

The recent outing involving Lincolnshire's open team was to the picturesque village of Syston a few miles north of Leicester in St.Peter and St.Paul's Church Hall which has been the regular venue for Leicestershire county matches for several years.

Graham Ladds, who plays at club level for Newark & Southwell in the Nottinghamshire League but who qualifies for and chooses to play for Lincolnshire, was playing on board 9 against Peter Gibbs with Graham, as white, opening with the Queen's gambit 1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 b6 5. Nge2 Bb7 6. a3 Bxc3 7. Nxc3 d5 8. Bd3 0-0 9. 0-0 Nbd7 and honours were even in the opening moves.

Some sharp play ensued with both players looking to dominate the Queen's side 10. b4 dxc4 11. Bxc4 c5 12. dxc5 bxc5 13. Bb2 Qc7 14. Qe2 cxb4 15. axb4 Ne5 16. Ba6 Bxa6 17. Rxa6 Qc4. Peter offered a draw at this point but Graham, seeing an opportunity to attack the pawn on a7, declined. 18. b5 Qxe2 19. Nxe2 Nc4 20. Bd4 Rfb8 21. Rc1 Nb6 22. Rca1 Nbd7 23. b6 e5 and the pressure on a7 was becoming intense (see diagram).

Graham now pressed home the attack 24. Rxa7 Rxa7 25. bxa7 Ra8 26. Bb2 Nd5 27. Nc3 Nb4 28. Nb5 Nc6 29. Ra6 Nb4 30. Rd6 Nc5 31. Nc7 and black resigned as 31. ... Rxa7 32. Rd8 mate.

Despite being heavily outgraded, indeed Nigel Birtwistle on board 1 was up against GM Mark Hebden, Lincolnshire lost by the narrowest margin $7\frac{1}{2}$ to $8\frac{1}{2}$ with Grantham's Jason Dilley and Rick wilson, Lincoln's Ayman Hammam and Kevin Shutt and captain Denis Georgiou from Scunthorpe all gaining creditable wins.

