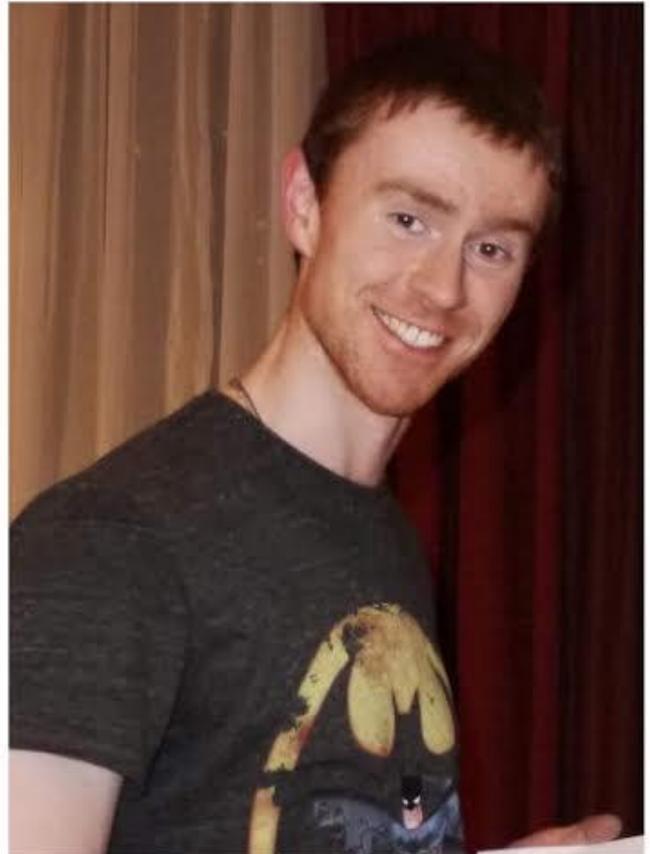




# Irish Chess Union Annual Report 2017-18



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## 1. Chairperson's Report – John McMorrow

Dear Friends,

2017-18 was a hugely successful year for the Irish Chess Union: we ran two events which produced GM norms, ran the largest ever Irish Championships with record numbers in all events bar one, celebrated our eighth International Master, David Fitzsimons and saw a large increase in the number of events run on this island. In all, we ran five norm events with an IM norm made in the Irish Championship again, Sam Collins and Alex Lopez making GM norms, and David Murray, Conor O'Donnell, and Stephen Jessel making IM Norms. Finally, we added 40+, 50+ and 65+ championships to the roster of events we run each year and ran 8 new blitz events. It continues to be a great honour to be chairperson of the ICU and work with so many committed people who all want the best for Irish Chess.

However, before I go on, I would like to mention three items. Firstly, I would advise all members to take note of the treasurer's report where there were some unexpected expenditures that our secretary goes into more detail on. We also used some of the ICU's reserves to invest in equipment that DGT were offering at lower prices than usual in the hope that clubs, organisers and members can avail of this discount for years to come. Secondly, the ICU learned yesterday that we had lost one of the legends of Irish chess in FM Philip Short. Philip made time for everyone, was incredibly friendly and was a fierce competitor with his 5 Irish titles spanning 4 decades. He will be sorely missed and we extend our deepest sympathies to this family and friends.



Lastly, as of today, the ICU is proud to announce that the UCU will be re-affiliating with us in time for the upcoming season and have released [a joint-statement](#) as such. This deserves more attention than I can give it in a short paragraph but suffice is to say is that we are delighted and look forward to even closer ties with the UCU going forward. The UCU president, Ross Harris, and I have many shared goals and we intend to hit the ground running with more ICU and FIDE rated events in Ulster from 2018-19. We have other provisional plans, which we will detail at a later stage, but for now we will just say that we are all excited about the possibilities.

Last year in my report, I mentioned that we would be trying some new ideas for the Irish Championships and from a raw numbers perspective; this appears to have been a success. Numbers in the championship itself grew from 16 (or 14 last time it was held in Dublin) to 36 and the field allowed for IM norms once again with one obtained by David Murray, while the event was won by IM Alex Lopez. The supporting events also grew with the Open weekender growing from 47 (or 46 last time it was in Dublin) to 64 entrants, and the first weekender growing from 69 entrants (or 57 last time it was in Dublin) to 98. We were also happy with the turnout for the weekday event (24 – compared to 14 and 16 for previous AM events) and the blitz events (48 in each). All told, there were 318 entrants across the 10 days, which is, by far and away, the largest Irish. On a personal note, it was great to have the support of a team of arbiters including Ivan Baburin, Tim Harding, Neal Kirby, Desmond Beatty and Luke Scott – which meant I could focus more on organising; I'm very grateful to each.

Norm events have been a big focus of ours over the past two years and this year we have run 6 events where norms are achievable. The first of these were a set at the memorial event for the late ICU Chairperson, Philip Hogarty, who passed away 10 years ago this year. This festival of chess also included our first Irish 50+/65+ event, which was extremely popular and will be repeated in 2019. Two norms were achieved, both in the GM Norm section, with Sam Collins making his third GM norm, and Stephen Jessel making an IM norm. The next set of norm events were held over Easter alongside a 40+ event and 3 closed all-play-all events. At these events, Alex Lopez scored his first GM norm, while Suran Poghosyan and Conor O'Donnell made IM norms. Finally for 2018, we had the Irish Championship as already mentioned and the IM norm league which is ongoing with several IM-norm seekers placed well after a few rounds.

Our goals and targets for each event over the next few years are:

- NCC (Dublin): 16 teams in 2018, which may see that event expand to 5 rounds.
- Irish Blitz/Rapid 2018: 60 in each event from 2018 onward.
- Irish Women's Championship 2018: 16 entrants with that figure rising to 20 by 2020.
- Irish Championship 2019: 40 entrants in main event with 300 in supporting events.
- Monthly blitz events: at least 40 per event.
- Irish 50+/65+ Championship: 40 entrants per year.

This year presented new challenges for the ICU committee and I. Although I have been in my position for 3 years, it is still a first for me to be involved in FIDE Presidential elections and with that comes greater opportunities to present the Irish Agenda to all 3 candidates. What do I think the ICU would want in a FIDE president? Primarily, we all want a leader and team who can put the mess of the past behind us. FIDE's situation can never be allowed to descend to this

precipice again where our world body finds itself without a bank account, failing to attract major sponsors and garnering the majority of its resources from federations. The de facto incumbent has been in his position as deputy President for about 30 years and thereby overseen much of this descent. More promisingly, the deputy on his ticket is Malcolm Pein – whose body of work speaks for itself. The other candidates are running on a campaign of change and reform and I'll highlight a few areas which aligned with the thoughts of our committee:

- Restore the integrity of FIDE and raise corporate sponsorship.
- Cut “taxes” on federations.
- Terminate the Agon agreement (Short: immediately, Dvorkovich: following review after the world championship match).

Speaking personally, my initial preference was for Georgios Makropoulos – the current deputy. This was before Kirsan Ilyumzhinov pulled out of the race and Arkady Dvorkovich joined the race – but my intention to vote for “Makro” lingered beyond that point. On July 25th, Nigel Short visited Ireland and presented his case to the ICU committee. Nigel made a very good case for his campaign and simultaneously, did a very good job of pointing out what he believed to be failings of the Makro ticket. He repeated some allegations which have been reported online but what stuck with me was this idea that Makro has had the power to make changes to FIDE for many years (even some obvious ones) but has not. FIDE needs change and therefore, I don't think Makro is the person for the job. This was a view shared on our committee at our next meeting when we put the decision to a vote.

Having listened to Nigel's case, I sent Mr Dvorkovich a range of questions on all of our concerns regarding his campaign. These included:

- His inclusion on the US pre-sanctions list and what he would do if he was sanctioned.
- If Kirsan Ilyumzhinov would form part of his board.
- What it would take for him to keep the Agon contract after review.
- Whether he shared Mr Short's position on FIDE fees or federation “taxes”.
- If he would commit to a target corporate sponsorship level (as that is his perceived main strength given his work with the FIFA World Cup).
- Would he continue to work for the betterment of chess and FIDE if defeated – and if he would work with either opposing ticket?

He stated that as he's no longer working as a government official, he suspects that his name will be removed from their next pre-sanction list. However, he would resign if he was ever sanctioned to remove any potential damage it could cause FIDE. Kirsan would not have an active position if he was elected. He would push to end the Agon contract once reviewed legally and financially given the quality of events to this point. He did agree with Mr Short's position on FIDE fees. His commitment was 5 million euro per year. He pledged to remain within chess no matter what happens and work with corporate sponsors and a charitable foundation in Russia to improve chess' standing in the world.

As campaigns in general contain promises and empty promises; we felt it more important to analyse the ability and desire to fulfil those promises and who would be the best person to

follow through on our agenda. As already stated, we did not believe that Makro would have the desire to change very much as this is the FIDE he has been a part of for 30 years. I did not know how this mantra would sync up with Mr Pein (who I view as a strong reformer) but as many of the rest of the ticket are incumbents, I felt he could be outnumbered. We know from their manifestos that both Mr Short and Mr Dvorkovich would intend to restore the integrity of FIDE, raise corporate sponsorship, cut fees to federations and terminate the Agon contract. We haven't any reason not to believe that this is their desire. So, our choice came down to ability and although our choice was not unanimous, we selected Arkady Dvorkovich. We think that he has the necessary experience to generate corporate sponsorship from the very beginning of his tenure. This revenue would facilitate the cut of taxes and would immediately create a more favourable image of FIDE. Therefore, this was our choice and I hope our logic can at least be understood even if our position is not shared by all.

Another challenge this year was complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and we have taken some necessary steps that may affect how our members use the ICU site and the ICU rating site. The simplest way to access the information you will need to log into those pages and our webmaster is available if and when you need support with this. In the coming year, we will be making more updates to ensure that your data is correct first and foremost, and remains safe.

We aim to run with three new projects for 2018-19 season, which are:

- A large FIDE Open run over Easter to offer a more inclusive event than the ICU Easter Festival.
- A corporate event for all companies to take part in and ideally reach new members.
- National Chess Month – a schools initiative to run throughout November.

These projects gel with our aims to reach more new members at both schools and professional level while a 9 round FIDE Open has been noticeably absent from the ICU calendar compared to other federations. We hope that these projects will be to our members liking and that they will get involved in any way they can whether it is forming a team within their office, running a local event to coincide with National Schools Month or entering our FIDE Open nice and early.

With Kindest Regards,

John McMorrow

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



## **2. Secretary's Report – Ciaran Mahon**

My role as ICU Secretary began following the October 2016 AGM. There continues to be a steep learning curve for me and I again acknowledge the unstinting support of the Chairperson John McMorrow. It is the principle reason that I am happy to present myself for a third term. Apart from again dealing with a stream, sometimes a torrent, of email correspondence from home and abroad, most time was taken up with activities relating to Executive Committee (EC) meetings.

There were 11 EC meetings held, significantly above average and which reflects the level of activity required of the EC members, regarding both on the national and international levels. A new topic this year – the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) – which came into force in August, has challenged the Executive Committee to comply. The ratings Officer Andrew Kildea has been to the fore in educating the EC. Actions to address compliance are well under way. These actions will affect all members' and non-members' interactions with the ICU and Ratings websites.

Developments regarding the High Court Summons, reported on last year, which while no longer naming the ICU itself as a defendant, still impacts on two members of the Executive Committee as defendants. These two members sought support from the ICU under the Indemnity Clause in the ICU Constitution. This clause (Article 15) is bottomless in terms of potential costs, which could seriously undermine the ICU. The matter was on the EC agenda on a number of occasions and a resolution satisfactory to all sides was eventually achieved, whereby the ICU agreed to provide specific financial aid to the two individuals. This aid package is refundable if not totally used.

As I reported last year, it seemed that certain factions within our chess community are not aware of the ICU "Code of Conduct" or "Child Protection Policy" documents, or choose to ignore them. I mentioned this to again raise awareness of the requirement for members to treat each other with dignity and respect. Unfortunately, since our last AGM the ICU Executive Committee has found it necessary to suspend one member permanently and another for 30 months, for serious breaches of the above codes.

Another matter I highlighted in the 2017 report was the need for the ICU to clarify both its governance role and support relationship with tournament organisers and the membership, for the benefit of all involved in chess. Members should note that there is a motion from the EC in this regard.

Finally, a personal hobbyhorse of mine. Again as referred to last year, while continuing to focus on priorities concerning for instance the growth of junior and women's chess, rapid tournaments, norm events etc., the ICU EC brought greater emphasis on catering specifically for the growing numbers of senior members, many of whom have served Irish chess faithfully for many years. The over 50 and over 65 tournament held this year was very well received and for the first time we were represented at both the over 50 and over 65 World Team Championships. The ICU is very grateful to Tim Harding and Gerard MacElligott for stepping up as captains.

### **3. Treasurer's Report – John McMorrow**

Margaret Naughton took over the role of treasurer at last year's AGM with the assumption that I would take care of day-to-day payments and transfers and Margaret would take care of the books. Unfortunately, with the workload of preparing for last year's AGM, I started the season behind in my day-to-day chairperson duties and took some time to get back on top of them. This had the knock-on effect of putting me behind in training our new treasurer on her duties and getting Margaret familiar with the books. Liaising then became the challenge as we were never in close proximity over the course of the year. I take responsibility for this failure to handle the handover efficiently and effectively; and I apologise to Margaret for this. Therefore, I took over the duties of completing the books as I felt it unfair to hand over the books without a proper background.

The ICU had a deficit of (€13,888) at the end of the 2017-18. I cannot pass comment on the unexpected expenditure of €15,000 but the secretary has given detail on this amount in his report. Our accounts for 2017-18 can be seen [here](#).

The other major change in the ICU's assets was a switch from a liquid asset portfolio to one with a mixture of liquid assets (cash held in BOI, AIB and in our FIDE account) and equipment. In January, the ICU finances were in an extremely healthy state with roughly €37,000 across our accounts and we thought it best to invest some of these funds in equipment that we could provide to clubs at cost over the next few years. The reason for buying in bulk was due to DGT's temporary offer to federations to buy equipment at significantly discounted rates including clocks, live-boards and other equipment. We have stocked about €14,000 in equipment and will be making it available at the same discounted price that they we purchased them for over the next few years until our supply runs out.

Our finances benefited this year from a very successful Irish Championship where the ICU's contribution fell to €3,000 due to sponsorship from Blackthorne International Transport and a very large turnout in all sections. Although the ICU ran double the number of events as usual (mostly new blitz events), most of these events ran at no additional cost to the ICU except the New Year and Easter events. Our contribution to the latter events was roughly €3,500 each.

The ICU's largest expenditure in the 12 months will likely be the Glorney Gilbert; however, we expect to receive financial assistance from the ECU with this event once again. I would hope that our sponsorship arrangement for the Irish Championships becomes a long-term deal and we will begin discussions on that soon with a hope to do many things better again next year: more live-boards, more early commitments from top players and confirming a venue and dates well in advance.

Although our financial position is murkier this year than in previous reports, it is worth noting that without the large one-off payment mentioned above, we would have once again produced a surplus and I would expect this to be the case next year with our New Year and Easter events refined to cut unnecessary costs. I would also hope that with the assistance of our sponsors, the ECU and Blackthorne International Transport, we would continue to mitigate potential losses in our major events.

#### **4. Rating Officer's Report - Andrew Kildea**

To be published soon...

## **5. Tournament Officer's Report – Ivan Baburin**

2017-2018 was another successful year for chess events in Ireland. Strong weekenders were seen again, with the St. Andrews Classic joining the ranks of more established events in Dublin such as the City of Dublin and Gonzaga Chess Classic, the editions of both of which were well attended this season. Bunratty once again was the largest weekender of the calendar, as ever attracting many players of all abilities, including some very strong Grandmasters. Victory was shared by Gawain Jones and Sergei Tiviakov, the latter of whom won the title after an exciting blitz playoff match.

This year saw two events offering GM and IM norms with a similar format being held in Dublin, over the New Year and Easter. Amazingly, a GM norm was made by an Irish player in each event - Sam Collins made a norm in the New Year event and Alex Lopez matched the feat at the Easter event - a huge congratulations to them both. A new feature seen this year was an over 50s and over 65s event which were both very well attended, attracting some players that have been relatively inactive in tournament chess - which is an excellent development to see.

A visible trend this season was the massive increase in the number of blitz events, mainly organised directly by the ICU but also by other clubs (such as the UCD blitz). The format is proving popular and the events are always very enjoyable, with a friendly, jovial atmosphere, and with the minimal time requirement it is an event that we seek to produce even more editions of.

The highlight of the Irish chess calendar this season was the incredibly strong Irish Chess Championship. With 36 participants, and with many of the top Irish players playing, this was an exciting and enjoyable event for me to witness and officiate as arbiter. The event was hotly contested, and saw Alex Lopez dominate the field that included many FMs, some IMs and a (albeit old) GM, winning the event with 8/9 points. Other notable performances were seen in Peter Carroll's impressive run, and David Murray claiming joint second with Conor Donnell. This performance earned David his first IM norm.

The Irish saw many side events run in parallel to it, including a weekday event, a two-section weekender, an Open weekender, and two blitzes. All of these were well attended, and made for an excellent atmosphere throughout the event, in the brilliant venue of the Talbot Stillorgan Hotel in Dublin.

I would like to thank all the executive in helping guide the ICU through another successful season, and to thank all the members that so actively support the tournament circuit through their continued playing and, increasingly, organising of new events.

I would especially like to thank the chairman of the ICU, John McMorrow, for the sheer volume and constant high quality of work he puts into running the ICU and always making it better. John works tirelessly towards organising events, formulating new structures and recruiting interest, and I strongly feel his efforts should be highlighted to the membership, as his natural humility may let this go unnoticed.

I look forward to another ICU season with even more, bigger and varied events.

Ivan Baburin

Tournament Director, Irish Chess Union

## 6. Junior Officer's Report – Desmond Beatty

### Membership and Participation 2017/18

It is estimated that between 3,000-4,000 juniors engaged with chess organisers in 2017/18 learning chess and/or playing unrated / rapid type tournaments.

There are 1109 (2017=\*990, 2016= ^894, 2015=\*^767) “active” junior (U21) members on the ICU membership database.

220 (\*250, ^95, \*^80) joined the ICU this year.

There are 334 (\*411, ^279, \*^232) on the ICU ratings list with 134 (214\* ^103 , \*^107) with no or provisional ratings.

200 (197\*, ^176, \*^125) have full ratings.

Many juniors played in the Armstrong and Munster Div 1 leagues.

14 of the top 35 (7\*, ^7) juniors played in the 2018 Irish Championships (in a field of 36)

The numbers for girls are:

- 139 (130\*, ^96,\*^93) “Active”,
- 33 (37\*, ^30,\*^26) rated (11 (17\*) provisional, 22 (20\*) full),
- 1 (1\*, ^1,\*^0) in the Irish Championships.

While the numbers on the ratings list are down overall, the increase in those on a full rating suggest that those joining transitioning swiftly to full ratings.

Proposed actions:

1. Continued encouragement and support for juniors transitioning to classic chess especially U10 and U12s including age limited ICU rated events.
2. Continued encouragement and support of junior clubs, sections and competition
3. Chess in schools initiatives to increase overall participation.

### International Competition

#### Glorney Gilbert International 2018

Hosted by Chess Scotland in UWS, Paisley



**Glorney Cup (U18 Open): 4th place** behind winners France. Tied 2.5/2.5 vs Netherlands (2nd) to deny then a clean sweep. Hosts Scotland 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Irish 5 ranked in the 11-30 range of the U18 squad. While we lose 5 of our 25 >1800 players to age next year, the panel remains very strong with the top 10 currently averaging >2050 ICU. The key to challenging for the top spot will be getting our strongest U18s to play, encouraged one hopes by home advantage, the strength of the returned Dutch and French and declaration by England that the GGI be treated as a “major” event.



**Gilbert Cup (U18 Girls): 5th** behind winners, the Netherlands. 2019 is very much a changing of the guard in the Gilbert Squad as we lose three long-standing veterans of the Gilbert (and the 2017 Glorney) teams in Diana, Alice and Eibhia to age. Thanks to all three for their contributions over the years. The new top 5 average an encouraging 1600+ ICU.

**Robinson Cup (U14 Open): 4th** behind winners the Netherlands. With the strong top 6 at the start of the year, the focus will be on their further development and building depth into this squad.



**Stokes Cup (U12 Open) : 3<sup>rd</sup> place** behind winners Netherlands and 2<sup>nd</sup> placed England. Losing on 5 of the top 20 to age, this squad starts the year with a strong 9 >1000 ICU (up from 2 last year) and 18 >700. Building on this 17/18 growth, squad development and coaching at both U12 and U10 levels will remain the priority in 18/19.

Thanks are due to many including the coaches, parents and volunteers but especially to IM David Fitzsimons and WFM Ioana Miller.

See [www.gloneycupchess.org](http://www.gloneycupchess.org) and [ICU Tournament Report](#) for more.

## Glorney Gilbert International 2019

In July 2019, the Glorney Gilbert International returns to Ireland and planning is well in hand with 3 venues shortlisted. In addition to consolidating the return to the 6 Nations format (from 4 in 2015), it is hoped to run an Alumni day / event on the Sunday (July 21).

**REQUEST:** GLORNEY/FABER GILBERT International Alumni from 1948 thru 2018 are:

1. Invited to register interest in participating [here](#).
2. To identify, contact and encourage teammates **and opponents** to do the same.

France (Ile de France) are confirmed as hosts for 2020 and many are looking forward to Paris already.

## The Northern Quadrangular 2017

Consistent with the goal of providing accessible opportunities for our juniors to play international team competition, December saw a full u16 team and half (with England Midlands) an u14 team play in the Northern Quadrangular (Vs Scotland, Wales and England North). A strong U16 team saw Ireland take the honours at the first time of asking. The invitation for 1.5 teams to return this December has been extended and accepted.

## Sir Patrick Moore Cup

March saw a 16-strong Irish team travel to Crawley (nr Gatwick) for the Sir Patrick Moore Cup. This event continues to present a welcome but stern opportunity for juniors across the age range. This year Sussex again proved too strong and retained the cup. The 3<sup>rd</sup> running of the event since its revival is planned for March 9/10 in Dublin.



## 2ème\_FTPA\_Youth\_Chess\_Tournament, Asnieres, France

April was “Paris in the spring” for a team of 10 playing teams from Ile de France, Rotterdam, Murmansk and Thessaloniki. It is hoped to make this another annual opportunity for challenging representative honours.



## Other international competition

20+? (21\*, ^31, \*^40) juniors entered (6 of) the other 7 target events (with +? for the U16YO still to be selected). Despite all these events being in Europe this year, 2018 has not been a bumper year for participation.

- FIDE World Youth CC 2018 (U14-U18), Halkidiki, Greece – 9 players
- ECU European Youth CC (U8-U18) 2018, Riga, Latvia – 6 players
- ECU EUYCC (U8-U14) 2018, Kouty, Czech Republic – 0 players
- Jugendschach EUYCC (U8-U14) 2018, Mureck, Austria – 1 player
- FIDE World Junior U20 CC 2018, Gebze, Turkey – 1 player
- FIDE World Cadet CC 2018 (U8-U12), Santiago, Spain - 3 players
- FIDE World Youth U16 Olympiad 2017, Turkey (Dec 2018) - TBA teams (of 5 players)

In addition, 2 invited places at Saint Lo were taken up this year, and 2 played in the World Schools 2018, Durres, Albania.

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



Note the centrality of the Irish flag 😊

## National competition

The Irish Junior Championships hosted by Ennis Chess Club in April saw around 160 (173\*, (^152,\*^161) playing in the Irish Junior Championships proper and a further 20 of all ages participating in the fun blitz on Sunday. The U10 event was notably the strongest in many years, with the [“game of the tournament”](#) played in this section.



Irish provincial events – September saw 24 participate in the rated sections of the Munster Junior Championships and 153 in the rated sections of the Leinster JCs in January.

Both the Connaught and Munster JCs were run as one-day rapid events.

## Junior Squad Development

The focus for 2017-18 was the junior squad-training program, building on the work done in recent years.

30 hours of group training was delivered between February and July with 40 juniors benefiting from some or all of these sessions. Each participant received one of the Yusapov series of books as part of the program.



Special thanks again to IM David Fitzsimons, WFM Ioana Miller and GM Alex Baburin for all their work from February, up to the Glorney. Thanks also to David and Scott Mulligan for making the trip to Paisley as coaches.

The development of structures and material continued with the introduction of the Yusapov series and the focussed work on endgames by Ioana and strategy and tactics by David.

## Future Developments

By further growth and development of the junior squad through coaching, tournament play and international competition.

Plans for 2018/19 include:

- Coaching delivery beyond centralised group coaching – a 4-5 session program from October – January.
- Squad goal setting – eg win the Gilbert, endgame rigour, etc.
- Squad member goal setting and general individual development plans.
- U16 participation in the Northern Quadrangular, Liverpool, Dec 2/3 (confirmed)
- Sir Patrick Moore match, Dublin in March
- More 1 day rated tournaments to continue support the transition to classic chess and grow the U10/U12 squad.

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

Plans for 2017/18 include:

- Junior Development Committee – supporting the chess in education initiatives with Moves for Life. With thanks to April Cronin, Brandan Buckley and John Conlon.
- Moves for Life – an organisation to support Chess in Education with primary the initial focus.
- National Chess Month (November) – an ICU / Moves for Life initiative to encourage participation at all levels but especially in Primary Schools
- Junior grading program - a “descriptive” pre-rating system
- Support for junior clubs, schools and supporting organisations
- Further develop coaching and support resources

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

- Junior Committee – build on the work in 2016-17 with the provincial Junior Officers, to include provincial championships in Connaught and Munster, regional coordination.

- Encourage more volunteers across the range of activities/structures required to support and grow junior chess in Ireland – please contact [juniors@icu.ie](mailto:juniors@icu.ie) to volunteer.



## THANKS

Once again, 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 go 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 who has again invested significantly of himself this year in moving the ICU forward and has played a huge part in leading the growth and strengthening of Irish junior chess.

To the junior selection committees, the junior development committee 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 2014-18  
Irish Chess Union

## **7. Development Officer's Report- Conor Barrett**

I took on the role of development officer 12 months ago and in my first year, I worked on several projects for the ICU as well as handling general queries that were sent to me. The main projects I worked on were in university chess, the DGT equipment offer and the running of competitions in Connaught.

It was a relatively slow year in university chess in terms of games played, however, the level of cooperation and communication between Ireland's third level clubs has increased massively. I hope to move forward with plans to re-form a universities union to oversee the running of regular leagues and tournaments, as this proved too difficult to do this year without proper structures in place. On a more positive note, a large sponsor was secured to support third level events.

I assisted in facilitating clubs obtain equipment at discount rates from DGT. This saw over 500 boards and 200 clocks delivered into Ireland and distributed to clubs across all four provinces.

The 2017/18 season saw the reintroduction of the Connaught Senior Club League for the first time in several years. All indications suggest that there is an appetite to continue this competition over the coming years with a few minor adjustments. 2018 saw the return of the Senior Individual Championship in its own right as well as the introduction of an Intermediate Championship. Over the next year, I would hope that these competitions would grow and lead to the creation of a Connaught union at some point over the next few years.

Conor Barrett

Development Officer/Connaught Membership Officer



Photo of Zalan Nemeth and Denis Ruchko in the playoff to decide the Connaught Champion 2018.

## **8. FIDE & ECU Delegate's Report- Kevin O'Connell**

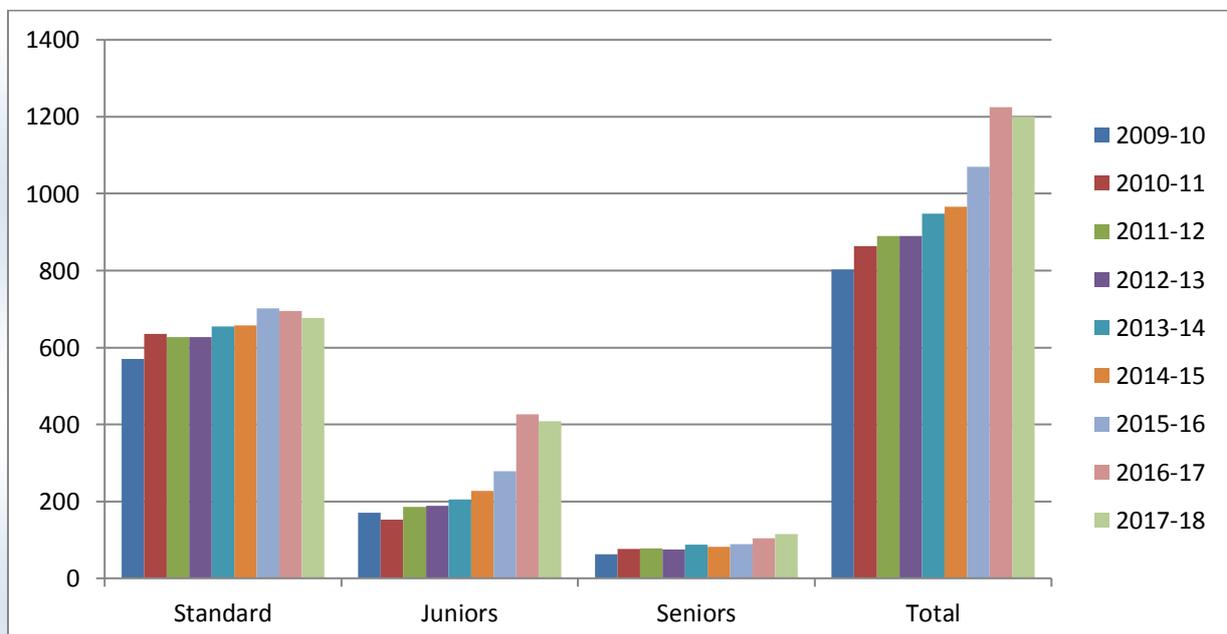
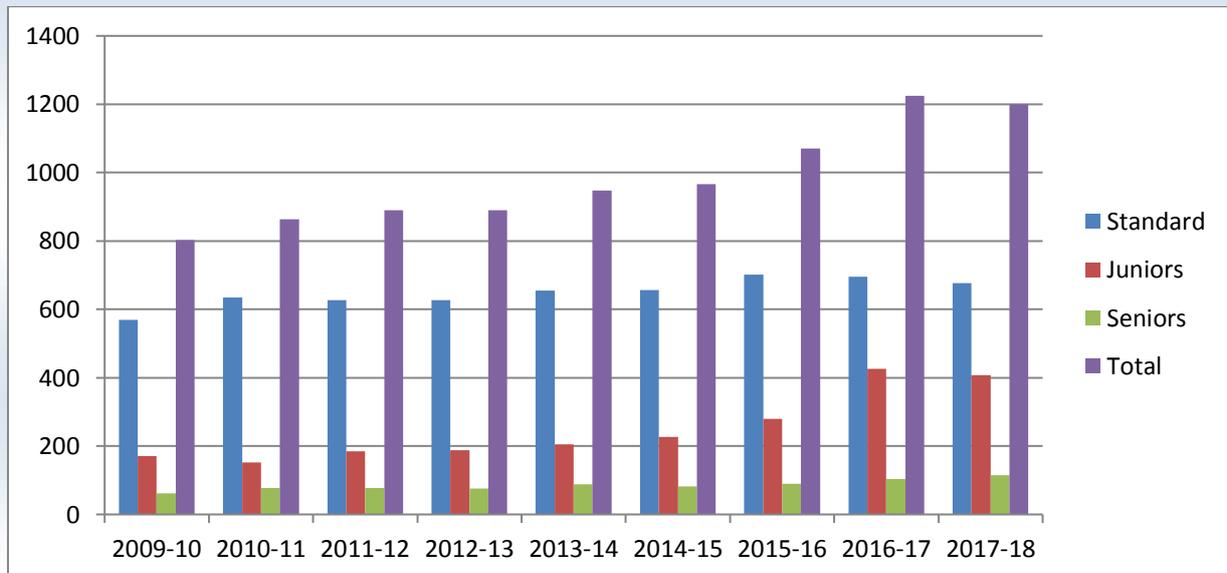
Report to be published after the FIDE Congress in October.

## 9. Membership Officer's Report - John Cassidy

It was another great year for the membership numbers of the ICU with membership staying steady at our peak of around 1200 members. Our paid membership numbers fell slightly from 1225 to 1200 with an additional 19 lifetime members.

We attracted 312 new members which compares to 345 new members in 2016-17. Of the 312 new members, 201 were new junior members, 10 were new senior members, while 101 were standard/oversea/unemployed new members.

Over the last 8 years, there has been an impressive incline in our number of members and while we missed our target of 1300 members this year, we can promise that we will put a greater emphasis on the horizontal rather than the vertical this year. That is to say that a slightly greater proportion of our time and resources will go into bringing more people into chess than on "elite" chess where we focus on running strong events for current members. For now, our membership growth rate is represented in the graph below:



## **10. Public Relation Officer's Report – Carl Jackson/Luke Scott**

The reach of the ICU extended this year with increased activity on our Facebook and Twitter pages and we aim to have monthly newsletters in the new season. At the time of writing, the ICU Facebook page has over 1,500 subscribers with a reach of over 8,000 people; our twitter page has just gone over 100 followers while our newsletter has over 300 subscribers. The ICU issued over 350 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, Dave O'Connell and Jonathan O'Connor. Desmond, parents, and many of the juniors themselves were also heavily involved in issuing reports on junior events throughout the year. Luke Scott, who had been writing newsletters over the past year, has fully taken over my role due to my own work constraints. It was a pleasure to work on the committee and I look forward to captaining the Irish Open Olympiad team in Batumi. Now, I'll hand over to Luke to discuss his plans for the coming season.

I took over from Carl at the end of June and throughout a very busy summer have come up with several ideas or possible avenues that the ICU could pursue in order to heighten it's media presence in Ireland and through the various other chess communities around the world.

Up until recently, I have been writing a monthly newsletter but had stopped due to studying commitments. I plan to have this back up and running very soon with the next issue hopefully being published around the end of September. My goal with this project is mould it into a mini magazine of sorts detailing all that happened in Irish chess for each particular month. I would also like to expand it from the simple infomercial that it previously was to something that can draw more user engagement. Puzzles, articles, league reports, game analysis and player interviews are all things I would eventually like to include in this project. The endgame of course being that with more quality content the number of monthly readers will hopefully increase dramatically to a level that sponsorship could possibly be sought after. The use of mailchimp has been a great benefit to this project and I hope to become even more proficient at using it in the coming year.

I also want to increase the presence of the Irish chess scene on various media websites with a large chess following. There is a very large community of chess players all around the world on various video and livestreaming websites such as youtube.com and twitch.tv. I have personally seen more and more tournaments taking advantage of this to advertise their events through live commentary and coverage. I feel that this elevates the professionalism and profile of these events while also appealing to non-playing chess fans. While not only functioning as advertisement for the tournaments itself, if we were to build a large following it could also possibly open doors for more sponsorship for the coverage and the events themselves. There are many members within Irish chess who possess excellent media skills such as photography and videography. I want to co-ordinate more with these members in the coming year to produce more marketing and media material to advertise our events.

A more long term but important plan that I believe has been discussed in the past is to establish a network of communication all the way from national schools across the country right up to the ICU itself. There are numerous primary schools across Ireland whose students play chess but do

not even know that the ICU exists. I believe that mimicking a system such as what the GAA employ with on a County/Club level would not only drastically increase the number of new members joining every year but also establishing the ICU as the organisation people actually know when they think of chess in Ireland. This would again elevate our Union to one that could be taken more seriously in a mainstream setting compared to other sports.

It is also my hope that in the coming year we can organise some more non-tournament chess events such as simultaneous displays or talks given by strong foreign players. These events are great for generating publicity while also creating a bit of buzz within Irish chess itself. I have noted that this year some clubs have taken the imitative and have started organising these events themselves which is great to see. These events can bring chess into the public eye and if held frequently enough in co-ordination with other major and regular events we can begin to cultivate a sort of chess culture here on our island. These again can be used as advertisement for our annual tournaments and could possibly be used as a draw to bring more foreign players here to play in Ireland.

I plan on undertaking a short PR and event management course sometime after Christmas. I hope that through this I can increase my skillset and understanding of what is required of me in my role as PRO. I look forward to working with the rest of the ICU executive in the pursuit of these goals and of course for you, the members.

Luke Scott,

ICU Public Relations Officer.



## **11. Women Officer's Report – Gearoidin Ui Laighleis**

A Chairde Gael

Beatha agus Sláinte.

I would like to warmly welcome Ioana Miller and Trisha Kanyamarala to the ICU family. Ioana will be the captain of the Women's Olympiad Team in September and we look forward to seeing both herself and Trisha at many of the tournaments here. Fáilte romhaibh, a chailíní!

This year has seen a lot of participation by girls and women in both home and foreign tournaments. Not only that but it was good to see them on the stage at the end of said tournaments. Diana Mirza, World Champion from 2017 has played well and consistently this year and won the Girls U19 Championship 2018. She has managed to combine her school studies and her chess and we are looking forward to seeing her play in the Olympiad in Georgia.

This year's Womens Championship was won by Ioana Miller who defeated Diana Mirza in the last round. Very strong performances were put in by all involved. The event was supported by the ICU's partner, Awards and Gifts. This was the last year of our sponsorship arrangement with Awards and Gifts so we are looking to find a new sponsor for the 2018 event.

The Gilbert cup team comprised of Eibhia Ní Mhuirgeáin, Kynesha Ryder and Aoife Castle this year. The tournament report stated that "Results were mixed but considering we were outranked in nearly every game, Eibhia, Kynesha and Aoife Castle certainly did themselves proud and can be assured that they represented Ireland extremely well." And we look forward to seeing the girls play in the future.

A new series of interviews with the women players started a couple of months ago with an interesting chat with Alice O'Gorman, one of our top female players. We hope to roll out a few more, especially during the time of the Olympiad.

Go maire sibh go léir!



## **12. Web Team Report - Jonathan O'Connor**

To be published soon...

### 13. 2017-18 Officers and Committees

Officer	Name
Chairperson	John McMorrow
Vice Chairperson	Alexander Baburin
Secretary	Ciaran Mahon
Treasurer	Margaret Naughton
Rating Officer	Andrew Kildea
Tournament Officer	Ivan Baburin
Junior Officer	Desmond Beatty
Development Officer	Conor Barrett
Women's Officer	Gearoidin Ui Laighleis
Membership Officer	John Cassidy
Public Relations Officer	Carl Jackson/Luke Scott
Munster Delegate	John Cassidy
Connaught Delegate	Colm O'Muireagain
Leinster Delegate	Gordon Freeman
Munster Delegate	John Cassidy
Gameskeeper*	Sean Coffey
Arbitration Officer*	Herbert Scarry
Webmaster*	Jonathan O'Connor
FIDE & ECU Delegate*	Kevin J. O'Connell

Constitution Committee
Herbert Scarry
Eoghan Casey
Charlie Talbot

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

Web Committee
Jonathan O'Connor
Dave O'Connell
Desmond Beatty

Communications
John McMorrow
Luke Scott
Dave O'Connell
Sam Murray

14. ICU Sponsors

