



Jersey presentation night, which was attended by Sydney Swans players Jared Crouch and Kristin Thornton.

Cork girls rule in Australia



Back Row L-R: Yvonne Rooney (Meath), Jamie Fitzsimons (Cavan), Lizzie Gavaghan (Aus), Claudia Cowell (Aus), Adeline Lim (Aus), Lara Creber (UK), Cliona O'Keffee (Waterford), Deidre Breathnach (Waterford), Pamela Fitzpatrick (Cavan), Suzanne Flaherty (Dublin), Maeve Sullivan (Cork), Candice Craft (NZ), Marie Keating (Limerick), Jenny Gillett (Meath). Front Row L-R: Donna Gallucio (Aus), Lisa Roper (NZ), Annie Phillips (Aus), Niamh Hainsworth (Dublin), Cara Connaire (Longford), Fiona Cotter (Cork), Sandra Ryan (Tipp), Sarah Bradley (Aus), Kate Lancaster (Aus).

TWO Cork women are in the middle of a green revolution in Aussie Rules football in Sydney.

They're part of a new club, the Bondi Shamrocks, who are creating a storm in the local AFL competition.

Fiona Cotter and Maeve O'Sullivan have helped the rookies reach the finals of the league.

Fiona, 30, is originally from Glanworth and has been living in Sydney since February 2006.

She works as an analytical chemist for a veterinary pharmaceutical company, Troy Laboratories.

Fiona played ladies football for Glanworth and then Fenagh St Fortcherns in Carlow while she was living there and working for Kerry Foods.

She was also secretary of Glanworth GAA club before leaving for Australia, a position which occupies with the Shamrocks, as well as being a member of Michael Cusack's ladies team.

Maeve O'Sullivan, 25, is from Bandon. She is currently in Sydney as part of a round the world trip, working in a café, before heading off in October to New Zealand and South America on the way back home.

Prior to travelling Maeve graduated from CIT with a degree in Chemical Engineering and worked for a year at Intel Ireland.

She played Camogie with Kilbrittain and



MARK WOODS

now plays on the wings for Bondi Shamrocks and for Michael Cusack's ladies football and camogie teams.

Women's AFL is an ever-growing sport in Australia with more than 64,000 female participants, while almost half the AFL television audience is female.

In New South Wales, the Sydney Women's Australian Football League (SWAFL) celebrates its 10th anniversary this year with the addition of two new rookie teams, including the Shamrocks.

A group of Irish ex-pats got together late last year to begin work on forming a new Ladies AFL Club with the aim of getting more

GAA girls together and giving Aussie Rules a go.

Sydney is home to a strong GAA contingent but few players make the crossover.

However, following the success of the International Rules tour last year, more and more GAA players wanted to get involved in AFL.

As part of the tour, the NSW Ladies GAA team played a Compromise Rules game against a SWAFL's Dream Team which turned out to be quite one-sided, the GAA side winning 49-14.

"The oval ball and the different skills, in

particular the tackling, do take a bit of getting used to," said Jamie Fitzsimons from Cavan.

"But, as GAA players, I think we have the pace.

"We're quick at passing the ball off, too, and it's something that has worked to our advantage so far."

While the team is primarily made up of Irish backpackers and ex-pats, taking the helm is a Kiwi and long-time GAA player, Lisa Roper.

Pitted against six experienced teams and one other new team, the Shamrocks have become a force to be reckoned with in the competition.

As they approach the end of the league, the Shamrocks are currently fourth in the table and have earned a place in the finals.

The skill of the Shamrocks' players was acknowledged when five players, Marie Keating, Una McKay, Kate Lancaster, Lisa Roper and Lizzie Gavaghan, were selected to represent NSW at the recent State Games in Perth.

Marie from Limerick was picked on the squad of 40 best players from the tournament, while Una (Tyrone) won the Players' Player Award in two games.

In addition, seven Shamrocks have been chosen to represent SWAFL in a game against the US Freedom, who are the US Women's National AFL Team when they tour Australia next month.

For backpackers and players returning home from 'County Bondi', the Shamrocks replica jersey is a worthwhile souvenir.



Maeve O'Sullivan from Cork.