Observer report for White Rose Riichi 2026 (Riichi, MERS 3)

Observer: Ben Thomas (GER)

Date: 24–25 October 2026

Place: Leeds, GBR

Website or other source(s) of information:
Dedicated website was available around three months before the tournament, containing full information, with registration, and comprehensive information including location, schedule, registered players, and hotel and restaurant recommendations.

Participants: 72 players

Represented countries:

GBR	GER	ESP	FIN	FRA	HKG	IRL	USA
64	2	1	1	1	1	1	1

Playing schedule:
2 days, 8 rounds (4+4), each of 75 minutes plus one hand. Scramble format for all rounds, with no two players meeting at the same table more than once, and winds assigned so every player played from each wind seat exactly twice. Social play was also available on the Friday evening.

Location:
The Tetley, a large pub and former brewery in central Leeds. Play was in a dedicated function room, with the main bar still open to the public.

Equipment:
26mm tile sets and junk mats at all tables, with point stick distributions 1x10k, 2x5k, 9x1k, 1x500, 5x100. Some tiles were a little dirty, but otherwise equipment in good condition.

Refereeing:
George Twigg was head referee (non-playing), supported by playing referees John Duckworth and Tom Pearson.
The referees were able to handle all situations well, including a behaviour complaint which was handled without further incident.

Information and communication:
An optional beginner presentation was run on Zoom by the head referee a few days before the tournament, giving players new to tournaments a better idea of what to expect, and on recommended etiquette. This extra effort is commendable, but was worthwhile, as this is the first EMA tournament to be held in northern England, so this was many players' first tournament.

A seating schedule was published a few days before the tournament, and players were issued with their personal schedules at registration. There was no drawing of lots in presence of the players.

There was a timer projected onto the wall, but due to the room layout, it was not possible to see it clearly from all seats. The organisers were aware of this, and encouraged players to co-operate if needing a time check. A clear sound indicated the end of regular play after 75 minutes, with a vocal warning 15 minutes before this.

Scores were updated between rounds on the website, viewable on mobile devices and projected onto the wall.

Sessions:
Play sessions for the most part went smoothly, with play generally at good speed.

There were 20-minute breaks between hanchans, although as there were not many toilets, this was still rather tight, leading to some delays.

The room was rather crowded, with not much space between tables. Partly in acknowledgement of this, chatter was especially discouraged to avoid distracting other tables.

The general atmosphere at the playing tables was positive, friendly, and with fair play.

Catering:
All catering was included in the entry fee.

Water was available in the game room throughout the tournament, with tea, coffee and snacks available outside during the breaks. There were pastries in the morning break on Saturday, and breakfast rolls on the Sunday.
There was a lunch buffet on both days, accounting for the range of dietary requirements. On the Saturday there were corn ribs, falafel, calamari, chicken tikka bites, sliders, chips, and salad. On the Sunday, there were chicken (or vegetable) pies, with chips, vegetables, and mushy peas.

There was an incident on Sunday where some players took multiple rolls, meaning there were none left for those who were later finishing their first hanchan. Thankfully, the venue did make up some more so everyone could have one, though this did mean delaying the next round by a few minutes. To avoid a similar incident in the lunch break, the head referee advised everyone to take only one pie. One of the organisers also supervised the buffet area to make sure this was adhered to.

On the Sunday, each player received a token so they could get a free drink from the bar, during any of the breaks or at the end of the tournament.

The food was great quality and the Observer heard only positive feedback about it. The bacon rolls on the Sunday morning were especially popular.

Prizes:
The top three players each won a trophy, as well as one of a selection of local produce gifts (gin, chocolates, and soaps). There was also:

- a trophy for ‘Best Improvement’, going to the player with the largest positive difference between their results on day two and those on day one;
- a set of mahjong playing cards, for fourth place;
- a plush donkey as a ‘Saki award’ (score closest to zero);
- chocolates for the non-playing referees, substitute players, and EMA observer

A free drink was also on offer for anyone who scored a yakuman. (This was achieved by one player.)

Conclusion:
Good location, and a very well-run first tournament by this club. I commend the referee for going out of his way to make players welcome, and caring for their wellbeing.
Great work by all the organisers – I would happily go to a tournament here again, and recommend it to others.