



Observer report for UK Open Riichi Championship 2026 (RCR, MERS 4)

Observer: Oliver HÖLSCHER

Date: 1-2 August 2026

Place: Guildford, United Kingdom

Website or other source(s) of information: All information about the tournament can be found on the website: <https://ukrc2026.azurewebsites.net/>

Participants: 84 players

Represented Countries: United Kingdom (66), Germany (5), Switzerland (2), Denmark (2), France (1), Ireland (1), Finland (1), Hungary (1), Sweden (1), Belgium (1), Non-EMA (3)

Playing schedule: 2 days, 8 rounds (4 on each day) of 75 minutes after which one more hand may be played. Players were seeded randomly where no player can meet the other more than once.

Location: The tournament was held at the “Guildford Masonic Centre” which was just a short walk from the town centre and the train station of Guildford. The location was spacious and consisted of a playing room which had enough space for 21 tables, a dining area with a staffed bar and a wide terrace overlooking the River Wey which could also be used as a dining area. There was a separate room for collecting lunch as well.

Equipment: All tables were identical and used 26mm sized Riichi tiles with a standard Junkmat. Tenbo sticks were used to count the points.

Refereeing: John Duckworth was the non-playing head referee. There were also two playing referees which were exchanged after each day. Day 1: Phillip Bielby, Martin Lester. Day 2: Gemma Sakamoto, Tom Pearson.

Complaints: A few complains have been made during the tournament:

- On day 1, the first round started approx. 5 minutes late because the organizers decided to wait for missing players. This delay persisted throughout the day.
- The vegetarian food options were insufficient (apparently non-vegetarians took the wrong food)
- There were water bottles supplied to the players but there was too few still water and the supply ran out before the day ended.
- The playing room was well tempered but if you sat directly below the AC the cold air flow may be a bit uncomfortable.
- You sometimes had to queue for the toilet between rounds.

Information / communication during the tournament:

Visible clock projected from a computer on a screen. Ranking was kept up to date between each session, available on <https://ukmalive.azurewebsites.net/>. The head referee explained the updated RCR rules at the start of the tournament. Every player received a name tag which included their assigned tables and seats. This information could also be accessed on the aforementioned website.

Sessions: Excellent playing atmosphere, FFF (Fair-play, Friendly and Fun).

Catering: Lunch was served in a room near the playing hall and the food quality was good (salad, main and dessert). Mains for day 1: Chickpeas and Pie or Lasagna. Mains for day 2: Beef Stroganoff or Chicken Curry. Water was free and other beverages could be ordered from the bar in the dining room for a small fee.

Other: There were some social activities complimenting the tournament such as social play at The Star Inn on Quarry Street the day before or eating dinner together at The Britannia on Saturday.

Prizes: Trophies for individual ranking (1st, 2nd and 3rd), one for the best British player and a couple of small prizes for various achievements.

Conclusion: Very nice tournament in Guildford, the weather was very good. The organization did an excellent job throughout and the tournament finished on-time which allowed many travellers to catch the tightly scheduled train to the airport. It is a tournament suited for experienced, but also new Riichi players making it a perfect place to meet and socialize and it definitely leads to one wanting to participate in the next edition of one of UK's Riichi tournaments.