

## **The CAI win the Vera McWeeney Trophy, beating the CA 14-10.**

Carrickmines Croquet and Lawn Tennis club played host to the annual contest between the Croquet Association and the Croquet Association of Ireland for the McWeeney Trophy on August 20-21<sup>st</sup>. The CA team travelled across the Irish Sea looking forward to trying to win back the trophy in weather conditions that varied between howling gale and pleasant sunshine.

On the Saturday morning, the CAI team came out of the blocks fastest, securing three wins from three matches in the morning doubles. The results were close run, and the score almost certainly would have been 2-1 but for a brilliant turn from late recruit Simon Williams who completed the match by peeling his grateful partner Daniel Bennett from 2-back to the peg to beat the unfortunate Jim Fields and Alison Girdlestone +6qnp. The weather began to improve marginally, and in the first round of singles the CA recovered from their morning misfortunes to take 4 games out of 6 and put themselves right back in contention. This round included notable wins for Eugene Chang, who took full advantage of Simon Williams' failed attempt to replicate his morning's peeling, and for Brian Fisk who won +26tp and reminded Fiachra Carroll (upon his return to A-class competition) that mistakes are costly at the top!

In the last round of the day, things were beginning to look a bit hairy for the Irish after their morning start. After the top 2 ranked Irish players won their games, it was looking like another 4-2 round for the CA when Alison Girdlestone put fellow rapid improver Daniel Bennett to the sword and the remaining lawns were occupied entirely by members of the CA team. Happily for the Irish there was then a resurgence! It began with Fiachra taking control of a back and forth battle to beat Eugene +9, before some inspired play on lawns one and two from Gerard Osborne-Burke and Alan Looney swung the match dramatically in the CAI's favour. The latter match between Alan and John Bee was played out on the show court with an enraptured crowd cheering and wailing with each shot that

hit and missed in the emerging sunshine. With the two players level when time was called after some dramatic play, Alan dutifully hit John's balls joined up at rover from Corner 1 to complete an excellent come back and seal a 10-5 overnight lead for the CAI team. The two teams then retired to the Gables restaurant in nearby Foxrock where an excellent meal was enjoyed by all!

Battle recommenced on Sunday morning, with one change to the team line ups seeing Nathaniel Healy replace Simon Williams on the Irish side. The CA had a mountain to climb, with 9 points on offer for the day and with a five point deficit to overcome. Once again the doubles proved to be very close fought, and the CA could consider themselves unlucky not to have won all three games. Jim Fields and Alison Girdlestone went down to Danny Johnston and Alan Looney after Alison went to peg with the first ball round, allowing Danny to get in and peg her off (over the course of a couple of turns...) leaving a three ball ending. The Irish play played the ending relatively aggressively and Jim took on a shot for the match with the Irish pair joined at his hoop which very nearly hit! As it was, Alan Looney played a super turn to peg out the game and secure an important Irish point. Even more unlucky were the pair of Eugene and Brian Shorney, the latter of which hit after time was called and dug out an excellent break to put themselves in reach of a +10 win, before a cruel bobble through 4-back left Brian unable to roquet his reception ball and this game too went to the Irish.

The final round of singles went off with Ireland needing to secure one point to clinch the match. This was looking in some jeopardy for the Irish captain as he sat down watching Eugene begin a break against him and noticed that there were no Irish players on any courts! Indeed, two English wins were recorded in quick succession by Brian Fisk over Nathaniel Healy and by the impressive Alison Girdlestone over Gerard Osborne-Burke. This certainly put the pressure on the Irish team, but happily for them Danny was left one shot too many and eventually hit in to beat Eugene and secure the winning point. Daniel Bennett added some gloss to the win with a triumph over John Bee to complete a good period

of croquet for him, having won the Younger Cup in Hurlingham the previous week. Jim Fields secured his first win of the weekend, narrowly beating Fiachra Carroll after the latter missed a slightly wild cut-rush attempt at the death. Brian Shorney then put paid to his earlier disappointment by beating Gerard in the final game of the tie to leave the score at 14-0 to the CAI team. The trophy and the Maugham Couch for best individual player were presented to the winning captain by CAI chairman Richard Assaf on a sunny balcony overlooking the lawns completing a good weekends work for the CAI team.

Thanks must go the CA team for travelling and playing the match in a very competitive and sporting manner, Carrickmines and it's members for hosting the match and some of the visiting players, and to Brian Fisk and Nathaniel Healy for organizing the match which had fallen by the wayside in recent years. The match has now been competed for in consecutive years, bucking the recent trend, and long may it continue.

Photographs to follow, teams and full results below:

Croquet Association

Eugene Chang (0)

Brian Fisk (-0.5) (C)

Jim Fields (-0.5)

Alison Girdlestone (2.5)

John Bee (6)

Brian Shorney (7)

Croquet Association of Ireland

Danny Johnston (-2) (C)

Simon Willams/Nathaniel Healy (2/0)

Fiachra Carroll (3)

Gerard Osborne-Burke (4.5)

Daniel Bennett (4.5)

Alan Looney (4.5)

CAI beat CA in the McWeeney Trophy August 20-21st 2016 in Carrickmines

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Danny Johnston & Alan Looney	beat	Brian Fisk & John Bee	+40t
Fiachra Carroll & Gerard Osborne-Burke	beat	Eugene Chang & Brian Shorney	+11
Simon Williams & Daniel Bennett	beat	Jim Fields & Alison Girdlestone	+6qnp(W)
Danny Johnston	beat	Jim Fields	+5
Eugene Chang	beat	Simon Williams	+3
Brian Fisk	beat	Fiachra Carroll	+26tp
John Bee	beat	Gerard Osborne Burke	+19
Daniel Bennett	beat	Brian Shorney	+20
Alison Girdlestone	beat	Alan Looney	+16
Danny Johnston	beat	Brian Fisk	+25tp
Simon Williams	beat	Jim Fields	+6
Fiachra Carroll	beat	Eugene Chang	+9
Gerard Osborne Burke	beat	Brian Shorney	+10
Alison Girdlestone	beat	Daniel Bennett	+18
Alan Looney	beat	John Bee	+10t
Danny Johnston & Alan Looney	beat	Jim Fields & Alison Girdlestone	+5
Nathaniel Healy and Daniel Bennett	beat	Eugene Chang & Brian Shorney	+20t
Brian Fisk & John Bee	beat	Fiachra Carroll & Gerard Osborne-Burke	+16
Danny Johnston	beat	Eugene Chang	+18
Brian Fisk	beat	Nathaniel Healy	+12
Jim Fields	beat	Fiachra Carroll	+5
Alison Girdlestone	beat	Gerard Osborne Burke	+24
Daniel Bennett	beat	John Bee	+11
Brian Shorney	beat	Alan Looney	+10