

## **SECRETARY REPORT 2023**

Another busy year comes to an end and the club continues to grow at an exponential rate. Although this is welcome, it does bring its own problems, not least the additional pressure it puts on the time of our club volunteers. I may be repeating myself, but I am constantly amazed at the generosity of our volunteers who give selflessly of their time and energy throughout the year. For the Ulster championship game against Armagh, we had 130 matchday volunteers, a phenomenal showing. Gaelic clubs are nothing without volunteers, who give of their time constantly for the societal good, a trait lost in quite a few areas of society in general. One of the striking things from my perspective is the quality of volunteer that we have within our club. Innovative, driven, highly skilled and able to both take direction and lead on their own initiative as required. I am also keenly aware that as the club grows, our current model is unsustainable, and we need to look at new ideas in terms of ensuring that we recruit new volunteers to lessen the burden.

All in, we hosted over 80 competitive games at Healy Park this year including the McRory Cup final where we watched our own Omagh CBS, with four of our own players in the panel lift the trophy before going on to win the Hogan Cup. Additionally, we hosted a number of massive games in the Ulster championship and All Ireland qualifying series. The virtual completion of our hall in addition to the kitchen facilities added to support our Café has allowed us to significantly enhance our matchday offering to supporters. It has also led to a raft of different, additional events taking place within the club along with an already bulging sporting calendar. In particular, the hosting of the Ulster Scor senior final for the very first time proved a massive success. The many compliments from the various competitors from across Ulster in relation to our facilities and indeed the hospitality provided was deeply satisfying.

In addition to this event, we hosted the launch of the ladies Ulster minor football championship, two Feiseanna, a number of live music events, a Night at the Musicals, a school show, MMA and boxing events, along with our brilliantly production of Wonka, all of which were massive successes. The ability to provide substantial food offerings has seen several clubs and counties avail of our excellent facilities for post-match meals, all of which provide a welcome revenue stream in addition to showcasing our facilities.

Our club truly is multi-faceted, combining all the traditional gaelic games under one umbrella, still the only club in Tyrone where this is the case, whilst continuing to excel in our cultural pastimes with Scór at both youth and senior level. The addition of the GAA for All initiative along with thriving Toddler's and Senior Citizens groups ensures that the club is a place for the young, not so young and for those with additional needs.

### **Club Committee**

The club committee has again worked hard in their various roles throughout the year. Clearly our club has become a massive undertaking, and this puts a significant onus on the committee in terms of planning, decision making and keeping the wheels turning. Not for one minute would I suggest that we have got everything right, indeed there are quite a few areas of improvement, however, what I do know for certain is that everyone is there to do their very best for the club. Out-with the main committee, various other members engaged in working groups for specific projects and this method of work seems to be the way forward as it spreads the workload without putting the additional time pressures involved in attending meetings. I want to express my extreme gratitude to all of our committee for their work and assistance throughout a challenging year.

Throughout the remainder of this report I will provide details in relation to the various sections of the club. These are an overview essentially and will not contain every single event and no doubt there will be unintentional omissions for which I apologise in advance!

### **Senior Football**

Without doubt this was one of the toughest seasons in quite a few years with a fairly poor league campaign which had us looking over our shoulder for quite a significant part of the season, although a decent run at the end of the league saw us finish 7<sup>th</sup>.

The senior championship saw a first round exit to Ardboe in Galbally in what was a very disappointing end to the season. Injuries to key, experienced players played a significant part in the defeat, however, I think it is also important to highlight a distinctly poor performance from the referee on the

day had a substantial impact on the outcome of the game. That said, we still had chances which we failed to take and ultimately, we have to shoulder the blame ourselves. Undoubtedly the disruption of having to find a new manager following Laurence Strain stepping down had a major impact on the season. The uncertainty around the management certainly distracted from pre-season preparations and this led to a significant number of injuries which seemed to continue unabated through the season. The appointment of Lenny Harbinson we hoped, given his pedigree would provide a boost, however, despite the good intentions of all, it was clearly an appointment which did not work out. It would be easy to start recriminating and apportioning blame but what's done is done and it is important that we look to make the necessary changes to ensure that we give ourselves the best possible opportunity to succeed.

I have no doubt that we have the players capable of challenging for another O'Neill Cup and that the desire is within the squad to do what is required to achieve this. The same desire and determination resides in our committee and together we will work to ensure that we move in the right direction.

The Senior Reserves, after a poor start finished very strongly in terms of their league campaign. The introduction of several of our minors along with a number of more experienced players saw some excellent performances throughout the year. Unfortunately, a couple of poor performances and results in a league of this standard puts paid to any hopes of winning the reserve league and although we pushed all the way we just left ourselves too much to do to catch a Carrickmore side that dropped just two points all season. The reserve knockout began with a brilliant win over Ardboe, followed up by a more comfortable victory over Coalisland to take us to the semi-final stage against a fairly decent Donaghmore team. A poor start to the game saw us on the back foot almost immediately and despite a much improved second half performance, we left ourselves too much to do.

I would like to thank Lenny, Kevin, Aidy, John and Conor for all their work with the teams this year. It is a massively time consuming role to be involved at the top level in our games and this commitment does not go unnoticed. The players also should be commended as the lack of reward was not due to a lack of effort and as a club we thank them for their efforts.

## **Senior Hurling**

I am pleased to report that we finally got over the line this year to win our first Tyrone championship in 50 years following a brilliant performance against Naomh Colmcille in the Tyrone Junior championship final. With a number of minors coming in and a number of older players departing the stage, the fitness levels have improved significantly under the guidance of Paul O'Grady. The South Ulster Junior league provided several competitive games to start the season and allowed several of our younger players to bed in.

The Tyrone league provided evidence of improvement with battling performances against Lisbellaw and Eoghan Ruadh and a first victory over Eire Og in a long number of years at this level. All this provided excellent preparation for the Junior Championship final although a very slow start appeared to have scuppered any plans for victory. All credit to the team, once the nerves disappeared, they inched their way closer and closer and when Eoghan Winters struck for goal early in the second half, there was only going to be one winner. The additional pace of Fionnbharr Taggart caused panic within the NCC team and along with a stout defensive display in the last 10 minutes the final whistle was greeted with scenes of great jubilation.

Unfortunately, the make up of the Ulster Junior championship makes a mockery of the name. The ability of counties to nominate the losers of their senior finals to play in the junior championship meant that we faced a very strong St Eunan's team in Letterkenny. Although the team battled gamely, in all truth the game was over after 10 minutes! That said, a very good season and clear improvement in the level of play and a well deserved trophy in the cabinet.

I would like to thank Paul O'Grady, Gerard Fox and Liam Flanagan for leading this group and for the enormous amount of work that they put in throughout the whole season.

## **Senior Ladies**

The senior ladies lived up to their promise to win the Intermediate Championship in a well attended final against our neighbours, Cappagh.

Throughout the year, in the league, the team showed continuous improvement and left themselves in good place coming to the championship, although clearly the stop/start nature of the league is a significant issue and hopefully one that can be remedied in future. A fourth place finish was sufficient for a play-off place.

The championship campaign saw a facile victory against Moy, before a strong performance against Ardboe saw us through to the final. Although the game failed to live up to its pre-match billing, maybe the fact that it was a local derby impacted on both teams at the final whistle we had 3 points to spare and a third intermediate championship. The team then defeated Moy in the playoffs before a fixture pile up left the management with a headache with a league semi-final fixed in the week that the Ulster campaign start.

A tough decision was made to concede the league game, a position that we should not have been put in. The Ulster campaign saw us draw Derry champions Steelstown, and much like the hurling championship, it is somewhat of a mockery that we had to play against a senior team and although the girls battled hard, it was too much of an ask against a team that was physically stronger and much more experienced.

It is important now to back up this success as we move into senior football. With a successful minor campaign also this year, clearly we have the talent pool to start to compete at senior level. I want to put on record my thanks to Aidy McCanny, Vinny, Stephen, Laurence, Ann and Elaine who have worked very hard with the minor and senior teams and the success achieved was just rewards for all their efforts.

## **Youth**

Our youth officer Barry McGinn has produced a more in-depth report so I will only comment briefly on youth matters. The numbers attending our youth teams is increasing all the time and is testament to the hard work of our coaches and the level of coaching being provided. A steady improvement in all groups is clearly evident and we need to ensure this continues. There was a significant pressure on pitches for games and training, as can only be expected given the large number of teams there your youth officer and Declan McGirr who managed the competing priorities brilliantly. I also wish to extend my

congratulations to all our youth players who represented the club at County level throughout the year and of course to our 4 Hogan Cup winners.

## **Scór**

Another very successful year of Scór at both senior and youth level saw several County titles brought back to the club. An Ulster Senior title on home ground was annexed by our Ballad Group, although there was significant disappointment that our thoroughly deserving Novelty Act did not get their just rewards. An excellent performance by the Ballad Group was not enough to yield victory at the All Ireland final in Killarney, however they did themselves and the club very proud and I congratulate them and their mentor Nuala on their achievements.

## **Culture**

In our Irish language section we aim to sing our National Anthem at as many home Senior games as possible, many thanks to all singers involved and also those who helped sing it at our Tyrone Club Championship games hosted at Healy Park. Again anyone interested in doing this for next year to come forward and let us know.

## **Health and Wellbeing**

The health & well-being project team consists of: Daryl Burns, Rosemary Carson, Leanne Kearney, lead by Dr McMullan as Health Well-being officer. The clubs policies, partners, activities and environment are aligned with supporting the holistic health of our club members and community. The Omagh St Enda's Dads and Lads has somewhat fallen back this year, however it has been a great programme and hopefully can get back to full throttle next year. The aim of the programme is to encourage former players and also people that hadn't played before to become part of our club and play some social football.

Gaelic for mums and others continue to grow, with over 50 ladies registered to play and are club members. G4MO group are very active in volunteering within the club and thoroughly enjoy the social & friendship benefits.

A Toddler Group runs weekly on a Monday and provides a very welcoming environment for mums to chat and children to socialise. On Wednesday's at Café 32, Alison runs a senior citizens club that has proved extraordinarily successful. I Would like to thank Dr McMullan and his committee for all the support & help in promoting health and well-being within our club and community. We look forward to building on the success of these programs and more in 2024.

### **Club Omagh**

Once again we are indebted to the members of Club Omagh for their continued backing in providing the financial support to allow us to keep developing our facilities. In times where finances are stretched and funding difficult to come by, the monthly and annual subscriptions are more critical than ever. It was heartening to see an increase in Club Omagh membership this year and this is something we hope to build on going forward.

The installation of floodlights at St Patrick's Park has been completed as well as the redevelopment of our kitchen and Caife 32. The hall is just about complete and additional works completed at St Patrick's Park and CBS Park with the installation of new goalposts, a toilet block and kitchen area as well as stoning of the internal area and kerbing. This has all been down to the generosity of our Club Omagh members. Our annual Golf day held at the wonderful Omagh Golf club was another successful day and my sincere thanks to our sponsors of that event and to Dr McMullan, Declan McGirr and Declan Devlin for their assistance in organising the event.

### **Healy Park**

We continue our partnership with O'Neills in relation to Healy Park and continue working with the 3&3 committee to introduce improvements as best as possible. The floodlight issue has finally been resolved with the installation

of an LED lighting system that is comparable to any in the country. I would commend the Chairman on the fact that he was able to negotiate that the club would incur no expense in the installation and that the full project was entirely funded by Croke Park and Tyrone county board.

Secondly, the water channel at the rear of the stand roof which was heavily blocked and led to surface water in the stand concourse, flooding in the main ladies toilets after heavy rainfall as well as cosmetic damage to the changing room areas has been fixed.

In terms of the pitch itself, it has stood up brilliantly to heavy usage over a prolonged period of time and I want to thank David Irvine for his diligent work and expertise. Our pitch is the only one in the county used 12 months of the year and it is important that we continue to protect as best we can.

Thanks to Sport NI, it is hoped that we will have 4 new turnstiles installed in the next month or so, although we have had trouble getting this done to date between issues with the manufacturer and indeed the contractor completing the job.

It is hoped that in the incoming year we can get ball-stops erected, however, given the significant cost, this is something that will need to be negotiated with the 3&3 committee.

### **Going Forward**

Undoubtedly as a club we are progressing year on year, becoming bigger and stronger and this requires the continued support of our members and indeed we need to widen the support base to ensure that people don't become overburdened leading to burnout. On the field we need to continue striving to improve and develop from u8.5 up to senior level and across all codes. To do this we need to develop the structures required in terms of coaching, coach education, strength and conditioning and all the other elements to the player development pathway. The introduction (finally) of a Games Development Officer will help tie this together and provide a much needed programme of coaching within our primary schools. I wish Cain Bradley all the very best in the role and I am sure that he will have the support and assistance of all our club members. With the completion of our main hall redevelopment we need to



look at what our next development plans are as we look towards our centenary year. A new strategic plan for the next 3,5 and 10 years is something that we should have had completed this year and is a disappointing aspect of the past year that we have failed to do so.

### **Mile Buiochas**

Finally whilst the role of secretary is a privilege, it is also quite challenging and simply could not be done properly without substantial assistance from a myriad of people. Conor and Ciarán despite their own challenging roles are always there and despite consensus not always being achieved on every matter, the constant challenging of each other has no doubt been a massive benefit to the club. Nuala Teague as assistant secretary has been immense and the amount of time and effort that she puts into this club should not be underestimated and I thank Nuala wholeheartedly for her work. I also want to thank all the members, committee members and coaches who assist me day in day out, I am truly grateful.

Needless to say, this was a tough year for me on a personal level following the death of my father in the first few days of 2023. Dad introduced me to the GAA at a young age, initially as a nuisance and temporary glass collector in the old social club further down the Gortin Road on a Sunday afternoon! Kieran Young's hourly rate was a bottle of coke and a packet of crisps and as I came back in my early teens as an actual glass collector, the hourly rate had not improved much!

In those days, u12 was the youngest grade, so it was with some trepidation as an 8 year old I was thrown over the fence from Lisanelly to start my journey with Omagh St Enda's and dad was there to support me all the time. There's many a story to be told, but perhaps the bribing of the referee at the Feile in County Meath with a tin of beer at 11 in the morning is the pinnacle! Even though his own involvement with the GAA ended relatively early, he was always asking about the club and how things were going.

His loss was a shock to us all, but in true GAA fashion, the community of Omagh St Enda's supported, comforted and mourned with us in a manner only

the GAA can. From stewarding at the wake, the massive attendance at the funeral and a guard of honour stretching the whole length of Castle Street (which would have embarrassed him no end) was something that neither I nor the family will ever forget. The wonderful lunch at Caife 32 after the burial was also deeply appreciated and I wish to thank you all for helping us through this tough time.

To Donna, the ultimate GAA widow, the continued support (sometimes through gritted teeth) day and daily does not have the appropriate words do justify all that you do for me, mile buíochas ó mo chroí!

*Ciarán Mac Daibhéid*