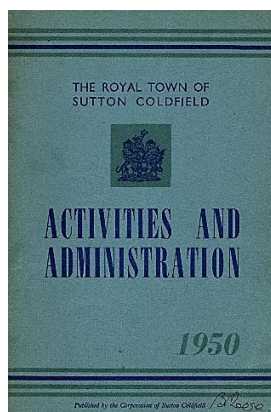
Stephen Roberts gave no source for this information.

Barry Wood was also a long time president of the Birmingham schools chess association and the Birmingham University chess association.

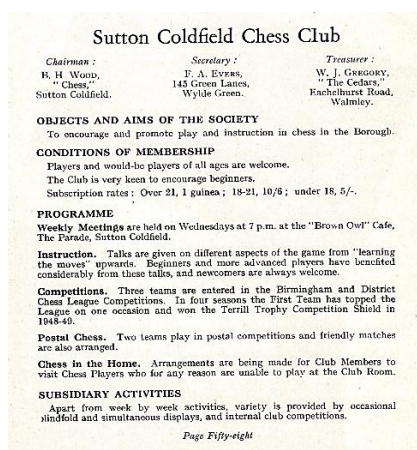


## Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield Corporation Handbooks

These handbooks are in the collection of Yvonne Moore.

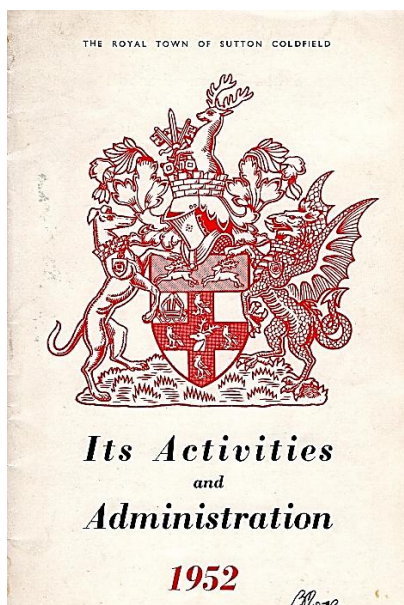


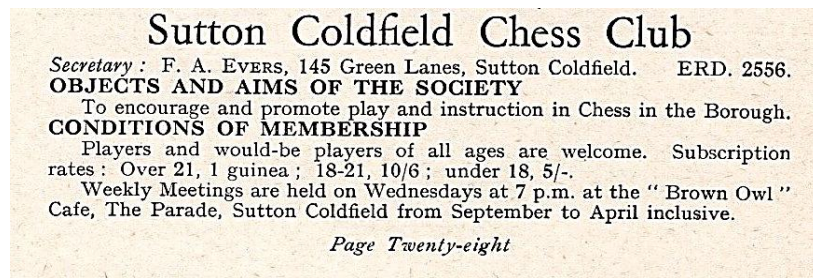
In the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield ACTIVITIES AND ADMINISTRATION handbook of 1950, there is a pertinent entry on page 58.



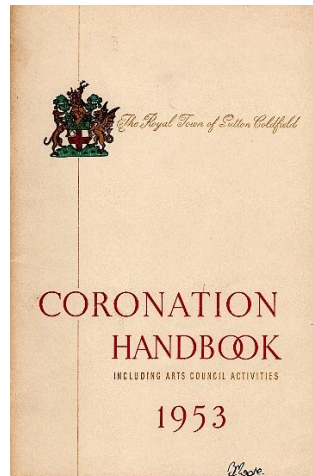
1950

In the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield – It's Activities and Administration, 1952, the chess club is listed on page 28.





**1952**



In the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield Coronation Handbook of 1953, page 42, there is an entry for "SUTTON COLDFIELD CHESS CLUB".

**SUTTON COLDFIELD CHESS CLUB**

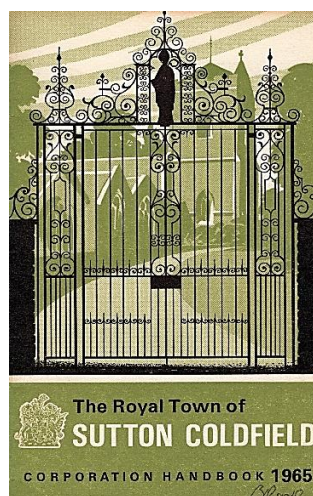
*Acting Secretary : MR. A. E. UTTON, 21 Berwood Road, Sutton Coldfield. ERD. 2310.*

**OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY.** To encourage and promote play and instruction in Chess in the Borough.

**MEMBERSHIP.** Players and would-be players of all ages are welcome.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES.** Over 21, 1 guinea; 18-21, 10/6; under 18, 5/-.  
 Weekly meetings are held on Wednesdays at 7 p.m., at the "Brown Owl" Café, The Parade, Sutton Coldfield, from September to April inclusive.

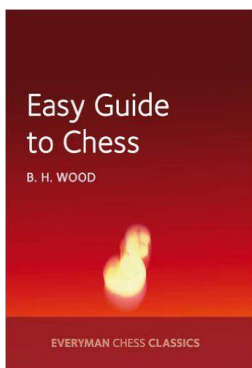
**1953**



In The Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield Corporation Handbook of 1965, on page 37, the entry for CHESS Sutton Coldfield Chess Club shows that R. A. Humphries of Streetly was the secretary.

## Author – Baruch Harold Wood

Wood wrote a book called “*Easy Guide to Chess*” (Sutton Coldfield 1942). This has been described as one of the best beginners books on the market by various sources. ISBN-10 1781943298



**Posted by “cgrau” on 3 July 2016 on “Chess.com” blog, with thanks.**

Other books Wood wrote include “*World Championship Candidates Tournament*” in 1953 and “*100 Victorian Chess problems*” in 1972.



The tournament at Hoogovens (Holland) in 1948. Wood is in the middle, seated with his back to the camera.

**Wikipedia archive creative commons CC BY-SA 4.0**

## Chess.com – blog by ‘SIMAGINFAN’, 2 February 2019

This person describes himself as an old friend of Barry Wood.

They first met when they played against each other in a team match at the “Chess” offices in Sutton Coldfield.

Simaginfan arrived late at the office and Barry was already waiting patiently for him, in a suit and tie, at the table with the chess board.

Barry played his customary French advanced variation with 4.dxc5. He said, “He murdered me”

Barry was described as a true gentleman, and they became instant friends.



He went on to say that Wood gave him a coffee and a tour of the offices and also showed him his personal store cupboard that was full of treasures.

He said that Barry was very much old school and a hard taskmaster, but very kind.

With thanks.

**A SUPER SET AT BARGAIN PRICE!**  
THE ARISTOCRAT OF ALL CHESS SETS IN WOOD



The photograph shows our COLDFIELD Chess Set which, personally designed by B. H. WOOD, represents the peak of beauty, utility and stability. The white men are in boxwood, the "black" in beautifully-grained dark-brown natural Maracaibo ebony. The whole set felted and loaded and packed in a neat slide-lid box; a joy to possess. Kings are  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ins. high, have  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ins. base. It is not widely enough realised that sets of comparable size and quality are being offered at twice the price. You have only to see a Coldfield set to fall in love with it!

PRICE **£5-19-6** (U.S. \$16) (With extra fine box **£6-17-6** U.S. \$19)

A U.S.A. client writes: "The Coldfield set you sent me has received many admiring glances from our Omaha players. One player has already sent his order and I know of several others that plan to do so."

**SUPERBLY-FIGURED INLAID WOOD** (Sycamore and Mahogany) **BOARDS TO SUIT, 2" SQUARES, 3" FLUSH BORDERS.**

PRICE **£3-12-6** (U.S. \$9.75)  
Our 18" folding boards—previous page—are also quite suitable

**CHESS — SUTTON COLDFIELD — ENGLAND**

Advertisement shared by "cgrau" on 3 July 2016 on "Chess.com blog

With thanks

#### Postal address

It seems from the above advertisement that any correspondent from across the world could reach the offices by using "Chess, Sutton Coldfield".

Harold Baruch Wood was mentioned in quite a few newspaper articles. A selection are included.

## CHess FOR THE HOME CIRCLE

### Successful Simultaneous Exhibition

The chess enthusiasts who gathered at the Picture House Cafe on Saturday had a thoroughly enjoyable time, and the event may be said to be the most successful of its kind ever organised in the town. A strong team of 14 players, representing the Grantham and Sleaford chess clubs, opposed Mr. Baruch H. Wood, and were kept fully alert from the commencement. Mr. Wood was very quick in going round the boards, never taking more than a few seconds to decide on his move.

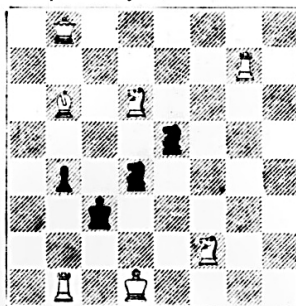
Those taking part were Messrs. H. H. Quilter, F. White, H. Meier, G. H. Batty, F. Leach, F. Passingham, Rev. Hosier, J. W. Smith, H. Hicks, H. C. Kendrick, L. Bools, W. Marshall, C. E. Redhead, and F. Gilbert. Of these, Messrs. Quilter and Leach won their games, and are to be congratulated; the remainder fell before the vigorous onslaught of the soloist.

Mr. Wood is continuing his tour in the north, and this week is giving simultaneous exhibitions at Sheffield, York, Inverness, Aberdeen, Glasgow, etc.

Mr. Wood is 30 years of age, and was born at Sheffield. He has secured almost the whole of the local chess championships in the Birmingham district, where he now resides, has been well placed in the British Championship, has competed successfully in several international tournaments, and was a member of the English team playing in the Buenos Aires Olympiad when war broke out.

#### PROBLEM No. 1,202

Concluding position in our 105th Solving Tourney. An adaptation by A. Kraemer of a problem originally composed by J. P. Taylor.



White to Play and Mate in Two Moves.

Solution of Problem No. 1,200 (Pauly).

Black: K g2; B's d6, h1; S g8; P's b4, c5, d4, e7, f7, h7, h2; (11).

White: K a6; Q d3; R's a2, g7; B c6; S h3; P's b3, c2, d2, d5, f4, g5; (12).

Key-move: P-c4 (waiting).

1. . . Either P x P c.p., 2 P x P mate; 1. . . P-c5, 2 P x P e.p. mate; 1. . . P-f5, 2 P x P e.p. mate; 1. . . P-h5, 2 P x P e.p. mate; 1. . . B-b6, etc., 2 P-d6 mate; 1. . . S-f6 or h6, 2 F x S mate. Total points, 9.

#### FAIRY CORNER

The Help-Mate is a wonderful medium for driving home and emphasising an idea, or combination of ideas. It is not that



Black must make a number of foolish or weak moves, as one solver recently wrote. Both Black and White must make a series of definitely strategic moves, and their order of play may not be changed. This is clearly shown in the adjoining diagram, in which Black plays first and helps White to mate in three moves. There is an interference and wonderful self-blocking solo effort by the Springer.

The Grantham Journal Friday April 26 1940

British Newspaper Archive

## **“SALE OF CHESSMEN SUTTON COLDFIELD APPEAL ALLOWED”**

“The Court of Appeal today allowed the appeal of Mr. Baruch Harold Wood, trading as “Chess” at Masonic Buildings, Sutton Coldfield, from the judgement of Mr. Justice Crossman restraining him from advertising or offering for sale chessmen not made by John Jaques & Son, Ltd., of Kirby Street, Hatton Garden. London, as “Genuine Staunton” chessmen.

The Judge had held that the use of the name “Staunton” by itself was not enough to distinguish chessmen made by Jaques & Son, but that the addition of the word “genuine” would entitle them to the injunction.

The Master of the Rolls, delivering the judgement of the court, said there was nothing in the evidence given before Mr Justice Crossman to justify the court in finding Mr Wood, in describing his chessmen as “Genuine Staunton” was representing them as the goods of Jaques & Son. The appeal would be allowed, the action dismissed, and Jaques & Son must pay the costs.”

**Birmingham Mail Tuesday 19 May 1940**

**British Newspaper Archive Transcription (original is hard to read)**

The “Staunton” chess set largely became the standard style for chess competitions.

The design and patent belonged to Nathaniel Cooke. He named it after a leading chess master Howard Staunton (1810 – 1874).

The style was first made available by Jaques & Son of London in 1849.

It appeared that the pieces were easy to use and universally recognised.

John Jaques of London made sports games at Hatton Garden.

The sets were made of ebony and boxwood with lead feet protected by felt.



**A typical design of chessmen**

The pieces are known as King, Queen, Rook, Bishop, Knight and Pawn.

**Wikipedia archive creative commons CC BY-SA 4.0**

Many examples of these chess sets can be found online.

Older and antique chess sets can sell for very high prices.



# Midland Parade

ONE of the most remarkable personalities in the Midlands — or the country — must be Mr. Baruch Harold Wood, a comparatively young man who lives in Sutton Coldfield.

Born in Sheffield, he was educated at the universities of North Wales and Birmingham to become a research chemist; but when in 1935, he had obtained his M.Sc., and was waiting for a suitable appointment, he decided, as a hobby, to publish a monthly magazine.

The result was startling. Within three months that magazine, "Chess," had a

By

## ALERTUS

circulation of many thousands; to-day it sells largely in nearly 100 countries of the world. It is not perhaps necessary to mention that, except during the war years, when Mr. Wood took charge of the laboratories of the Birmingham Chemical Company at Lichfield, he has not practised as a research chemist.

## Best-seller

CHES is probably the only game—with the possible exception of chicanery—which is truly international; and when the magazine (in Mr. Wood's words) began to run away with him, he realised the necessity of learning foreign languages in order that he might be fully apprised of chess activities in other countries.

As a consequence of intensive application Mr. B. H. Wood he now reads in ten languages and speaks six of them fluently.

The next thing Mr. Wood did was to write a best-seller, "Easy Guide to Chess," of which nearly 30,000 copies have been sold. Then he started dealing in chess requisites, and, presently, began to manufacture them himself, his chessmen being of his own design.

During the war when suit-

able wood was scarce, Mr. Wood endeavoured to meet the insatiable demand for chessmen by making them of plastic and metal. He also scoured the curio shops of the country for old ivory and the tusks of the hippopotamus and rhinoceros.

The number of chess players is seems, has increased enormously during recent years. Throughout the world there are now nearly 3,000 prominent chess clubs, and (on Mr. Wood's index alone) nearly 50,000 first-class players.

Mr. Wood thinks of himself as a chess administrator rather than as a player. But he has on many occasions been a member of the British chess team; he is the British Correspondence (postal chess) Champion; he holds the record for simultaneous play with 127 games in 4½ hours; and he has travelled in many parts of the world giving demonstration games.

## Restored

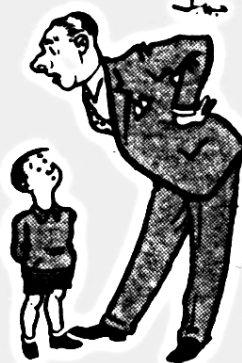
WITHIN six weeks of the declaration of war most of the contents of Birmingham's Natural History Museum had been packed up and safely stored in remote country houses. That was why, when bombs fell on that part of the city's Council House in which the museum is housed, damage was confined to masonry, the glass of a score or so of display cases, and a couple of birds and a wapiti (North American deer) which were among the few specimens left behind.

To-day, all except two of the galleries of the Museum have been restored and reopened; and it is expected that the remaining galleries, too, will be in use before the year ends.

Most people, I surmise, go to a natural history museum for instruction in things animal, vegetable and mineral. The Birmingham Museum, however, also provides a marked æsthetic pleasure and interest partly because of the artistry of the displays and partly because each group of specimens is made to illustrate a fascinating story.

## Responsible

IN one gallery, for example, the visitor begins by sight of the protozoa, the most primitive form of living organism, and then proceeds by way of other appropriate specimens up the ladder of



"And What's the good of ten quid extra for you compared with another bob for 20 fags?"

By Harrison.

He is a Lancashire man who, after having been assistant zoologist at the Horniman Museum in London and assistant curator of the Norwich Council Museum, came to Birmingham 19 years ago, and in the words of a prominent city councillor, speedily made one realise that a museum need not necessarily have any resemblance to a junk shop.

## Grass art

ONE item of information given me by Mr. Payler made one appreciate how troublesome—and costly—the attempt to give a realistic setting to the specimens may sometimes be. Take the birds in the Beale collection, some of which are exhibited in their native haunts — long grass and undergrowth.

The grass and undergrowth is not just plucked from the countryside and dumped in one of the galleries. To preserve the stuff it must first be dried, and then every blade of grass and every leaf and bud of the undergrowth must be painted to simulate the natural colour lost through drying.

## Indentured

ALD. B. T. ROBBINS, Mayor of Oldbury, who is retiring from the head-mastership of Smethwick Hall School after 22 years' service in that capacity, became a member of the teaching profession when he was 13 years of age.

Having at that time reached the seventh standard, and having decided that his career

well-known local prelate was once a teacher at Warley Institute School.

## Radio hero

ONE of the best actors in the country is unquestionably Johnson, the Birmingham man, who plays of Dick Barton, Special Agent in Charge, in the B.B.C. serial which is now agitating and (they say) making cult for parents to children to bed early at night.

Since I was one of the few people who, when Noel Johnson was making occasional appearances at Birmingham Crescent Theatre ten years ago, Noel adjudged him a talented actor.

forecast that he attain some celebrity glad that fame had come to him. But, like another of his friends, hope that we shall see him again in less trivial roles.

Noel Johnson is that well-known Birmingham man, Mr. Sidney H. who retired three years from the managership of weighing machine department of Messrs. W. and A. Ltd., and who is now of a business at V. Mr. Johnson was also officer of the Auxiliary Fire Service from 1937; his organisation was at the National Fire Service.

## Fumes

WOULD twenty wretched smoke back the clock three years? for there was Dalton in 1627. The days when the English grew his own tobacco.

With such success citizens of Wiltshire cultivate the tobacco weed that it was exported at three times of Virginia. The Council is reported "fumed," sent in with a series of C. Seizure and destruction.

The local authority refused to comply. Cornet Wakefield, party of horse was Winchcombe and Ch.

"MIDLAND PARADE — A CHESS KING"

## **“MIDLAND PARADE – A CHESS KING”**

“One of the most remarkable personalities in the Midlands – or the country – must be Mr. Baruch Harold Wood, a comparatively young men who lives in Sutton Coldfield.

Born in Sheffield, he was educated at the universities of North Wales and Birmingham to become a research chemist; but when in 1935, he had obtained his M.Sc., and was waiting for a suitable appointment, he decided, as a hobby, to publish a monthly magazine.

The result was startling. Within three months that magazine, “*Chess*”, had a circulation of many thousands. Today it sells largely in nearly 100 countries of the world. It is not perhaps necessary to mention that, except during the war years when Mr Wood took charge of the laboratories of the Birmingham Chemical Company at Lichfield, he had not practiced as a research chemist.

### **Best-Seller**

Chess is probably the only game – with the possible exception of chicanery - which is truly international: and when the magazine (in Mr Wood’s words) began to run away with him, he realised the necessity of learning foreign languages in order that he might be fully apprised of chess activities in other countries.

As a consequence of intensive application, he now reads in ten languages and speaks six of them fluently.

The next thing Mr Wood did was to write a best-seller “*Easy Guide to Chess*” of which nearly 30,000 copies have been sold. Then he started dealing in chess requisites and presently began to manufacture them himself, his chessmen being of his own design.

During the war when suitable wood was scarce, Mr Wood endeavoured to meet the insatiable demand for chessmen by making them of plastic and metal. He also scoured the curio shops of the country for old ivory and tusks of the hippopotamus and rhinoceros.

The number of chess players it seems, has increased enormously during recent years. Throughout the world there are now nearly 3,000 prominent chess clubs, and (on Mr Wood’s index alone) nearly 50,000 first class players.

Mr Wood thinks of himself as a chess administrator rather than as a chess player. But he has on many occasions been a member of the British chess team; he is the British Correspondence (postal chess) Champion; he holds the record for simultaneous play with 127 games in 4 ½ hours; and he has travelled in many parts of the world giving demonstration games.”

**Written by ALERTUS**

**Birmingham Weekly Mercury 20 April 1947**

**British Newspaper Archive**

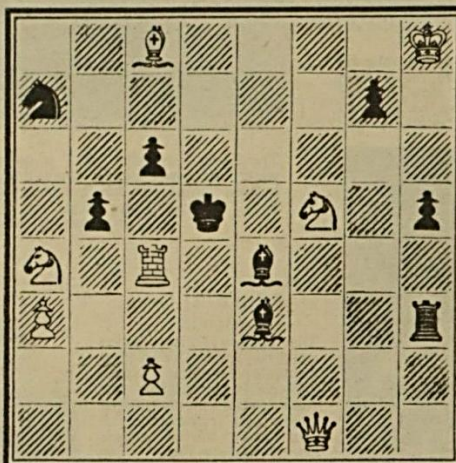
**Transcription**

The identity of ALERTUS was not discovered.

## CHESS NOTES

By BARUCH H. WOOD, M.Sc.

By GEO. J. HICKS (a contributor from pre-war days).



White to play, and mate in two moves.

(SOLUTION BELOW.)

Here is the score of an excellent little game played earlier this year in a match between Leeds University and Sheffield University :

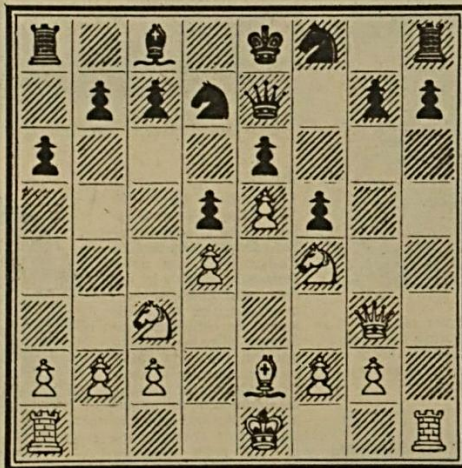
### FRENCH DEFENCE.

White.	Black.	White.	Black.
J. H. BEATY	I. J. BENSON	J. H. BEATY	I. J. BENSON
1. P-K4	P-K3	5. P-K5	KKt-Q2
2. P-Q4	P-Q4	6. P-KR4	B×B
3. Kt-QB3	Kt-KB3	7. P×B	Q×P
4. B-KKt5	B-K2	8. Kt-R3	Q-K2

It is not considered wise for Black to accept the offered pawn—he gets too cramped a game.

9. Q-Kt4	P-KB4	11. B-K2	Kt-B1
10. Q-Kt3	P-QR3	12. Kt-B4	QKt-Q2

After White's next move (What is it?) the game wins itself.



### SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.

1. Q-B4. If 1. ... P×R; 2. Q-Q6. If 1. ... B×Q;  
2. R-B5. If 1. ... B-Q5; 2. R×B. If 1. ... R-R5;  
2. Kt×B, etc.

### CONCLUSION TO THE GAME.

13. QKt×P			
Full marks for 13. KKt×P, which is just the same.			
13. P×Kt	18. Q×Pch	R-B2	
14. Kt×P	Q-Q1	19. Q-K6ch	R-K2
15. Q×P	Kt-KKt3	20. R-R8ch	Kt-B1
16. B-R5	R-B1	21. Kt-B6 mate	
17. B×Ktch	P×B		

Chess column - Illustrated London News 1 October 1949

British Newspaper Archive



## **“Publisher challenged Patrolman’s Evidence**

### **READING OF MOTORCYCLE SPEEDOMETER”**

An article in the Skegness News on 27 October 1954 concerned a Baruch Harold Wood.

“More speeders were fined at Skegness on Wednesday, the only one pleading not guilty, and putting up a spirited defence, being Baruch Harold Wood, a publisher and holder of several science degrees, of Rectory Road, Sutton Coldfield, who was summoned for exceeding the speed limit in a built up area on Roman Bank on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

PC Massey was on a motorcycle patrol when he saw the defendant enter the built up area at excessive speed. The defendant told him he did not realise he was in a built up area and missed the 30 mile an hour sign.

The defendant put up a challenge as to the ability of a motorcycle officer to collect evidence safely.

Wood countered “It is impossible for a sane person to follow a fast moving vehicle on a motorcycle without the paramount consideration being to prevent being killed. And the powers of observation of the witness were hampered.”

After a lengthy hearing where Wood tried to offer scientific reasoning as to why he was not speeding, the magistrates decided to convict him and fined the defendant £3.”

**The Skegness News 17 October 1954**

**British Newspaper Archives Transcription (extract)**

### **“SPEEDING FINES”**



The following were fined with endorsement of licence for speeding: Cecily Gwendoline Jones, of Pear Tree Lane (August 21, Little Common Road, £5); Anthony Gordon James, of Birchlands Avenue, S.W.12 (August 21, Little Common Road, £7); Leonard Arthur Walker, of Green Farm Close, Green Street Green, Orpington (August 21, Little Common Road, £3); Baruch Harold Wood, of Rectory Road, Sutton Coldfield (August 21, Little Common Road, £6).

**Bexhill on Sea Observer 2 October 1965**

**British Newspaper Archive**

# **CHESS EDITOR IS CLEARED OF CRIMINAL LIBEL**

**A** MIDLANDS chess expert, editor of a chess magazine, was found "Not guilty" at Birmingham Assizes yesterday of criminally libelling an official of the British Chess Federation.

Baruch Harold Wood, of Rectory Road, Sutton Coldfield, had pleaded "Not guilty" to publishing a defamatory libel concerning William Ritsen Morry (43), of Stanway Road, Shirley, knowing it to be false, and to a lesser charge of publishing the alleged libel.

On Tuesday, Mr. Michael Davies, prosecuting, stated that Wood edited a magazine called "Chess."

Morry was a former solicitor who had been bankrupt and had been sent to prison in 1945 for fraudulent conversion, but who had since repaid all his creditors.

## **The letter**

The alleged libel was contained in a letter by Wood to the chairman of the Monmouth County Chess Association about a proposal to form a Welsh chess union. The letter referred to Morry as "this ex-gaolbird."

Yesterday, Mr. Commissioner Roberts referred to a submission previously made by Mr. H. Milmo, defending, that there was no case to answer, and said he had decided it would be better if the case went to the jury.

Wood was entitled to withdraw his support from the union if he wished and was entitled to give his reasons for doing so. Consequently, the Commissioner



H. H. Wood. R. Morry

ruled that the letter was written on a privileged occasion.

The jury had to consider whether Wood, in writing the letter, acted with malice, spite or from a bad motive. There was no doubt that the words were vehement in character.

After a retirement of 15 minutes, the jury acquitted Wood on both charges.

Mr. Milmo applied for costs against Morry. The Commissioner, saying he did not consider the case should ever have been brought, awarded Wood costs not exceeding £100.

## **'Abandon hope' at these schools**

West Bromwich.

**A**LD. A. MEDLEY, chairman of the Education Committee here, was questioned last night about his reported remark to the Town Council that there should be a notice at secondary modern schools stating: "Abandon hope all ye who enter here."

Coun. Mrs. Grace Wilkes said at the committee's meeting that she did not agree with that view. She asked Ald. Medley if he really thought his remark was a true reflection on the town's secondary modern schools. If so, what remedy did he suggest?

Ald. Medley replied that he qualified his statement considerably by pointing out that it concerned the type of boy who was of an academic mind and could profit elsewhere. He still maintained that a boy in that type of school could abandon hope; he had no opportunity of development or of being taught the academic subjects of a grammar school.

Mr. F. Walton (headmaster representative) suggested that parents should visit the open days at secondary modern schools and judge for themselves whether what they saw was the work of those who had abandoned hope.

## **Mountaineering for boys**

**WEST BROMWICH.** — The Education Committee here is to organise a mountaineering course for boys during the autumn term. The proposal was agreed to at last night's meeting of the committee, which will pay 15s. for each boy, as in the existing camping scheme.

Mr. J. H. Turner (Director of Education) said: "We have a camp at Beddgiert, North Wales, and that area will probably provide our starting-off point. The course will be for about a dozen boys aged between 16 and 18. They will be selected from our grammar and secondary technical schools."

## **Transcription**

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**Birmingham Daily Gazette Thursday 15 July 1954**

**British Newspaper Archive**



## Memories of an eccentric chess enthusiast



I B Griffith

MR B H WOOD'S obituary fitted three columns of the Daily Telegraph on Wednesday, April 5.

It told of his birth at Sheffield in 1909, how he took a first class honours degree in chemistry in Bangor and then a research degree at Birmingham University.

During the 1939-45 war he ran a research laboratory working a twelve-hour day on foodstuffs and flavouring.

It was at the end of the war that chess took over from chemistry.

He founded, edited and ran the magazine Chess, with its world wide circulation for fifty years and was also chess correspondent of the Daily Telegraph.

I quote from the obituary "An

engagingly eccentric and absent-minded figure, Barry Wood once arrived at the Fleet Street office of the Daily Telegraph wearing two neckties when eventually questioned about this sartorial idiosyncrasy he said, "Oh, so that's where I put the other one."

He played chess twelve times for England, he came joint second in the British championship in 1948.

He was president of the British Universities Chess Association, ran a business in chess sets and accessories and received an OBE in 1984.

His postal address was simply Chess, Sutton Coldfield.

All this I gleaned from the obituary, courtesy of Canon Eric Ramage who rang me from his home in Angle-

sey to tell me about it, for we both knew Barry.

What the obituary does not say is that Baruch Harold Wood spent ten years of his childhood and youth in Tregarth with his mother and brother Rex.

Being English was enough to make him an eccentric in a Welsh village in the twenties but when cricket gear was discovered in a cupboard in the Church Hall he was a providential asset for this most English of pastimes, bowling leg breaks and googlies with loose limbs and hair flying all over the place. Mascot and legend we loved him.

Mythology grew around him in college. As stated in the obituary he got a first, but the story was that the

chemistry department was most unwilling to give it to him because they said that he was never seen in lectures or in the laboratory.

"I scarcely know him," said his professor, but the outside examiner from Birmingham insisted, "the best I've seen. His coming with me to do research," and he got his first.

He would come into the common room, straw in mouth, pork pie hat on head and play his accordion to the delight of some and the consternation of others.

The women called him the Pied Piper. He and I edited the first ever Bangor rag magazine. It had four pages and was named Bang-or-Bust! Yes. I knew Barry Wood.

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