**Tuairisc an Rúnaí 2023**

(Secretary’s Report 2023)

The Club AGM is the gathering each year where we reflect on achievements to date & also look forward to & plan for the events of the year to come. In this year, 2023, having completed our 122nd year as a GAA club we can certainly cherish our longevity & resilience, &, drawing strength from these credentials, we can look forward to the coming year, 2024, with purpose & confidence. As a gathering of like-minded people the club has, over several years & indeed decades, merged into a functional unit which provides for & supports its patrons on an all year round basis & not just during the active periods of its constituent sports. Over the course of the last couple of decades & particularly during recent years, the parents of the participating children have become more involved in the participation of their children in the club. As a consequence, the club has responded to the availability of parents / grandparents / guardians on the side-lines of playing fields & has initiated the adoption of sports & activities for those age groups to participate in. These outlets have contributed enormously to the appeal of the club to a wide cohort of people.

Social sports have made the playing field available once again to people of all ages, many of whom regarded their playing days as having been behind them. The introduction of Rounders & Handball to the club has greatly facilitated this concept of ‘inclusiveness’ as people, heretofore confined to the side-lines, now find themselves actively involved in & participating in social & indeed competitive sports. In the present day Ireland where there is a diverse population of people from many different countries, many of them have now found for themselves a sport that they can identify with & indeed participate in with some vigour & expertise. The concept of inclusiveness & social involvement has also manifested itself by way of an increase in activities in the Kevins ‘night life’ in the locality. The little club-house in Donore Avenue has become a base for traditional & some not so traditional singing & musical entertainment of late thereby ensuring that the club activities have not stopped when daylight fades – they have merely moved indoors & continue apace.

Those progressions combined have seen the club participation in sports & the involvement of its patrons alter drastically over the last couple of decades & even over recent years. Club participation in Scór, Rounders & Handball has opened avenues of participation for patrons & has brought recognition to the club through the successes of those various teams in the competitive & social environments. Added to this are the Social Camogie, Social Hurling, Social Rounders & Kevins Heroes teams that have made club life an enjoyable concept for so many. A total of 823 game participation outlets are currently being pursued by club patrons thereby ensuring that, for those who would like to participate, there is an outlet available.

Teams currently fielded:-

Hurling = 16; Camogie = 11 Rounders = 4 Social Teams = 4.

The wide range of activities pursued & the participant numbers involved places a considerable burden on the club management given that the club does not own any playing facilities & depends on acquiring playing space as the playing season evolves. This draws into focus the lack of provision of playing space for children & others by Dublin County GAA Board & Dublin City Council over the decades past. It is regrettable that in 2023 the club has to borrow the use of facilities & beg access to same, weekly, while it caters for the needs of its patrons who hail from all over Ireland, from all over Europe & indeed from all over the world. The club has always met its financial obligations to the aforementioned Co. Board without receiving a quid pro quo regarding facilities required for its day to day operation. With the passage of time the club patronage is increasing as is the number of teams that must be facilitated. This is an endorsement of the work taking place in the club itself while the shortage of playing facilities is an indictment on the Co. Board & the GAA. Running a club where all playing facilities have to be paid for up front has put large & constant pressure on financial resources. It is a testament to the management that they can make facilities & outlets available to the membership on an ongoing basis, year after year. This is another aspect of the club that is in constant overdrive all year, every year.

Credit our social event & fundraising volunteers. They have their finger on the pulse of the club. They have been in situ for a number of seasons & thereby know the financial & social requirements for the various events at different times of the year. Fundraising events are organised at the local level to aid a team or a specific sporting code, or at the club level to ensure finance is available for annual expenditure or further still at the macro level for development projects or major equipment purchase. Regular juvenile committee meetings are held to help determine how teams are progressing; plans are put in place which are fine-tuned & are then ratified at monthly Executive meetings. There is, nevertheless, always space, time & resources available for the children to enjoy & celebrate when those special festivities arrive.

There is a symmetry between the cohorts of sports people & their families who frequent the club. People seeking different experiences & different outlets are finding their niche in the club. Scór, Camogie, Rounders & Handball offer an outlet to all genders of all age groups so that different members of the same family can engage in several different sporting outlets. Hurling similarly offers participation options to girls & boys up to & including the age of 12. In recent months, interested people have come together to participate in music & song in the clubhouse. This is to be encouraged & can, if promoted, become a social occasion for people going forward. The different sports have all completed their prescribed competition fixtures. This is the most important goal of the club each year – to ensure that participants can partake in their selected sport at the appropriate level that is suitable to them. In recent years the club has been having considerable success in Rounders competitions at different levels. In 2023, the Intermediate ladies won the All Ireland title on 9th September. They had built on the experience of 2022 when they finished All Ireland runners-up, to achieve a convincing win in the 2023 All-Ireland Final over Michael Glaveys of Roscommon by 25 runs to 3 runs. The Intermediate ladies team 2023 numbering 14 players had participants from seven different countries involved. The ladies had followed on from similar All Ireland successes in recent years by the U12 Rounders team & also the Intermediate mixed Rounders team. Credit for this success with Rounders in the space of just four years must go to Club P.R.O. Daith Ó hAoláin who took a personal interest in the game & championed its introduction to the club. Having identified the sporting & playing niche, the players duly responded & have made an impact on the game of Rounders in Ireland. Special Congratulations to Erica Meslin who has become the first club Gaelic Games All Star by winning the accolade for her performances with the Kevins Intermediate Ladies Rounders Team 2023.

Camogie participation has continued to grow in the club. Girls of any age can find a camogie team in the club which meets their age & ability requirements. Camogie mentoring has kept pace with the growing numbers playing the game in the club thus affording a positive exposure to the game for the participants thereby ensuring that Kevins players are making it onto teams representing Dublin in juvenile competitions. Schools camogie is supported in the club & this helps to boost participation & make available a development pathway for budding camogie players in the club catchment area.

Going forward, I feel that hurling in Kevins is in need of a boost, as, despite relatively large numbers playing the game, there does not seem to be sufficient players of a relatively high standard coming through. Given that practically all teams are adequately populated, one would hope for the emergence of more players of a higher standard than are coming through at present. This may materialise over time; the numbers are there for this to happen so maybe this is an aspect of their game that could be pursued over the coming couple of seasons. Players on the 2nd & 3rd adult teams need to be pushing for places on the 1st team at all times. There is relatively little movement between the team-sheet listings from year to year which may indicate that players are happy just to play within their comfort zones rather than striving to break new boundaries & to put pressure on for inclusion in a higher adult team.

Social games are filling a particular & deserving need in the club. It makes available an option or outlet for former club team players & others who would wish to play games in a non-competitive manner & where there is a low risk of injury. People (parents/guardians & others as well as former players) are using this outlet to maintain their interest in the games & to maintain a level of physical fitness. It is also a good way to enable people to have a meaningful involvement in the club who, otherwise, may drift away from the club when their competitive playing days have ended.

Going forward, there is emerging an interest in Handball which is being driven by club P.R.O Daithi. This is a game that is appealing at present to quite a few juvenile club members. This could be ramped up to include adult ladies & gents. Access is available locally & in Croke Park to practice & to get some club handball teams established. It is hoped to, with the co-operation of some local schools, to construct some basic Handball Alleys which could also double up as ball-walls for hurling/camogie practice. Once in place in the schools, these alleys/ball-walls could be of benefit to both the school concerned & the club.

Centre stage on each Saturday morning are the ABC & younger juvenile teams. They & their parents & mentors practice their games & hone their skills in the confines & safety of Loreto Schools.

The ‘Kevins Heroes’ special needs team, similarly, have their get together & games & are a big part of the weekend gathering.

The Club Compás Programme gives clubs a digital self-assessment tool to review their performance & get directions on how to address any operational shortcomings. Each club receives a bespoke self-assessment report that scores their performance against best practice. This report also gives them advice on ‘what to do next’ and learning resources available to assist. Once the self-assessment aspect of the programme is operational, clubs have an option to submit applications to become accredited clubs & receive awards in recognition of their commitment to good governance. Criteria in the club are grouped into; ‘**Must do**’ ‘**Should do**’ & ‘**Could do**’ Priority Ratings. Criteria falling short of what is required are identified & can be worked on going forward to improve the club overall compliance score. In 2023, the club achieved a 79% rating compared to the most compliant clubs participating in the programme. Aspects to be improved on are identified in the process & the aim is to improve on this score over the coming 12 months.

To make it all happen requires input from many quarters & many people. Club Children’s Officer ensures that mentors are adequately trained & vetted to enable them to perform their functions with ease & due care & attention. Team mentors roster their teams for suitable times & training slots at the required venues. Team mentors themselves are required to partake in training & safeguarding exercises: this is overseen by the Club Children’s Officer, Karen Jordan. Great credit is due to Karen & to the entire club cohort of mentors for all our sports as it is hugely important that our patrons participate in an environment conducive to good Health, Safety, Welfare & wellbeing regulations.

Going forward:-

The population of the South Inner City area is growing & will continue to do so going forward as new housing developments come on stream. The increase in club patronage numbers is likely to continue & this requires that the club sources more playing outlets going forward. Plans are being formulated for upgrading of the Loreto Schools site. The long awaited Dublin City Council playing pitch development has stalled in recent times but it is hoped that it will eventually come on stream. Handball alleys/ball walls are a possibility for some local schools – these can offer training outlets for hurling/camogie all year round with the provision of basic lighting – while the facilities can also benefit the schools concerned. It would be desirable that Dublin Co. Board would support some club projects & maybe this is an avenue which could be pursued. Meanwhile we must continue apace with the fundraising drive to enable projects to be pursued when opportunities arise. Continue to develop the club/school unit that is such a key factor in the sporting ethos of the area. Make maximum use of available grants for sporting bodies when the opportunities arise.

Thanks to all of the club patrons for their continued support & loyalty.

Thanks to the mentors who keep the thing together all year round.

Thanks to the various committee members who play such a central role in club work & life.

We look forward to 2024 with energy & vigour.

Patsy Kearns