

Iverk Show holds AGM

Robert Dowley to succeed Wattie Walsh as Chairman



Walter Walsh, who had diligently chaired the Iverk Show Committee for the past 21 years, is pictured at last week's Iverk Show AGM with Joe Malone (Show President), Matt Dempsey (President of the RDS) and new Iverk Show Chair Robert Dowley. | Photos: Joe Cashin

The Iverk Show held its AGM on Monday last, January 19th, with long-standing Chairman Wattie Walsh retiring from his post, with Robert Dowley to succeed him as Chair.

There was a great round of applause for both Wattie and Robert in a packed Piltown Community Centre.

Wattie, by his own admission, was not a man for great speeches he thanked all the committee for their support over the 21 years he served as Chair and he was delighted to see the show progress on so many fronts.

The move to Sunday had been positive for attendances and now many other agricultural shows want to run on Sundays around Ireland.

He hopes that the show would retain its long-standing community status, in which people people can meet and enjoy the attractions. Wattie also said he was lucky man as the weather proved pleasant last year and indeed for the vast majority of the shows held over the past decade.

Joe Malone, who was re-elected as President, paid tribute to Robert and to Wattie. Joe himself has been a committee member for 62 years and chairman for five years, and was succeeded by Hilary Delahunty for three years before Wattie assumed the Chairmanship.

Joe reckoned that Wattie had done a terrific job and got stuck in; the strength and charisma of Wattie ensured that all came on board and supported him.

Joe Malone wished Tybroughney man Robert Dowley all the best in the future; Joe was also presented also with the Iverk Show medal, and he thanked his wife Elizabeth for her support in the show as did Wattie with respect to his wife Laoise for all her support down through the years.

Robert Dowley follows a family line with his grandfather Louis and his father, Robert, serving as Chairmen previously; Louis in the pre-WWII era and in the late 50s, with Robert following in the late 60s.

Robert Dowley thanked all for supporting him and hoped to tweak and improve the show. Vice-Chairman Willie Kearns also praised Robert in succeeding Wattie.

Matt Dempsey, the President of the RDS, who served as Irish Farmers Journal Editor for 25 years, addressed the gathering as guest speaker and delivered an informative and entertaining speech.

He gave a great lesson on farming and agricultural shows and gave some background to the RDS spring show.

Joe Malone said the Farmers Journal had been fortunate to have had such an excellent editor for so long in Matt Dempsey, who is also a farmer.

Mr Dempsey's talk proved most informative and his advice was similar to that of Wattie's: to not to make the show too big and to ensure that it retained its local atmosphere.

Recalling the Spring Show, which once drew in attendances of 250,000 to the RDS, Matt Dempsey said that congestion and farm machinery capacity were among the reasons why the show was cancelled in 1992.

The Dublin Horse Show, first held in 1864, has proven a huge success for decades and can boast of five star international status, and has also grown into a great event on the Irish social calendar each August.

There was talk of having an Iverk exhibition in Dublin at the RDS; however, the RDS lacks a museum itself at present.

The RDS really started in 1731 via the Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland and was retitled the Royal Dublin Society in the 1870s, AGM delegates were told. They had a mission to improve farming, just as the Iverk Show did in the 1820s, when it was

founded by Lord Bessborough.

He noted that the Kilkenny Lord had helped in famine relief via special wall building at the time, with Kilkenny suffering less than the west during The Great Hunger

Land agitation was a big topic in the 1870s, as was the move from tillage to cattle.

The Danes went to America, said Matt Dempsey, and saw the great prairies and took the decision to stop tillage and focus on pig meats, becoming great suppliers to the British market, competing with Ireland as it turned out, but had success. They had co-ops too and the Irish followed their example.

The Spring Show's success grew during the post war era, with many of the classes run at the RDS each year since having moved to the Tullamore Show and elsewhere.

The Iverk Show is doing very well, added Mr Dempsey, and he was delighted to open the show back in 2013. He has great admiration for the committee and all their work and hoped that the great Iverk Show tradition would be retained well into the future.

On the financial front, 2014 proved another positive year for the show with a surplus again recorded after a good day last August. Here's hoping for more fine weather and another good show this year.