

Wales v Ireland & Scotland April 2024

Held Moreton Morrell Tennis Court Club, Warwickshire



Wales v Ireland Saturday 6th April

There was a frizzante of excitement in the air as our international competitors arrived from various parts of the isles. The flags were flying and daffodils fluttering as we approached the club. Surely the omens were on the Welsh side. **Cymru am byth**. Tom Granville, Moreton's Head professional, greeted us with his usual convivial smile and some of the early arrivals rushed to practice on the court, bathed in the soft spring sunshine. Jenny Jones' car screeched to a halt, the shirts which she had designed were collected and distributed. Many thanks Jenny.

The first match between Wales and Ireland started on time. Play underway, one game to Ireland, then disaster. Jenny slipped and fell on to her left arm. As a true stalwart she said it's my non dominant arm, give me a moment and I will play on. The colour drained as she left the court and soon it became evident that she had fractured her wrist. Guy Fielding was happy as ever and bounded on court to replace her. Despite the good teamwork between Guy and Jeff Avery, the opposition of Chris Marguerie and Roy Rogers were too strong. With Chris on good form and well supported by Roy it was soon over 6 : 1. First blood to Ireland.

The captain rearranged his team and Jeremy Irvin-Singer and Jeff took on Chris and Felicity Riddall-Bell. I always say beware of a youngster who is improving. Felicity had great footwork and preparation before hitting the ball. With Chris on form, the two overpowered Jeremy and Jeff. Well, the day was still young. 3 : 6.

Chris Marguerie then kindly took Jenny to Warwick where she was attended to. The captain took to the court with the spritely Guy to take on Felicity and the beaming Simon Cripps. Could we get one back? The captain who loves serving to left handers failed to get his length and the Welsh pairing were on the back foot. It wasn't to be with Ireland winning 6 : 2.





Chris Marguerie (Senior Physician at Warwick Hospital) was by now in Warwick A & E a true busman's holiday for him. Who best to replace him but the Irish captain Roland Budd, handicap 33. Jeremy had a steely look about him and was quietly in the zone. Having a healthy handicap advantage, the Welsh pair had to somehow stop the rut. Roy who was the highest handicapper on court was our target and initially Wales were 2 games up. Then Roland went up a gear and seemed to be everywhere on court. Anything on the penthouse was punished and even the

balls at or just behind Roy seemed to come back at the base of the tambour. Yet we stuck at it and playing above our handicap coming through 6 : 3; at last, a Welsh win.

Guy and Jeremy fought valiantly against Roy and Felicity, but Felicity kept her form, moved effortlessly and made great ball contact to claim another Irish victory 3 : 6.

Michael Llewelyn-Jones joined Jeremy and opposite the net Simon teamed up with the ebullient Jack Woods. Jack's smile ebbed away as Jeremy was solid and Michael played brilliantly hitting winning volleys and main wall boasts to great effect. Another victory to Wales 6 : 2.

Michael on form and the captain linked up to play against Simon and Jack when 5 : 3 up to Wales surely, we should see it through. At 5 all a bad leave by the captain, defending a chase 2 yards, proved disastrous. Wales lost 5 : 6, a match we should have won.

It was then time for "**Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau**" and "**Ireland's Call**", their rugby anthem, both sung with pride and gusto. Wales had the numbers and the passion; at least we finished the morning winning the singing.



We all sat down to an excellent lunch which consisted of **Irish main:** Dublin Coddle followed by **Welsh dessert:** Welsh Amber Pie.



The captain said a few words of welcome and thanked the Irish for taking up the gauntlet for the first encounter between our two great countries. He thanked Michael Llewelyn-Jones and Vaughan Williams for so generously sponsoring the prizes. He also thanked the Welsh team members for being so enthusiastic and spirited, making his life easy to organize the day. There was much laughter and banter. Roland on behalf of the Irish graciously thanked us for the welcome and hospitality. He had much to smile about after the morning's results.

The afternoon was a different format of 4 singles matches. Starting with Michael against Jack. Given Michaels blistering form in the morning, great hopes abounded but Jack possibly fortified by the Dublin Coddle breezed through to win 0 ; 6, 2 : 6.



The agile and ever smiling Geraint Thomas having travelled 4 hours up from Dorset was ready to challenge Mark Heffernan who had a mere 90 mins drive up from London. Mark seemed to have nervous energy and a fixed determined smile. Geraint played well but Mark played above his handicap, picking up well in the corners

and winning the main points when it mattered. 3 : 6, 2: 6.



Then the match we were all waiting for, the big showdown between the lowest handicappers on either side, Simon Talbot-Williams (HC 35.3) and Roland Budd (HC 33). We were treated to a great 3 setter which ebbed and flowed. Roland in the first set found his length and whatever Simon threw at him, in terms of serve or cutting under the grille, Roland managed to retrieve moving Simon from side to side. First set 1 : 6. You are not a low 30 handicapper for nothing. Initially Roland kept his momentum and was ahead for most of the set. Leading 4 : 1, Roland persevered with a metronomic consistency, but Simon was making fewer racket errors and moving better. He upped a gear, improved his returning, kept the pace up, mixed his serve and enjoyed more time at the serving end. Roland could not maintain his dominance and Simon's perseverance and more accurate and penetrative placement came through. Seeing Simon smiling at one set all, made us think could he pull this off? He was clearly enjoying the Celtic competition. Starting at 3 all in the third both players were focused and determined. Backhand exchanges were a constant feature from under the grille to the back hand of the right-handed server. Occasionally Roland switched angles but Simon fought on, despite his back and hip issues, scurrying from corner to retrieve as much as he could. At 4 all Roland started to make errors he hadn't earlier in the contest. You could feel doubt & fatigue setting in, yet Simon looked determined and that proved to be the case. 1 : 6, 6 : 5, 6 : 5. What a spectacle

After the excitement the final doubles proved a tame affair. Great tennis to witness with both partners enjoying the lower handicapper's play. Overall great quality tennis but Ireland now had an unassailable lead winning the day 8 matches to 3 and 55 games to 87. There could be no arguing the result.

Fifteen of us reconvened at Cote Brasserie in Leamington with Jenny sporting her full plaster. A great time was had by all with much revelry. The captain once again thanked Roland and congratulated the Irish team on the result. There is always next year! Roland chose his Irish player of the day awarding a bottle of champagne to Jenny and the Welsh captain felt it was a close matter between Simon and Jeremy. Both were applauded. Simon was given a Welsh cap to mark his entertaining and successful display and Jeremy a bottle of champagne for playing 4 matches and his successes. The winning captain donated his bottle of champagne to Tom who had so well looked after us and marked all day.

Results

	ONE SET TO SIX		first set	
9.00	JENNY JONES (INJURED) GUY FIELDING & JEFF AVERY	V	1 to 6	Ire
			ROY ROGERS & CHRIS MARGUERIE	

9.35	JEREMEY IRWIN- SINGER & JEFF AVERY	V	CHRIS MARGUERIE & FELICITY RIDDALL BELL	3 to 6	Ire
10.10	GUY FIELDING & DAVID PHILLIPS	V	FELICITY R BELL & SIMON CRIPPS	2 to 6	Ire
10.45	DAVID PHILLIPS & JEREMY I SINGER	V	ROLAND BUDD & ROY ROGERS	6 to 3	Wa
11.20	GUY FIELDING & JEREMY I SINGER	V	ROY ROGERS & FELICITY R BELL	3 to 6	Ire
11.55	JEREMY I SINGER & MICHAEL L JONES	V	JACK WOODS & SIMON CRIPPS	6 to 2	Wa
12.30	MICHAEL L JONES & DAVID PHILLIPS	V	JACK WOODS & SIMON CRIPPS	5 to 6	Ire
13.00	LUNCH				
	BEST OF 3 SETS				
14.00	MICHAEL LLEWELYN JONES	V	JACK WOODS	0: 6, 2:6	Ire
15.00	GERAINT THOMAS	V	MARK HEFFERNAN	3:6, 2:6	Ire
16.00	SIMON TALBOT WILLIAMS	V	ROLAND BUDD	1:6, 6:5, 6:5	Wa
17.00	SIMON TALBOT WILLIAMS & GERAINT THOMAS	V	ROLAND BUDD & MARK HEFFERNAN	5:6,4:6	Ire

Matches. Wales 3 to Ireland 8

Games. Wales 55 to Ireland 87