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Cork club chess mates



Keegan O'Mahoney of Cork Chess club and, below, Aidan Wolfe, ready for a game.

Picture: Eddie O'Hare



We look at Cork Chess Club which was founded in 1990 and draws members from all over the region. Some of them have even represented Ireland on the international stage.

CHESS is the 'game of kings' with a 1,500-year history behind it.

■ Rob McNamara

While not quite as old as the game itself, Cork Chess Club also has a long and storied history too, and with 25 member regularly attending meetings, the game is still going strong in the city and county.

The club was formed in September 1990 by Walter Fitzgibbon, Paul McSweeney Snr, Gordon Cadden and Joe Hayes, initially as Cork City Chess Club, but later renamed to reflect that members were travelling from the wider Cork area to play.

They originally met at the Arcadia in the CIE social club but then moved to their home at Cork Bridge Club on Patrick's Quay, where they remain to this day. Their ethos is an all inclusive, friendly environment. You don't have to be a chess master to join up, new members are always welcome and all levels of play are catered for from ages nine up to 90 and beyond.

The club draws members from all over the wider Cork region, says club secretary Mark Watkins:

"We have in the past had members travelling from all over County Cork. In the 2000s a very active couple used to travel in each week from Glengarriff.

"We currently have members travelling from Inch, Crosshaven, Ballincollig and Blarney."

Among the club's biggest achievements has been the pride of seeing some of their members represent their country, including one former member of notable international competitive pedigree.

"Our current treasurer, Keegan O'Mahoney, represented Ireland in the World U20 championship in Russia in 2015, junior player Alex Byrne represented Ireland in the 2016 U18 Glorney Cup international team event, which teams from Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales against each other," says Mark.

"Former member Alex Astaneh Lopez, a titled chess International Master, represented Ireland at all levels and sometimes comes in to the club by arrangement to coach," he adds.

There's an annual fee for membership, currently €45 for adults and €30 children, and each week attendees pay €5 for adults and €3 for children.

"For new members the first session is always free and new faces are always welcome," says Mark.

"We meet on Friday evenings through the months of September to May, breaking for the summer. We arrange a weekend tournament, Cork Congress, in springtime, and occasional coaching nights. Visit our website www.cork-chess.com for details or email cork-chess@gmail.com."