



Irish Chess Union

Annual Report 2015-16





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1. Chairperson's Report – John McMorro

Dear Friends,

2015-16 was another successful year for the Irish Chess Union: our membership grew by an unprecedented level, we increased our levels of sponsorship and saw a large increase in the number of events run on this island. We formed new partnerships, strengthened our existing partnerships and, at all times, tried our hardest to work toward a better ICU. From a personal perspective, it was a great honour to be elected chairperson of the ICU and work in that position for the last year. I feel that we accomplished a lot of our goals but almost more importantly, we managed to paint a picture of the future of the ICU which I would like to share with you so that you can decide for yourselves if we have the right path in mind. After all, general meetings are a time to share, contrast and debate ideas with the best interest of our organisation in mind.

I believe one of our primary goals over the next 5 years should be to grow our membership to 1750 members with an intermediary goal of raising our membership to 1,300 by the end of 2018. We hope to achieve or surpass these targets by working on three separate but related fronts. Firstly, as pointed out by the membership officer in his piece below, the ICU has a high turnover of members (roughly 150-200 leave every year while we generally have 175-225 new members) so we know that there are many potential members out there who are for one reason or another choosing not to re-join. By offering more to our members – more events, better quality of events and greater benefits from becoming a member (which I'll talk more about) – I hope that we can retain a greater proportion of our members, year after year. Secondly, the development officer has a new program for introducing chess into the largest towns in the country which currently do not have any or much exposure to chess which he has spoken about in his report. The idea here is to grow new strongholds for chess and eventually introduce adult clubs in these areas to cater for these members as they progress through the ranks. Finally, we are all well aware that there are thousands of students playing chess every day who don't see a benefit to joining the ICU at this stage of their progression. It is up to us to show both the player, their coach and/or parent that there are big advantages to juniors to join compared to those who don't. What are the advantages?

- An ICU rating.
- You are considered for international selection (15% of our juniors represented Ireland this year).
- Invitational to ICU coaching sessions by some of the best coaches in the country.
- You receive a newsletter of upcoming events and reports on past events.
- Greater integration to the wider Irish chess community.

So, what fresh benefits can we offer members? ICU Blitz and Rapid ratings are one of our goals for 2017 and we feel this will add significant value to what our members receive from their annual subs. This step is not easy and will require a lot of work from our Webmaster and Rating Officer – however, I'm confident that we'll be able to roll out this functionality by the end of 2017. Where we hope blitz/rapid ratings will benefit the ICU in particular is in recruiting school children who primarily (or only) play fast paced games rather than classical longer formats.

The ICU raised around €18,000 in sponsorship this year and it is our goal to maintain this level at over €15,000 per year over the next few years to fulfil our goals – with that figure rising to €20,000 by 2020. It is tremendously hard to predict the overall level per year as it requires a lot of man-hours and more than a little luck but we will base our next budget assuming an investment of €10,000 which can be adjusted up or down based on our progress. Ideally, we would like to use these additional funds to offer better prize funds at events, devise more developmental projects and run more norm tournaments. Our target is to run 2 norm events in 2017 with the number of norm events ranging from 2-4 per year over the next 5 years with a major international event in Galway in 2020 (while they are the European capital of culture). We aim to start negotiations for that event in March as soon as their planning committee is assembled.

The ICU executive and Irish chess relies on the hard work and dedication of countless volunteers throughout the country and we can't thank them enough for their support. In 2016-17 we aim to expand that group of volunteers we rely on by assisting with the establishment of a University Chess Union and Connaught Chess Union (CCU) who we hope will deal with the day to day issues and growth of chess in Ireland universities and in Connaught. 2016 saw the successful return of the Intervarsities which were held in Cork in April and we hope that this can be used as a springboard for greater things in the coming years. We have several aims for the CCU in the coming years:

- Assist with the [2017 Irish Junior Championships](#) in Sligo.
- Assist with the 2018 National Club Championships which is scheduled to be held in Connaught.
- Set up a league similar to those run in Leinster and Munster.
- Take a leading role in running the 2020 event in Galway.

In an effort to boost numbers and improve the quality of our 2016-17 events, we have set dates and booked venues well in advance for everything except the Irish Championship which we hope to announce in the next 2 months. We will be seeking volunteers to work in conjunction with ICU executive members to run some of these events and take some of the burden off the event arbiter. Our goals and targets for each event over the next few years are:

- NCC: 16 teams in 2017, with 20 teams by 2020 which would see that event expand to 5 rounds.
- Irish Blitz/Rapid 2017: 50 in each event from 2017 onward.
- Irish Women's Championship 2016 & 2017: 14-16 entrants with that figure rising to 20 by 2020. This would see that event expand to 5 rounds.
- Irish Championship 2017: 30 entrants in main event with 150 others participating over the two weekends.

As referenced in the tournament officer's report, we were all disappointed with the numbers at this year's Irish Championships and our response has been to draw up a plan which addresses issues which we believe were contributing factors to the low turnout. We've also asked the majority of our top players for their input. Firstly, we aim to announce a date and venue approximately 8-10 months in advance so that players have a chance to build a 9 day event into

their schedule. Secondly, we aim to announce a sponsor(s) alongside that announcement as well as several top-tier players (if possible, if not then we will announce those players in early spring). Lastly, we intend to increase the guaranteed prize fund substantially from the offset as we expect to have the financial backing.

On the administrative side of things, we aim to produce fully audited books going forward and we believe the addition of Ronan Sweeney (an accountant) and Ciaran Mahon (a former auditor) should be of great assistance in this matter. The constitution committee who worked on several documents this year have also agreed to stay on in that role for 2016-17 and finalise their work on Constitution updates, Eligibility Criteria, Rules for discipline, standing orders/meeting rules as well as beginning work on refining the child protection document. In the future we would like to see these documents discussed in forums during tournaments so the details can be debated before they are put before a general meeting.

All of these objectives over the next few years have been broken out and assigned to individual, or groups of, committee members. I've given my committee many other goals for the upcoming months and years but I wanted to list the headline targets so that our membership can give us feedback, debate these matters or offer us their own ideas on how these goals would be best achieved. I am confident in all of those who have once again, or for the first time, raised their hand and offered to help the ICU for another year. I'd like to thank all my fellow committee members for their hard work throughout the year – they were tireless and surgical with the precision they took to every task and I'm very much looking forward to all we can achieve in the new season.

With Kindest Regards,

John McMorrow

John McMorrow
ICU Chairperson
<http://www.icu.ie/>



2. Secretary's Report – John Kelly

I took office on the 11th of October 2015 at the ICU AGM and since then there have been 7 executive committee meetings. Minutes and agendas for these meetings are available to all the executive committee. The meetings took place with Skype for those unable to physically attend the meeting. The Executive Committee members were John McMorrow (Chairman), Alex Baburin (Vice-chairman), John Kelly (secretary), Shane Sheedy (treasurer), Andrew Kildea (ratings), Kevin O'Connell (FIDE/ECU delegate), Rory Delaney (Development Officer), Carl Jackson (PRO), Hannah Lowry O'Reilly (Women's Officer), Desmond Beatty (Junior Officer), Colm O'Muireagain (Connaught delegate), John Cassidy (Membership Officer), Gerry Graham (Tournament Director) and Gordon Freeman (Leinster Delegate). I would like to thank Kevin O'Flaherty and Bryan Tobin for their assistance in getting accustomed to the role.

When asked if I was interested in being nominated for secretary, my personal situation was quite different from what it is now. I changed jobs early in 2016 which meant that the hours I could dedicate to the ICU diminished over time. However, I received excellent help from the Chairperson and Leinster delegate in particular who both performed some of the normal secretary roles related to items such as FIDE correspondence and compiling some meeting minutes on my behalf.

The meetings themselves ran very smoothly with no negative interactions between committee members. Changing work conditions meant that several members, myself included, were unable to attend some meetings but as the meeting agendas and notes on decisions made were produced quite quickly (with a summary presented in the ICU Newsletter), we did not feel too out of the loop. Although we initially spent some money on meeting rooms which had been the practice of past committees, it was decided that this wasn't money well spent and so our later meetings were conducted at events including Bunnratty, the Irish Junior Championships and the National Club Championships. The savings from this decision were added back to the budget.

In an effort to keep committee members focused on hitting targets and goals, the chairperson has created a google doc which lists all of the short and long-term goals for each committee member and who they can or should work with on these projects. The secretary's report last year alluded to discussions which fell outside the realm of ICU Executive meetings but still had a material impact on how to proceed on different issues – I believe the above document should make it easier to track these decisions as well as on-going projects in the future.

It is no secret that the ICU endures a high volume of abusive correspondence from a handful of members and it is a shame that they seem unwilling to change their ways and move beyond issues which occurred long ago. The executive in many cases tried to work with these individuals but faced insults and unfounded accusations as they did so which was disheartening.

Despite that, it was a pleasure to be a part of this committee during a very successful season on so many fronts. I was happy to see that members took to the [ICU Facebook page](#) I created but I believe some of the projects and plans devised by several members of this committee will really start to pay dividends in the second year of their stewardship and Irish chess will flourish over the years to come.

John Kelly

ICU Secretary

3. Treasurer's Report – Shane Sheedy

My goal at the start of the year had been to act as a driving force behind funding ICU events and projects in the future and for the most part, we were very successful. The overall level of investment was about €17,500. That figure does not tell the whole story as it doesn't mention the work that went in from individual ICU members to amass this figure and also doesn't talk about the stipulations placed on the money for how it should be used. In 2016/17, total income of the ICU was €99,121.61 while expenditures were €79,717.48 giving us a net income of €19,404.13. Full details can be seen [here](#).

Our largest investment in 2016 came from ZPR who earmarked roughly €6,000 for an 8 player, all play all, senior event. That [event](#) was held in August in Buswells Hotel and featured 8 of Ireland's top veteran players. Clocks were also donated to the ICU which were in turn donated to Drogheda chess club in recognition of their work in seniors chess over the years. I would like to thank Tim Harding for introducing the ICU to this investor and the Chairperson, John McMorrough, for doing most of the negotiating and organising as I was abroad at the time. The event was very well received and all the participants seemed to enjoy the event and also thanked Ivan Baburin and Gordon Freeman for their help in organising and running the event.

Our next largest investor is to be finalised but involves a €5,000 investment from New Ireland Assurance into junior chess. New Ireland Assurance has of course been involved in Irish chess for the past few years and we hope this investment will see them involved in Irish chess for years to come. Their desire is to see this money put toward the project proposed by the development officer, Rory Delaney, which will see hundreds of sets presented to areas of Ireland which have not been strongholds for chess in the past.

AwardsAndGifts.ie have agreed to sponsor the Irish Women's Championships, the National Club Championships and the Intervarsities for the next 3 years. The ICU executive annually spends about €1,000-€1,500 on trophies and so the deal was put in place that they would provide us with a tab of €1,250 per year (with a total value to the ICU of €3,750 over the full term of the agreement). They have also agreed to provide anyone within chess with a 10% discount on all future purchases. The work here was again largely done by the Chairperson who met with the owners but I would also like to thank Gordon Freeman for coming up with the proposal.

The ICU had 2 other event sponsors over the year including Espion (who sponsored the Irish Junior Championships with an investment of €1,000 which ensured the event broke even) and Easystream (who sponsored the Irish Blitz and Rapidplay Championships with an investment of €750 and prizes which brought the overall value over €1,000). These sponsors could not have been found without Rory and Killian Delaney. Finally, Wholesale Chess granted us a 250 pound tab in exchange for an ad on our site which was used to buy equipment for new clubs.

I believe the potential is there for the ICU to continue to blossom in 2017 although it must be remembered that these types of agreements in large part come down to some luck as well as hard work and persistence. They are also heavily dependent on the economy which is why we felt it was important to seek longterm deals such as our agreement with Awardsandgifts.ie. It has been a pleasure to work on this committee which always functioned harmoniously.

4. Rating Officer's Report – Andrew Kildea

In the last year there have been 204 events rated on the ICU Rating system. There were 232 new rating ids created with 95 of those being for members under the age of 21. The ICU Rating system saw an increase of 6040 rating points acquired through the rating of foreign events on the Irish system. This is a significant increase of 1758 rating points gain over the same period last year. This mainly derives from the more frequent and larger participation of Irish players in international events combined with the now mandatory rating of all selection based internationals.

36 events were FIDE Rated which saw the creation of 88 new FIDE IDs. Ireland has 346 active rated players on the FIDE system of which 77 are under the age of 21, an increase of 71 active players from last years list.

On the FIDE Countries Ranking List, Ireland is ranked 65th with a rating average of 2384 based on our top players average rating and has 32 titled players.

This year saw the introduction of the monthly published ratings list. The lists are published at the start of each month to include all events completed on or before the last day of the preceding month. The lists can be considered as being valid for entry and pairing for the month in which they are published and I would strongly recommend that all events use the most up to date published list for pairing purposes. Through the usage of these lists, ranking and pairing for events gain a significant level of accuracy and in assigning players to correct grading bands. To maintain the accuracy of these lists there will be a requirement to register all events for rating prior to those events taking place and the submission of the rating report in a timely manner there after. This will ensure that all events are rated and included for publication on the appropriate list. The online event entry system is now directly tied to the monthly published ratings lists. This facilitates the setting of restrictive rating bands tailored for event entry.

The coming year will see the introduction of a new Rapid and Blitz rating system. The new system will take its start point from the current Standard system allowing for a direct transposition of ratings and thus will allow for the immediate use of these ratings in blitz and rapid events.

It is intended to look closely at the introduction of an age related starting rating for first time junior players to aid and facilitate the rating of events run solely for younger age categories. Currently many junior events do not qualify for rating due to the technical limitations of the provisional rating calculations. This would see a significant increase in the number of rated players and would facilitate a provisional rating being acquired at an earlier age with the possibility of it being introduced at school level also.

The introduction of new provisional IDs will ensure that all players' ratings are tracked from their initial participation in a rated event.

This was a very productive year and I would like to thank in particular, Jonathan O'Connor for all his work implementing the changes on the sites. It was a pleasure to work as part of this executive and I look forward to another productive year.

Andrew Kildea

ICU Rating Officer

5. Tournament Officer's Report – Gerry Graham

The Irish Chess weekend tournament circuit still proves to be a great attraction; more than half of our registered players have played in one weekend event or another during the season just gone. Our weekend circuit is still proving a draw for many players from abroad also, as Russian GM Oleg Korneev played the inaugural Enniscorthy Chess Congress in January. Kilkenny had an almost record entry for their 39th Congress and the upcoming running of the event, is being sponsored by Blackthorne Transport and is probably going to be their best ever. Bunratty also had over 300 players for only the 4th time in its much shorter history but it had over 50 players from outside Ireland playing. This year also saw the welcome return of the Galway Congress, switched to a new time in April as well as the Cork Congress Masters being won by Stephen Jessel, a sign of further success to come in July?

The Irish Junior Chess Championship was a great success, this year held in Dublin and run mainly by Kevin Burke from St. Benildus. It featured live boards for the first time and was very well supported. I'm sure our Junior Officer's report will feature more news of this event.

There were 10 teams playing in this year's NCC, held in Dublin, and both Gonzaga and Trinity saw off strong opposition to claim the two coveted places in this year's European Club Cup. However, for the first time, a third ECC place was on offer and this was claimed by Bray who finished third. All three teams will travel to Novi Sad, Serbia in November.

The Irish Championship was held in University College Dublin and, unfortunately, the numbers entering was down on the expected entry. It was, none the less, extremely well fought and the deserved winner was Stephen Jessel with Colm Daly in 2nd place. The intermediate champion was Donatas Jocius while the Junior Champion was Robert McLoughlin. The open weekender was won by Ioana Gelip.

The Irish Women's Championship was held in Dublin in February but this was the delayed 2015 event, and was won by Monika Gedvilaite. The 2016 event will be held from the 15th to 16th October in Dublin.

I'd like to thank the other members of this year's ICU executive for all their help I received during the past year, especially the chairman, John McMorrow. Far too much work fell to John this season but he proved himself more than capable to handle to job. He'll have my full support for the coming election, and I hope he'll have yours too.

I will not be standing for re-election as tournament director and I'd like to thank all those who supported me in this role. I believe that Ivan Baburin will be standing as tournament director at the forth-coming AGM. Ivan is a National Arbiter with all the qualifications for the title of FIDE arbiter except the exam, which he's waiting to complete. He has gained a lot of experience in the last few years and I have every confidence that he'll make an excellent T.D.

Upcoming 2016-17 Events:

[Irish Blitz/Rapid Championships 2016](#), [Irish Women's Championship 2016](#), [NCC 2017](#)

6. Junior Officer's Report – Desmond Beatty

Membership and Participation 2015/16

It is estimated that between 1,000-3,000 juniors engaged with chess organisers in 2015/16 learning chess and/or playing unrated / rapid type tournaments. Thanks and recognition is due to the many schools programs and junior clubs (or clubs with strong junior sections) and especially to all the volunteers and coaches across the country who make this happen, often quietly and independently. They represent a key foundation on which the future of chess in Ireland rests. Work is ongoing to identify all of these and determine ways to encourage and support them.

As this chess year 2015/16 comes to a close...

There are 894 (2015=*767) "active" junior (U21) members on the ICU membership database 95 (*80) joined the ICU this year.

There are 279 (2015=*232) on the ICU ratings list with 103 (*107) with no or provisional ratings 176 (*125) have full ratings (indicating the significant increase (>40%) in the number who have transitioned into classic chess).

Many (~18) juniors in Armstrong and Munster Div 1 leagues.

7 juniors played in the 2016 Irish Championships (in a field of 16)

The numbers for girls are 96 (*93) "Active", 30 (*26) rated (10 provisional, 20 full), 1 (*0) in the Irish Championships.

So overall there has been significant growth in classic chess participation by juniors.

While numbers entering and playing untimed, blitz and rapid levels chess are not readily measured, anecdotal evidence combined with the above metrics suggest growth there too. It is hoped that the proposed new provisional membership category will help here.

Notable individual achievements

- Conor O'Donnell FM (17), Open Olympiad team, member of winning [Armstrong team](#), Irish U19 champion.
- Tom O'Gorman (13), board 1 winning Glorney team.
- Diana Mirza WCM (16), Women's Olympiad team , Irish U16 champion
- Alice O'Gorman (16), Women's Olympiad team
- Admira Kecskemeti (9), [7th place U10 Girls European Youth Championships](#)
- Alex Byrne (13), board 1 and 4.5/5 board prize on winning Robinson team

There were many other fine achievements by juniors of all ages and stages this year – too many to list here but well done to all.

Notable team sustained successes

- Ireland retained the Glorney Cup



- Ireland retained the Robinson Cup



- Gonzaga retained the Millfield International Schools title.
- Castlebar retained the Community Games U16



- Malahide retained the Community Games U13



Glorney Gilbert International

Hosted by the English Chess Federation,

Glorney Cup (U18 Open): Winners by a point ahead of France to retain the trophy won last year in Enfield.

All 5 players are eligible for next year with another strong panel moving up from U14.

The English A-team players were ranked 28th-61st (2015 = 38th - 50th) in ECF grading.

We might expect a stronger selection next year as England look to improve on their 3rd place finish.

Gilbert Cup (U18 Girls): Second to runaway winners England, the Gilbert Team drew with them in the final match. While one of the three will be overage next year, the Gilbert squad continues to develop and grow in strength and numbers with the top five are available for at least another 2 years.

Robinson Cup (U14 Open): Winners again to retain from 2015.

1 was from the 2015 Glorney winning team, 5 were Stokes veterans.

3 of the 6 will be available again next year to be joined by 5 stokes veterans moving up into what is already looking like a strong squad including 1 girl.

Stokes Cup (U12 Open) : 3rd place behind France and England and 2 Stokes veterans remain under 12 next year.



While there are 6 players from around 1000 upward, squad development will be key to competing next year.

Thanks due to many including the coaches, parents and volunteers.

See www.gloneycupchess.org and various reports on the ICU website for more.

International competition

With 31 (*40) entries across the 7 target events, 2014/15 was another strong year for international participation, despite some challenging event timings and locations.

- [World Youth U16 Olympiad 2016, Poprad, Slovakia: Team of 5 players](#)
- World Junior U20 CC 2015, India – 0 players
- World Youth CC 2015 (U14-U18), Khanty-Mansisk, Russia – 4 players
- World Cadet CC 2016 (U8-U12), Batumi, Georgia – 2 players
- [European Youth CC \(U8-U18\) 2016, Prague, Czeckia – 12 players](#)
- [ECU EUYCC \(U8-U14\) 2016, Kouty, Czech Republic – 4 players](#)
- [Jugendschach EUYCC \(U8-U14\) 2015, Mureck, Austria – 4 players](#)

Our juniors travelled to many other international events including those on the neighbouring island, Romania, Spain, Germany and Serbia.

National competition

[Irish Junior Championships](#) hosted by St. Benildus CC. in April saw 209 participate over the weekend with 152 (*161), playing the Irish Junior Championships proper and a further 29 juniors and 28 adults in the Sunday festival. The 2017 event will be hosted by the Ross CC in Sligo. The event was sponsored by Espion with trophies supported by Awards and Gifts.

Irish provincial events - January saw the 130 juniors playing in the [Leinster Junior Championships](#) with the [2016 Munster Junior Championships](#) scheduled for September.



Junior Squad Development

The focus for 2015-16 was junior squad training program, building on the work done in recent years. 30 hours of group training was delivered between March and June with 38 juniors benefiting from some or all of these sessions. Thanks to the generosity of the Stephens Green Hibernian Club and contributions from parents, this was delivered cost neutral to the ICU.

Special thanks to David Fitzsimons FM and Brendan Buckley for all their work from March, up to and including the Glorney as well to Ioana Gelip for additional coaching for the Gilbert Team around the event itself.



Future Developments

Build on the successes of the Glorney Gilbert in 2015 and '16 by further growth and development of the junior squad through coaching, tournament play and international competition.

Plans for 2016/17 include:

- Coaching delivery beyond centralised group coaching – commencing with targeted sessions in the Autumn 2016.
- Squad goal setting – eg retain Glorney, Robinson, win Stokes and Gilbert.
- Squad member goal setting and general individual development plans.



Grow, develop and support the wide network of grassroots pre-classic chess for novices.

Plans for 2016/17 include:

- Provisional Membership – until a full rating is achieved
- Support for junior clubs, schools and supporting organisations
- Further develop coaching and support resources also under consideration
- Junior grading program - a “descriptive” pre-rating system

Develop structures and policy with the executive, junior and selection committees including

- Junior Committee – build on the informal work in 2015-16 with the provincial Junior Officers
- Encourage more volunteers across the range of activities/structures required to support and grow junior chess in Ireland – please contact juniors@icu.ie to volunteer.

THANKS

It has been a personal privilege to be a part of what has been another successful year for junior chess in Ireland. Thanks and recognition goes to such a wide range of people, impossible to list individually but all worthy of mention.

To ICU Patron, President Michael D. Higgins for his ongoing support of Irish Chess. To the ICU executive and, especially, ICU Chairman, John McMorrow.

To the junior selection committees and the provincial junior officers, the coaches, the organisers, the parents and to all of those who have volunteered in ways large and small, seen and unseen, throughout the year.

To the wider ICU membership for their welcome and encouragement to juniors across the board.

Finally, to the juniors themselves – you are the future of Irish chess and a joy to work with. Thank you for enjoying and for making the most of the opportunities offered to you in chess by all those mentioned above – that is the best way that you thank them!

Desmond Beatty
Junior Officer 2014-16
Irish Chess Union



7. Development Officer's Report– Rory Delaney

The majority of the year has been spent in getting up to speed to with the workings of the Executive and concentrating on a few small key areas which will help improve chess in Ireland.

Clubs

Over the past season I have concentrated on improving the resources available to those interested in setting up new clubs. An example of some of the new clubs are GMIT Castlebar, [UCD](#) & a shortly a new junior club in Killarney which is expected to begin in September.

Work is ongoing to publish a club resource pack that will contain information on the requirements for setting up a chess club, from the administrative steps such as a draft constitution, child protection policies, setting up a bank account and hiring a venue to the practical resources such as teaching materials and equipment. It is expected the first draft will be available by the end of October.

Universities

One of the successes of this year was the organisation of the [Intervarsities by UCC Chess Club](#). This brings together the players representing various third-level clubs. Supporting clubs in third-level institutions is important in order to help keep junior players maintain their interest in chess. We hope to re-establish the Irish Universities Chess Association to further develop third-level chess in Ireland.



Sponsorship

I was able to secure sponsorship for the [Irish Junior Championships](#) hosted by St Benildus Chess Club. I would like to thank [Espion](#) for their generous sponsorship of the event. We were also

able to work with Wholesalechess.co.uk who provided us with sponsorship so that we can provide equipment to new clubs.

Plan for 2016/17:

Irish Open

We hope to run the Irish Open again by either the end of this year or the first half of 2017.

Norm Tournament

One of the goals for 2017 will be to host at least one tournament with norm possibilities. It is vital that we provide opportunities for players to gain norms in Ireland rather than having to travel outside in the hope of gaining an IM or even GM title.

Junior Club Pilot Scheme

One of the plans that was developed over the last few months was the establishment of a pilot scheme in 5 towns across Ireland where there is currently little or no chess activity. This scheme would involve supporting 5 primary schools in each selected area with equipment, coaching materials and general support to run after-school clubs. The end aim will be to have sufficient interest to establish a chess club in the town that would have a sustainable number of players to grow and develop. We have a sponsor lined up to support this initiative but it would be dependent on the sponsorship deal being finalised.

Overall it has been a successful year but I believe that we as a committee will be in a stronger position to achieve more over the coming season. If anyone has any ideas that they think will benefit chess in Ireland or if they are interested in setting up a club then please get in touch, development@icu.ie.



8. FIDE & ECU Delegate's Report– Kevin O'Connell

In addition to the usual miscellaneous correspondence (questions relating to regulations, player transfer etc.) there were the two big AGMs in Baku in September (both ECU & FIDE).

The two AGMs were draining. It should be noted that, contrary to rumour, there is no danger of FIDE going bankrupt. There are several 'normal' things of some importance that I will cover here, but I will start with title news, finances, Danailov and the Bulgarian Chess Federation.

Ruth Redmond's FA (FIDE Arbiter) title was confirmed.

FIDE Finances

Yes, they were in a parlous state, with reserves severely depleted. The Treasurer took a chain saw to the spending by Commissions, slashing 50% from almost all 2016 budgets during the first half of the year and then in Baku chopping a further 30% (incremental) from the 2017 budgets. Very few budget areas saw any increase for 2017 but ironically 'Treasurer's Expenses' (almost 30%+ - €35,000 to €45,000) was one of those few.

It is expected that by the end of this year, FIDE's reserves will have been substantially restored (in the range €500,000 - €900,000). Incidentally, the ECU's finances are in rude health.



Danailov & Bulgarian Chess Federation

The ECU GA (10 September) expelled the Bulgarian Chess Federation from the ECU according to article 7(b) of ECU statutes. The vote was 37-11 (+3 abstentions/invalid votes). BCF will have to

apply to rejoin. This was consequent to the ongoing investigations into the creation of "ECU LLC (Delaware)", associated bank accounts, 'ECU' invoices to BCF and so on - see annexes 6-7 of 2016 ECU GA Agenda (<http://www.europechess.org/agenda-of-ecu-general-assembly-2016/>).

The FIDE Ethics Commission suspended Silvio Danailov, former ECU President and President of Bulgarian Chess Federation for 18 months for violating clause 2.2.3 of the Code of Ethics to a serious degree for the case 13/2014.

The FIDE Ethics Commission (case 4/2015 – go to www.fide.com and click on the Ethics Commission link on the right-hand side of the page for details of this and others) recommended the suspension of the Bulgarian Chess Federation as a member of FIDE. This was approved by the General Assembly. Bulgarian players should not be affected by this as they can continue to play (under the FIDE or ECU flag) in events. The FIDE exclusion is temporary and will come into effect in one month if BCF does not comply with the decision of the FIDE Ethics Commission (15 June 2016) and will remain so excluded until such compliance has taken place.

Arbiters

Aside from Ruth's title, there were several other items of interest mentioned.

The Arbiters web site (arbiters.fide.com) is developing apace. For example, click on the Seminars link (left-hand side of main page) to reveal a dropdown list which includes 'Lectures' which can be used to refresh your knowledge or to prepare for a seminar. Recordings of courses are available at <http://arbiters.seminars.fide.com/> (see the item dated 01 August on the main page – arbiters.fide.com – for explanation of how to use this).

Anti-cheating lectures are available online as is a Guideline document.

The training of National Arbiters is to be taken under the wing of the FIDE Arbiters' Commission. Details to be finalized, but will be based on 6 hours of recorded video training.

Changes to Laws of Chess

There are many, mostly small changes that will come into force on July 1st 2017. Please see the attached document.

Chess in Schools

While not directly tied to being Delegate, as Chairman of FIDE's Chess in Schools Commission, I have attended several chess & education conferences, not least that which was hosted by the EU in Brussels in February. That was organized by the ECU and it is hoped that the connections made there will prove fruitful for the future development of chess in schools in those EU countries which do not currently have a programme in place.

Kevin O'Connell

Le Grand Mas, 12330 Mouret, France (2016.09.20)

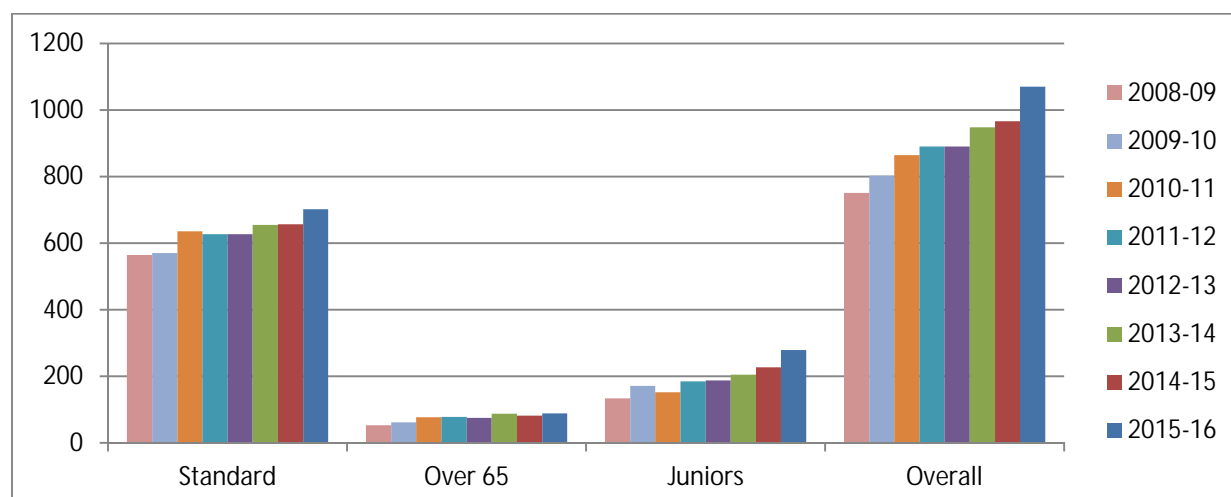
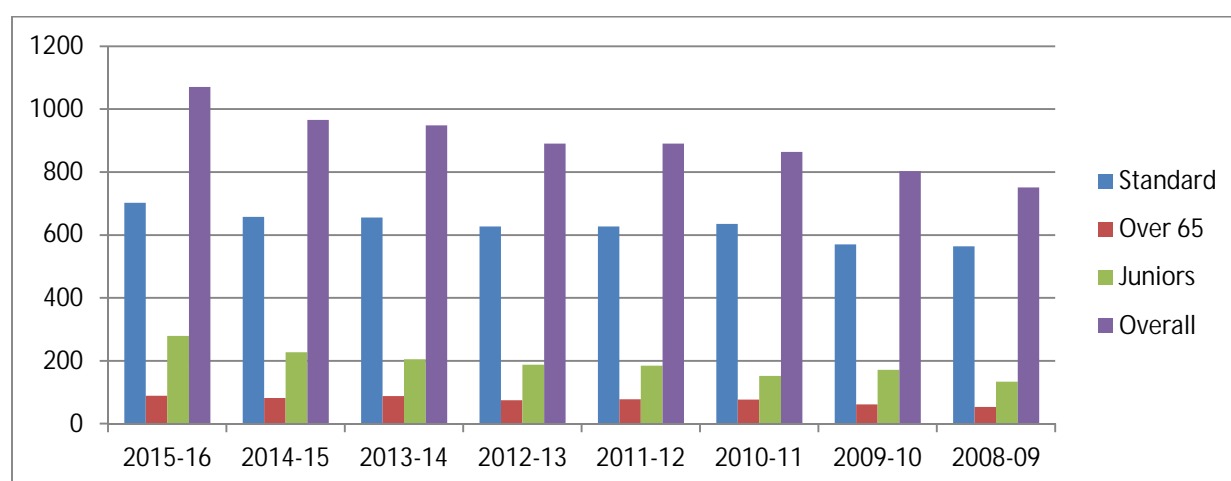
9. Membership Officer's Report – John Cassidy

It was a great year for the membership numbers of the ICU with a growth rate that outstripped any previous year on record at 10.75%. Our paid membership numbers were up from 966 to 1070 with an additional 19 lifetime members.

We attracted 221 new members which compares to 183 new members in 2014-15. Of those 183 members who joined for the first time in 2014-15, 82 (45%) did not re-join in 2015-16. In total, 201 2014-15 members did not re-join the ICU in 2015-16 which shows that we still have a lot of work to do in retaining our members – while at the same time seeking out new members.

Of the 221 new members, 116 were new junior members (around 52%), 6 were new senior members (around 3%), while 99 were standard/overseas/unemployed new members (around 45%). The ICU also welcomed 66 returning members (who had not been members in 2014-15).

These numbers have all been growing for seven years with an overall growth rate of 42.5% in that time span. We've broken down that figure further to show the respective growth rates at the various levels. The most striking growth has been in our junior membership with an overall increase of 108% - increasing from 134 to 279. However, there have also been strong growth rates in both our senior numbers (68% - from 53 to 89) and our standard/unemployed/overseas numbers (24.5% - from 564 to 702). These numbers are represented in the graph below:



10. Public Relation Officer's Report – Carl Jackson

The reach of the ICU extended this year with the creation of a Facebook page and a Newsletter. It is hoped that these tools will be used for years to come by executives to get the word out about events. At the time of writing, the [ICU Facebook page](#) has over 700 subscribers with a reach of over 2,000 people while our [newsletter](#) has over 200 subscribers. As well as using these mediums of communication, we also broadened the base of events which are reported on with articles on our teams (Adare and Gonzaga) traveling to the ECC as well as league reports which seemed generally well received. I'd like to thank those who helped with the reporting on the leagues including Kevin Burke, Eugene Donoghue, Shane Sheedy, Andy Keenan, Gerry Smith, Rory Quinn and Robert Lavery. The provincial leagues feature roughly 80% of all ICU members and so it was felt that this was something that should be given pride of place on the ICU site as so many members contribute to its running and enjoy the competition year after year.

As well as issuing these new reports, the ICU issued over 300 news updates to keep members up to date on the latest goings-on within Irish Chess. The ICU committee's communications were enhanced by several updates to the ICU site which were thanks to the web-team of Desmond Beatty and Jonathan O'Connor. Desmond, his helpers and many of the juniors themselves were also heavily involved in issuing reports on junior events throughout the year including the [Irish Junior Championships](#), the [World Youth U16 Chess Olympiad](#), the [JUEYCC 2016](#), and of course the [Glorney Gilbert International 2016](#) as well as many others.

With my first season on the ICU committee under my belt, I feel that year 2 will give me a chance to expand my role and offer more to the ICU. I look forward to the new season and with it, a new set of responsibilities and goals. As well as providing league reports again this year, I wish to branch out while also continuing to build a better public image of Irish Chess and the ICU. Part of creating a better public image is improving the product we are already working with and using the resources we have.

I aim to add recruitment to my ICU portfolio in year 2 – specifically in a few key areas:

- Recruitment for subcommittees, ICU related bodies and volunteers to help with tournament organisation, member mobilisation (to boost event attendances) and the vast amount of junior work.
- NCC – team events are notoriously hard to plan and I hope to boost the overall turnout this year and in years to come by liaising with club captains and individual members.
- Irish Championships – the chairperson has already begun the task of planning for next year's event and has discussed proposals and potential changes with many of our top players. I aim to assist with this task and keep a continued dialogue open with these players to see what they would like now and in the future from Ireland's premier event.

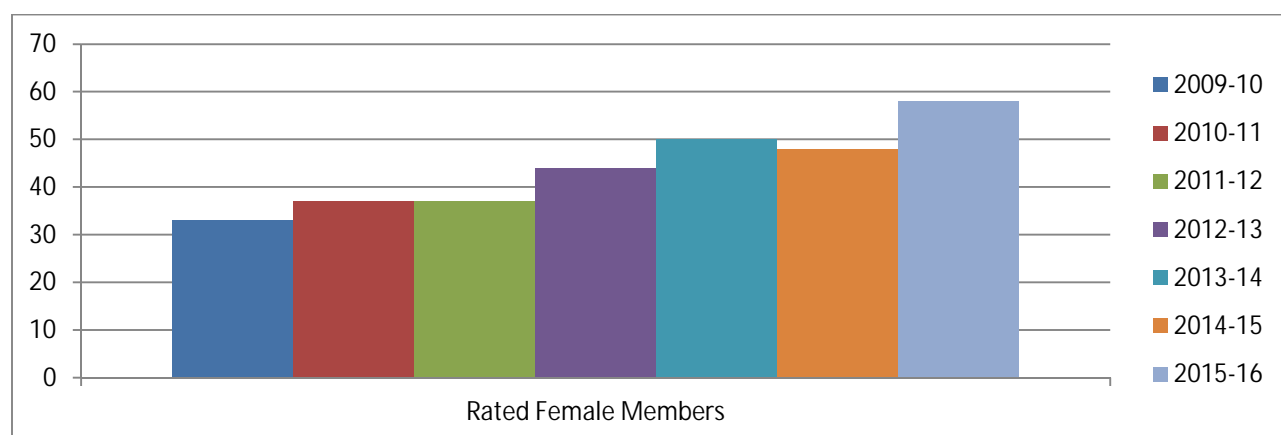
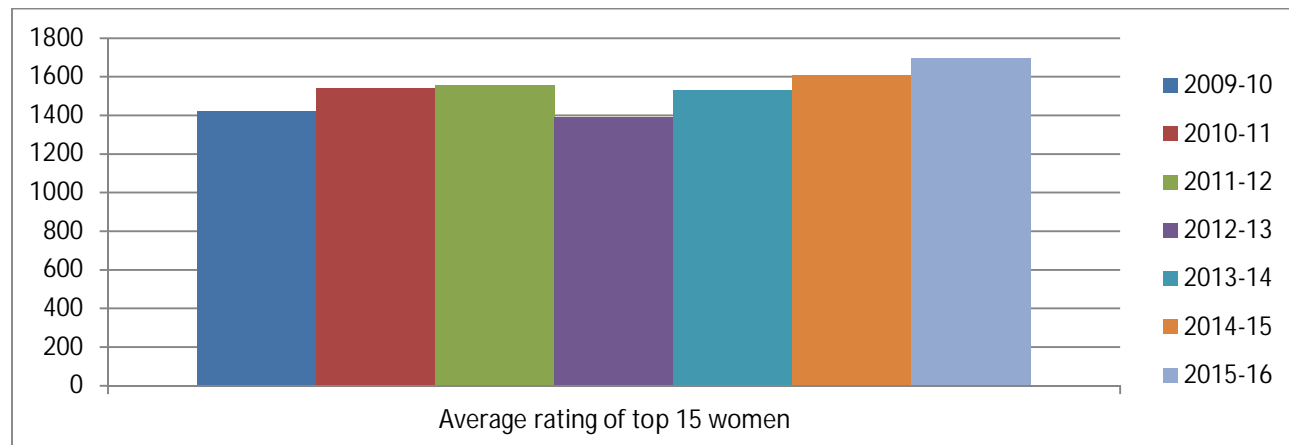
Long term, our goal is to have every Irish chess event feature in local news to some extent and for ICU run events to receive national coverage either in promotion in advance or a report following the event. Finally we aim to widely advertise the ICU and ICU events to primary, secondary and university students which we hope will form the basis for our membership spike in years to come.

11. Women Officer's Report – Hannah Lowry O'Reilly

In terms of both strength and depth, Irish women's chess is certainly going in the right direction. Over the past four years we have seen the average of the top 15 female players rocket up from 1388 to 1696, while the number of rated female members has also risen substantially from 33 in 2010 to 58 in 2016 (a 75% increase).

The Irish Women's Championship was won by Monika Gedvilaite who narrowly defeated Diana Mirza in the final round. Mercedes Plaza Reino had a terrific tournament; notably drawing with Monika on her way to finishing joint second alongside Diana. The 11 entries was a record for an Irish only women's championship and we hope this is a sign of things to come rather than a peak. The event was supported by two of the ICU's partners, AwardsandGifts.ie and WholesaleChess.co.uk. In a very positive development, AwardsAndGifts.ie agreed to sponsor the event for a further two years including the upcoming event in October. I'd like to thank Gordon Freeman and John McMorrow for helping to find us that long-term sponsor which should help women's chess for years to come.

It was another good year for the Irish Gilbert team who performed extremely well and drew with the overall champions, England, who retained the cup. That team was made up of Alice O'Gorman, Mercedes Plaza Reino and Anastasija Manojlovic. Many of our top players should be eligible for the Gilbert team again in 2017 and I've every hope that they'll go one step better in 2017! I'm sure the girls (and ladies of the Olympiad team) would like to thank Ioana Gelip for her coaching and pep talks – she has been a great addition to our team and hopefully she'll continue in that role in the future.



12. Web Team Report

Usage

The ICU site had 5,000,000 hits throughout the year. The main spikes came in July for the Irish championships and in November, possibly due to Kilkenny. 490 members logged in to the system during the year, with about 100 members logging in each month.

Content

While raw counts are not an indicator of quality, the following indicates significant increase in content for members via website.

	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
News Items	~270	~135	~170	~140
Articles	~130	~30	~80	~26
Photos	265	70	225	115

Many thanks to all content contributors.

“Fixed” Content

While most content is editable via the database by operational users – Editors, Treasurer, etc, there remains some content that is only changeable via coding. Examples updated this year:

- ICU Constitution (per Oct 2015 EGM)
- Eligibility Criteria for Adult Events (per Oct 2015 EGM)
- NCC Rules (per Oct 2015 EGM)
- Champions photos
- Junior Clubs listing

It is hoped to develop enhancements to “delegate” some or all of these to relevant “user roles”.

Functional Enhancements

There were significant enhancements, large and small, made in 2015/16 including:

- Home Page Improvements
- Tournament Entry Service including payment and entry listings
- Forgotten Password automated
- Link to new ICU Facebook page
- Game viewer
- Improved usage statistics tracking
- "Like" button on News items and Articles on icu.ie
- Results ticker

- Partner/sponsor support
- Monthly published ratings lists on ratings.icu.ie
- "high tide" ranking for juniors per Junior Selection 2016 - High Tide Ratings
- Improved ratings reports for tournament organisers
- A number of minor bug fixes.

While exchange of ideas and commentary on social media may encourage interested parties in formulating ideas, the channel for comment or proposing changes or enhancements is via email to webmaster@icu.ie.

Volunteers sought

Finally, the ICU thanks those who have volunteered contributions to date. The ICU is looking to the membership for volunteers as follows:

- Content contributors - eg articles, news items, results (eg league matches), photos, videos, etc.
- Site operations support
- A UI/X designer

If you would like to volunteer or would like to recommend someone, please email webmaster@icu.ie.

Plans for next season

- Finish the support for entry taking and payments for tournament organisers. Stripe will allow the ICU website to accept payments for entry fees on behalf of tournament organisers with the money going straight to the organisers account instead of to the ICU account.
- The ICU constitution, appendix A, and various other rules and regulations are updated by making changes to the website code. I plan to allow the secretary to update these directly. However, the system should show the members, when and who made a change to these documents, why they made the change, and what the change was.
- Introduction of rapid and blitz ratings. This is harder than I thought, and requires a lot of code changes on the ratings site.

Thanks

I'd like to thank Desmond Beatty for his very useful project management advice and Andrew Kildea for his advice and help during the year.

13. 2015-16 Officers and Committees

Officer	Name
Chairperson	John McMorrow
Vice Chairperson	Alexander Baburin
Secretary	John C. Kelly
Treasurer	Shane Sheedy
Rating Officer	Andrew Kildea
Tournament Officer	Gerry Graham
Junior Officer	Desmond Beatty
Development Officer	Rory Delaney
FIDE & ECU Delegate	Kevin J. O'Connell
Membership Officer	John Cassidy
Public Relations Officer	Carl Jackson
Women's Officer	Hannah Lowry-O'Reilly
Connaught Delegate	Colm O'Muireagain
Leinster Delegate	Gordon Freeman
Arbitration Officer*	Ted Jennings
Selection Committee Chairperson*	Daniel Lynch
Webmaster*	Jonathan O'Connor

Constitution Committee
Ted Jennings
Sam Collins
Charlie Talbot

Funding Committee
Shane Sheedy
Killian Delaney
Gary O'Grady

Web Committee
Jonathan O'Connor
Desmond Beatty

Communication's Committee
Carl Jackson
John McMorrow
Rory Delaney

Women's Committee
Hannah Lowry-O'Reilly
Gearoidin Ui Laighleis

14. ICU Sponsors

