

## Sterling struggle for Shaw Shield

By Paul R Glissan - Captain, Bench and Bar Chess Team

In the advent of the new millennium and the centenary of federation, a sterling struggle for the Terrey Shaw Memorial Shield took place on 17 November 2000 at the Law Society's Lounge and Dining Room. The Shield is the prize for the winner of the annual Bench and Bar v Solicitors chess match, in memory of the late esteemed Terrey Shaw (formerly of Culwulla Chambers), who died in 1997.

The Shield has been a resident of the trophy cabinet in the Bar Common Room since the inception of the match in 1993. This year, however, the task of maintaining its residency there was made herculean by the simultaneous absence from the Bench and Bar team of many of its strongest players. The Hon. Justice J S Purdy of the Family Court of Australia (multiple former Australian Chess Champion) was on circuit in Queensland. Tim Reilly (Observer of the Australian Chess Team at the recent International Chess Olympiad in Istanbul) was still overseas. Ben Ingram had a professional commitment. Steven Rares S.C. was celebrating Ellicott QC's magnificent half century at the Bar. Michael Hall was recuperating from his final submissions on behalf of John Marsden. Bullfry QC, having had too many doubles, was attempting to take advantage of the cab-rank rule at the taxi rank opposite the Law Courts.

On the other hand, the Solicitors were strengthened by the recent return from London of their former Captain Malcolm Stephens (one of Australia's strongest players), who drew with Shaw in his last game, on board one, in the Bar Common Room in 1996. Indeed, so strong were the Solicitors this year that their current Captain, the aptly named Adrian Chek (who has defeated Australia's second strongest player, Grand Master Darryl Johansen), was playing on board three.

This year's match was played on 13 boards, arranged in order of descending strength according to current ratings or recent performance, with a limit of one hour per player to complete the game. A thrilling struggle ensued.

Bob Colquhoun (former Australian Chess Federation President) got the Bench and Bar off to a good start with a win on board seven. The Solicitors then drew ahead with wins on boards 12 and 13. The Bench and Bar then won on boards six, eight, nine, 10 and 11, but lost on boards two and four. In the opinion of Director of Play, Morris Needleman, Ken Pryde, with the white pieces on board one, 'never quite equalised' against Stephens, and eventually lost his first game against the Solicitors in the history of the match, in a classic pawn ending. With minutes remaining on his clock, Malcolm Broun QC judiciously agreed to a draw on board five, resulting in an unlosable lead of 6½ - 5½ in favour of the Bench and Bar, but with one game remaining, on board three.

Could the Bench and Bar win? Horst Bleicher had been recruited from retirement from practice at the Bar to play on board three. With two or three minutes remaining on his and Chek's clocks, his position looked equal, if not slightly superior. Everybody clustered around to watch the unfolding drama. Not realising the score, Chek (as he revealed later) mulled over the possibility of offering a draw, which would have resulted in a win for the Bench and Bar by 7 - 6. But he played on. Then a truly 'Hickory Dickory' thing happened. Without



Glissan and Chek with the Shaw Shield.

human intervention, Chek's clock suddenly retreated 20 minutes. Nobody saw it happen. Nobody can explain how it happened. Nobody has ever seen it happen before. Bleicher pointed out that Chek's flag appeared to have fallen. Because of the clock malfunction, the Director of Play stopped the game, removed the erratic clock, replaced it with another (after resetting it to the times displayed on the original clock before its malfunction) and restarted the game.

The atmosphere was now akin to that during the bowling of the last ball of the last over in the famous tied test against the West Indies, 40 years ago. Everybody was rivetted by the rapid progress of the pieces, as the remaining seconds ticked away. Then chess's equivalent to a cricket run-out happened - Bleicher's flag fell. Chek had won on time, and the match was tied 6½ - 6½! Silver cups were presented to both Chek and Bleicher for their sterling game. Copious quantities of red were consumed to restore everybody's nervous equilibrium.

The consensus is that this was the best match yet played. Unlike the Bledisloe Cup, the Shield will spend six months with the Solicitors and six months back in the trophy cabinet in the Bar Common Room.

In this Olympic year, it is appropriate to recall that Terrey Shaw represented Australia in no less than nine consecutive International Chess Olympiads, from 1968 to 1984, and won the gold medal for the best percentage score on board six in Yugoslavia in 1972. He was an International Chess Master, and was an authoritative, entertaining and widely read Chess Writer for the Sydney Morning Herald and The Bulletin magazine for many years.

In the 1993 *Bar News* Shaw, with characteristic modesty, wrote: 'The handsome perpetual shield ... is now on display in the common room trophy cabinet. Have a look at it quickly, as we may not be able to hang onto it next year.'

In true gladiatorial spirit, the Bench and Bar have not yet relinquished their grip on the Shield, which is pictured in the hands of both Team Captains in the Bar Common Room following this year's match.

Congratulations are due to the Solicitors for sharing the Shield this year.