



NORTH DOWN PETANQUE CLUB

SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT TO AGM – 18 APRIL 2007

GENERAL SITUATION

The Club continued to function in the year just past, with a membership of around 20. While this was a few less than the previous year, the 'drop outs' tended to be fairly irregular attenders anyway, so there was limited impact on the action at club nights and competitions.

CLUB NIGHTS/COMPETITIONS

As with most years, there is a hard core of members who brave the elements throughout the seasons, and the 'craic' is no less enjoyable for the sometimes-inclement conditions. We also enjoyed a substantial programme of competitions, with only 2 of the original programme not being played. The format whereby teams are not pre-ordained but rather, are constituted to try to ensure a breadth of skill in each team, now seems to be the preferred option. As the organiser of most of the competitions, I want to record my thanks to the members who gave of their time to assist and compete. Thanks are also due to those others who organised some of the competitions and to those who donated wine for the ballot, which now attends all

competitions. Congratulations again to the various winners, among whom there are some familiar names, but also some not so familiar.

The Committee would want to encourage all members to maximise their attendance at club nights and competitions, not only for its own sake, but also to ensure the best 'presentation' if/when potential new members come along.

THE COMMITTEE

The Committee met on 4 occasions during the year. The main outcomes of those meetings were;

- (a) Enquiries by the Secretary to the major funding bodies (Council, National Lottery Fund, NI Sports Council) confirmed that no assistance was available, other than for 'capital' works;
- (b) Individual prizes are now awarded for club competitions;
- (c) Invites to ex-members to re-join, yielded no takers;
- (d) A Car Boot sale and Fireside Quiz raised much needed funds (Wilma will report on these later) Our thanks go to David McHenry for his transport and to others who helped at the Car Boot Sale and to our President for his design work on the Quiz;

REPRESENTATION

The Club continues to be represented at external competitions. Humberto Tavares and George Davidson competed in the 'Boule Blitz' doubles competition in Cork, with minor success. At national level, Denis Nightingale, John Hennessy and George Davidson won the Irish Triples competition and at International level, North Down was again well represented in the Irish team competing in the Celtic Challenge in Dublin, where John Hennessy, George Davidson, Denis Nightingale and Humberto Tavares were part of the victorious

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Ireland team. The same members will represent Ireland again in the forthcoming Celtic Challenge in Abergavenny, Wales

LOCATION

Moving on to the matter of our playing arena, it has been clear to the Committee and members for some time, that we could no longer afford to pay the annual tariff of £1500 demanded by Pickie Bowling Club, without some radical measures to generate income. The Committee has been loathe to recommend the significant increase in membership fees which would have been required to meet these costs. It was also our view, based on experience, that there was neither the appetite nor the wherewithal within our Club to run the number and variety of other events/functions which might generate additional finance, especially when this was seen as only being required to pay the tariff. Thanks to Ian Smyth, potential pistes at a local council facility and Bangor Football Club were identified and considered. Approaches to both organisations were made to see if and at what cost, alternative premises could be made available.

Both parties replied positively to our approach and the costs were significantly less than the current tariff. This allowed the Committee to re-consider our position and the Secretary wrote to Pickie BC on 1 December 2006. (see letter attached). The outcome was, that following a meeting between your President, Secretary and Treasurer and the President and Treasurer of Pickie BC on 27 March 2007, the Pickie Committee has agreed that the tariff for the incoming year will be £500. Unlike previous years, however, there will be no offsetting against this amount, to recognise those North Down members who become full members of Pickie BC. A cheque for £500 and a letter expressing our appreciation for their generous gesture has already been sent to their Treasurer. The arrangement is for this year only, and fresh consideration will be given to our situation next year.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have enjoyed a 'stable' year in terms of play on Club nights and increased participation at competitions, compared to the previous year. In addition, the presence of some of our members in the National and International arena keeps the Club's name to the forefront. The successful outcome of negotiations with Pickie BC and the probability that a few recent attendees at Club nights will become full members are all factors from which we should take heart. I make no apology for re-iterating my conclusion in last year's report, that "you get out what you put in ". Those who put consistent effort into attendance at Club nights and competitions have enjoyed the year and look forward to a similar experience this year.

To: The Secretary
Pickie Bowling Club
82 Broadway, Bangor,
Co Down

From: the Secretary
North Down Petanque Club (NDPC)

1 December 2006

Dear

Your Committee will be aware from previous correspondence and the more recent meetings with members of our Committee, that we have been concerned for some time about the annual tariff of £1500 that we pay to play at Pickie BC. At its meeting on 29 November, our Committee discussed this matter and has concluded that, given our current financial position, together with a greatly reduced membership to that which pertained when this tariff was originally set, we will not be in a position to pay the present tariff when it becomes due in 2007 (around March, by custom and practice)

There were a number of financial and psychological factors that our Committee considered, some of which will be familiar to you. By way of background these were;

- (a) the fact that, prior to the outset of our relationship and the setting of the tariff, we were given to believe that the tariff would remain only for a relatively short period;
- (b) the fact that, (contrary to (a) above) the present tariff was subject to possible increase (as was intimated at the most recent meeting between our respective Committees)
- (c) unlike the green bowls fraternity, our members are perfectly content to play once a week, with a limited programme of weekend competitions;
- (d) broadly speaking, the other non-Petanque facilities available at Pickie are not a significant attraction for our members;
- (e) the nature of our game and Club requires little by way of outgoings and, until we came to Pickie, our membership fees were more than sufficient to meet our expenditure needs, without resort to other fund-raising events;
- (f) there is currently no appetite within our club, nor the membership numbers needed, to organise fund-raising events, particularly when the effort is perceived as only being required because of the annual tariff (notwithstanding our gratitude to your Committee for the offer of assistance with any fund-raising ventures)
- (g) the knowledge that no other Petanque Club of which we are aware, in Ireland and the UK, pays anything close to £1500 for equal facilities; and
- (h) that we have current offers of other local premises, with facilities adequate to our needs, at significantly less than £1500 pa.

I would want to stress that our Club has no underlying desire to leave the Pickie BC site, nor are the above factors in any way meant as a criticism of the current arrangements or the Committee/members of Pickie BC. We fully appreciate that a large Club such as Pickie must be run on business grounds, in order to survive, and try to attract whatever income it can from whatever sources are available. It is equally the case that our Club, in its present

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situation, and in order to survive, can no longer sustain the current tariff and perceives better value for money from other available options which will meet our relatively simple needs.

When your Committee has considered the foregoing, it may be that there will a willingness to reduce the annual tariff to a figure which would be acceptable to our Club, as being more in keeping with our size, nature, needs and resources. That is our hope, and we would, of course, be happy to discuss this. However, your Committee will also understand that we must continue to plan for a 'worst case scenario' of re-location some time in the New Year. We do not, however, intend to 'sign up' for anything until your Committee has considered the matter and has responded.

I look forward to hearing from you.

George W Davidson

PS. Please note my change of address/phone no.etc as set out at the bottom of the page.