

## Cologne Celtics' Cork Trip Planning Report: January 2020

On Thursday night (16.01.2020), I flew from Cologne/Bonn Airport to Dublin, and from there, took the Aircoach to Cork. I travelled with two members (Lydia and Renate) of Städtepartnerschaft Köln-Cork e.V., and we stayed in Cork until Sunday (19.01.2020). I resided at my family home, whereas the ladies stayed at Sheila's Hostel. This trip was organised to lay the groundwork for the March visit from the Cologne Celtics...

Friday started quite early with a meeting at City Hall with some of their representatives involved in the twinning area and the members of the Städtepartnerschaft Köln-Cork e.V... This meeting was more about stating who we are when the event is taking place and the grants available from Cork City Council for the return leg... The message here was to arrange the detail with Councillor Mick Finn, who would coordinate with the International Relations/Twinning Department of the Council.

Following this meeting, there were a few hours until the next appointment, which involved meeting the Lord Mayor of Cork, Councillor John Sheehan. Also present were two former Lord Mayors of Cork: Councillor Mick Finn and Councillor Tony Fitzgerald. All concerned expressed interest in the development of a GAA club in Köln and especially in our interest and growth in hurling. All concerned also stated their hope for further development and integration of European GAA clubs with clubs in Ireland.

The *Ard-Mhéara* was presented with a Cologne Celtics jersey, and he expressed his delight, having never previously received a European GAA club jersey. This meeting concluded with arrangements to meet Councillor Mick Finn the following day to break down the specifics of our project.

The next day (Saturday 18.01.2020), I met Councillor Finn and the two members of Städtepartnerschaft Köln-Cork e.V. at the restaurant *Electric* in Cork City. We outlined the main topics of concern that we had... We outlined our plan of action as visiting Páirc Uí Chaoimh followed by a visit to St. Finbarr's GAA Club.

Following the meal, we travelled to Páirc Uí Chaoimh and saw the available facilities. The all-weather pitch was deemed the most suitable location to attract a crowd, have a pitch ideal for March weather, and allow the Cologne Celtics players to visit the Páirc itself...

The pitch is the same size as a full hurling pitch which is far bigger than anything our players have played on before. We decided that having two matches (involving four teams) followed by one match on a full pitch was the best way to ensure that all players would be involved whilst allowing our non-Irish members to experience a game on a full-length hurling pitch.

From the Páirc, we went to the St. Finbarr's GAA club. The facilities at the Barrs are impressive, with three full hurling pitches, an Astroturf, a handball alley, a gym, a club shop and a clubhouse/bar. After a brief tour of the facilities, we sat down as a group to outline how the days would play out...

- Friday: (in the morning) a civic reception for the Celtics with the Lord Mayor of Cork, and from there, we take a bus from City Hall to St. Finbarr's GAA Club.
- Friday (early afternoon), a training session at the St. Finbarr's Club...
- Saturday match: bus at 10:45 to the Páirc. Players will have a chance to use changing facilities to prepare for a game. Players divided into 4 teams – mixed amongst clubs (after outlining that most of our players have less than 12-months' experience of the sport). Two x 20-minute games will be played across the pitch, followed by 1 x 15-minute full pitch.
- This match will include camogie players with the recommendation that maybe Cologne players mark Cologne players. This has also been provided as an option for male players, depending on the other team's skill level, etc.
- Following the match, the players will be shown Páirc Uí Chaoimh proper before being transported to St. Finbarr's GAA club.
- At St. Finbarr's, there will be a reception at the clubhouse. This will allow players to socialise with live music, food, and opportunities to purchase alcohol provided at the club.
- This reception will also include a presentation of a Shield to the winners of this first "tournament". This reception will be about the friendship between clubs...
- Following the reception, we will be provided with a bus back into the city – the club is also only ten minutes from Cork City if people need to take taxis etc. into the centre.
- Sunday: We are currently looking into whether there is a match that our players can attend. Cork plays Louth in the National Football League, but there may also be club hurling matches that we may be able to attend...

This was the final meeting of the weekend that had an impact on our Cork trip. Everyone I encountered was enthusiastic about the trip, and they hoped we would have a good time. Councillor Finn has stated that should this trip be successful, we may have the blueprint for future trips to Cork playing other clubs... Should this trip be a success, there are no limits to what could be established between our club and future Cork trips...

If there are any more questions or issues, please write to me, and I will send more information if I think of anything else discussed/mentioned in passing.

Le meas,

Oisín O'Mahony  
Cologne Celtics: Irish Language & Cultural Officer