

The Irish Pétanque Association
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2009

REPORT OF THE HONORARY SECRETARY

1. GENERAL SUMMARY

1.1 A number of aspects and innovations conspired to make 2008 another year of mixed fortunes.

Membership:

1.1 (a) Any discussion on membership needs to take account of the fact that registered numbers give an artificial view of our state of health, due to the inclusion of many family members who do not actively participate in the administration of IPA related business or play in its competitions. That aside, of particular note, this year saw the departure of David Beck from our ranks, following long service as an officer and playing member of the Association. He resigned on the basis of his dissatisfaction with the selection process for the 2009 Celtic Challenge and, despite approaches from your Hon.Secretary and Hon.Treasurer to re-consider and potentially officiate at the Celtic Challenge, he has held to his original decision.

1.1 (b) A number of members of the North Down club, who had joined in 2007 specifically to take part in the IPA competitions which were held in North Down that year, did not renew personal membership.

IPA Competitions:

1.2 (a) The Annual Triples competition took place in Bushy Park, Dublin, as scheduled, on 19 April 2008. It was reasonably well supported, and was won by Jim Ryan, Davy Beck and Humberto Tavares who defeated Pierre and Jack Di Pizzo and Martin Lovisek in the final.

1.2 (b) The Annual Doubles and Singles competitions took place, as scheduled, on 20th and 21st September 2008 respectively at Sligo PC's impressive premises. The Doubles winners were John O'Grady and Fayaz Sookharry who defeated Denis Nightingale and Gavin Walker in the final. Fayaz took the Singles title, defeating Fergal Hogan in the final.

1.3 It was particularly pleasing that, with the exception of our President, the finalists for the Doubles and Singles were relatively recent additions to the IPA ranks.

1.4 Disappointingly, some lapses in the standard of expected 'behaviour' surfaced during the competitions and these are on the agenda for discussion at the AGM.

Celtic Challenge 2008:

1.5 The competition was held in Fochabers, Scotland. Wales took the honours, followed by Scotland 1 and 2. Ireland finished a very disappointing 4th, seeming to find particular difficulty with the terrain.

Celtic Challenge 2009

1.6 The 2009 Celtic challenge will be held on 2/3 May at Frankfield PC, Cork. A small Committee comprising members from the IPA Council and the Frankfield club are taking matters forward, although of necessity, the lion's share of the work falls to the latter. On behalf of the IPA, thanks are extended to the members of the Frankfield club for their time, effort and commitment to the project. Our Hon.Treasurer will give an up-date on the situation.

1.7 In a break with tradition, the composition of the 9 teams that contested the qualifying competition held in Dublin in September last, was determined by a Panel selected at last year's AGM. The 8 teams making up Ireland A and B emerged after a full 'round robin'. The future selection process is a matter for this year's AGM.

World Championships: November 2008

1.8 Dakar, Senegal was the venue and the IPA was represented by Richard Elvin, John O'Grady, Pierre di Pizzo and Fergal Hogan. The team finished 33rd in the main competition, but may have won the competition for nicest uniform, if the team's report of events is to be believed. The full 6 page report is available via the IPA website. Steven Spielberg has, to date, not confirmed if he is interested in the film rights.

Clubs:

1.9 The North Down club has enjoyed another successful year. The club is financially sound and, while no new members have been added this year, relative newcomers have been successful in many of the club's competitions and a full programme of well-supported competitions will be completed.

1.10 Regrettably, 2 North Down and IPA members are suffering health problems which preclude current participation in the sport. Council member Wilma Dunbar has sight problems which are not responding to treatment so far, and David McHenry has cancer which is significantly restricting his mobility.

1.11 The Cahir Petanque Club remains dormant. While the club is no longer affiliated to the IPA, your Hon. Sec. continues to provide material via email, but nothing has been forthcoming from the club over this last year.

1.12 Material also continues to be sent to the contact in the Galway area, and the Dublin based Cabinteely club, but no news is forthcoming.

1.13 Your Hon. Sec is also in fairly regular email contact with the main representative of the no longer affiliated Bushy Park club, however, there are no indications that re-affiliation to the IPA is a consideration.

1.14 I leave it to representatives of other clubs/groups here today to comment on the state of play in their particular corner of the Irish Petanque world.

2. COUNCIL

The full IPA Council did not meet this year. However, its office bearers, augmented by members of the Frankfield PC, Cork, met on 8 November 2008, in the Hon.Treasurer's home, to discuss preparations/responsibilities etc for the 2009 Celtic Challenge to be held at Frankfield.

CONCLUSION

3.1 The 'home' venue for this year's Celtic Challenge should give a particular 'lift' to our spirits as we move forward into another year. However, stimulating and maintaining longer term interest in administration and playing at a national level remains a problem. There appears to be a parochialism about the game whereby, we can attract local interest from those places where national competitions and the Celtic Challenge are played, but this dissipates when participation requires travel away from 'home'.

3.2 In addition, despite the number of playing venues, the absence of a seemingly viable, affiliated club in the Dublin area remains a conundrum.