

Penrith do the double!

Way back in 1885, Dr R. Walker, founder of Carlisle Chess Club, donated a silver cup to be contested by the, newly formed, Cumberland Chess League. In 1982, some 97 years later, Penrith Chess Club, at last, had their name engraved on the trophy.

Thirty-eight years later, the now Cumbria Open League of 2019-20 was drawing to close when the pandemic struck and everything ground to a halt, with Penrith needed only to draw their last match of the season, away to Windermere, to win it again. The match, scheduled for 14th March 2020, took place at Windermere on Tuesday evening 17th August 2021, some seventeen months later. Knowing that Windermere would have a strong team, Penrith called out of retirement Robert Patla, who had not played for over eight years but had been Cumbria champion for five years in succession prior to that. Robert, along with Jacob McAtear, Holden Davis and Eggert Fruchtenicht, proved to be a stronger team than even Windermere could field. Holden won his game against Colin Bragg on board 3, Robert held Dave Phillips to a draw on board 1 as did Eggert against Dave Shaw on board 4. Board 2 was won by Jacob when Alex Billings ran out of time despite being offered a draw with three minutes to go. With the result at Penrith A 3, Windermere 1, Penrith win the Cumbria Open League 2019-20 by an unassailable 8 points and once again, Penrith have their name on the coveted Walker Cup.

The pandemic also left one other important match unplayed in the Whitaker Handicap Knockout. The final was to be between Penrith and Ulverston and was scheduled to be played on 14th March 2020. This event has been held each season since 1994 and Penrith have won it twice, once in 2005 and again in 2018. To win it this season would put 'the icing on the cake'. The handicap is calculated using a rather complex formula based on each players' rating. The match was arranged to take place on Wednesday evening 22nd September 2021 at Penrith's home venue, the Crown Hotel, Eamont Bridge. The Penrith team, Penrith 1, were rated some 923 points above Ulverston, which worked out at a 2 ½ point handicap against Penrith 1. As matches are contested over only 4 points, Penrith 1 could afford only one draw, the remaining games would have to be wins. As it happened, the Penrith team won all 4 games. Individual results were, in board order: Jacob McAtear 1 Martin Gawne 0; Eggert Fruchtenicht 1 Ian Dacre 0; Lewis McAtear 1 Neil Foxcroft 0 and Guy Griffiths 1 Peter Hanks 0. Result after handicap deducted: Penrith 1 1 ½ Ulverston 0

So for the first time in history Penrith do the double!