

## Annual Report of the Secretary 2017

Once again it was an extremely busy year for the Club both on and off the pitch. Once again our members stood up, educated and organised themselves and put their collective shoulders to the wheel in a fine way.

One difference this year was the appointment of our Games Promotion Officer Martin Lynch. Martin hit the ground running and in no time at all had forged relationships with all seven schools in Ashbourne. Together with Club Coach Maura Roche they are bringing Gaelic Games to the fore in the schools. We are already seeing the benefits of this with new members in both codes.

The Club identified the need for a Games Promotion Officer some years ago but funding was always a stumbling block.

The Club and schools link is essential for good communication in supporting the schools with Gaelic games. Clubs which are organised well on a consistent basis in supporting their local schools will themselves be successful in the long term. Historically there has been mutual respect and good communication between the Club and the local schools but with the establishment of two new primary schools, one secondary school and a rapid increase in population in Ashbourne the need was now even greater than ever to promote our games. It cannot be taken for granted that these children will automatically join our club and play Gaelic games.

A steering committee consisting of Club head of games Tony Wall, Tom O Shaughnessy, Jimmy Walsh and Pdraig Durkan was established and they will be the co-ordinators of the programme between the G.P.O. and the Club coaches and committees.

The need for a Games Promotion Officer became a priority and finally a reality in Feb this year. After a lengthy selection process the Club finally got a G.P.O. Martin Lynch.

In only ten months with Donaghmore Ashbourne Martin has made a seriously positive impact on both Club and all seven schools in Ashbourne.

He is on both secondary schools sports management teams. Coláiste De Lacy entered their first Gaelic football teams in the Leinster competitions and together with their school coach Conor Brennan won the Oliver Coogan Shield. They also formed their first Camogie team this year and Fiona Madden is their school coach.

Martin has established a Coaching and Leadership programme for T.Y. students which will be delivered in Coláiste De Lacy with T.Y. co-ordinator Stephanie Spillane and with Sean Roberts in Ashbourne Community School which has five T.Y. classes. He has also established a work experience module for T.Y. students and the feedback from the students and teachers has been extremely positive. He is professional and encouraging to all students and they share a mutual respect.

Gaelscoil Na Mí and Educate Together primary schools entered the Cumann na mBunscoil competition for the first time this year and St Declan's primary school entered a hurling team this year along with their football teams. The schools blitzes, which brought some school players to the Club for the first time, were a great success and will continue next year.

1200 Primary School children in Ashbourne are now receiving GAA coaching each week from Martin and Club coach Maura Roche. In November they began coaching Fundamental Hurling to those students.

He is also very involved in Coach education. The Coach Pathway programme focuses on continued education for coaches so that they can improve through specifically designed courses, workshops and conferences incorporating the principles of best practice. He has delivered two GAA Foundation courses, which include Fundamental Hurling which will be run from this November to March of next year, and many workshops to date. He is currently in the process of formulating a GAA Award 1 course for youths and adults for completion before Christmas.

He is involved with the Club and Cúl camps and has established the Skills Academy Camps for 13-16 year olds.

We had the very successful poster competition in the schools with 250 posters designed. The winners poster is being used and more of the entries will go up around the Club. Martin is delighted with the recent announcement of a pilot programme of hurling to be launched in the two new primary schools in Ashbourne, Educate Together and Gaelscoil na Mí. This is a new initiative and funding for equipment has been granted by Croke Park. More details of this will follow shortly. He hopes to embark on some GAA teacher training in the new year.

Hurling is thriving in the Club and numbers should continue to increase as the dual code go games children progress. A big highlight of the year for the U8s was to line out in Croke Park for the Leinster GAA Hurling event in April . The children and adults had a wonderful experience at HQ.

We had Club hurlers on County panels from U12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and Minor who are in the Championship Shield Final. The adult hurlers reached the Championship Quarter final and League final to date and retain their Intermediate status.

We had Club representation on County Camogie squads from U13, 14,16, 17 minor and adult. The U14 and U16 Camogie teams won their respective Championships.

Maggie Randle did the Club proud again by winning a Meath Intermediate Championship All Ireland medal which makes her the only Club member to have two All Ireland medals, having won her first in 2012. Well done Maggie.

The Ladies football adult section increased their numbers this year and entered two teams in the league and reached the Championship final. The other team won that day but our player Aoibhin Cleary won Player of the match. We had three players at County level in the National League and Championship and four Minor Ladies in the Championship County Finals. We also had girls on County teams from U12 and U16s. Our U12 girls won the Meath Community Games Final so the future is bright for Ladies Football and serious credit is due to Mary O Shaughnessy for her professional leadership.

Our mens footballers had a decent year fielding four adult teams in the leagues and three in the championships. The third/fourth teams competed well and there was some fine football played, all the while introducing the younger players to adult football. The second team reached the quarter final of the championship and reached the league final and had some impressive wins. Although the the Senior lads were disappointed with their Championship campaign they won the Feis Cup and are so close to winning the Keegan Cup. We know they will start fresh again in the new year and it will be theirs in the not too distant future.

The minor footballers lacked numbers this year but a good squad of players at U17 who won the Meath 7 a side Shield final in July, bodes well for next year.

The dedication of all players and mentors from Acorns to adult and everyone in between is well appreciated and I wish them all the best for 2018.

I would also like to thank all those who organised and supported fundraising events during 2017. As always the bills are huge and take serious time and effort to meet. The regular income from the constant events, too many to mention, are essential and this year Lip Sync was also a great success and very entertaining. Thanks to all the participants and organisers.

Well done to John Joe Williams on winning Club Person of the Year 2017.

I would like to extend my condolences to all those who have lost loved ones during the year . Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anamacha.

And so to next year.....We will keep improving and building, aspiring to the highest standards in all areas. We have the necessary guidelines of player and coach pathways and Child protection. We will continue with coach education. We will expect to give respect and get respect.

We can never have enough help and encourage new members to get involved with the Club, in what ever way possible . We will keep the focus on ‘every child gets a go’ and ‘four codes one club’. There should be room for all to play our games, those who are highly skilled and competitive and those who may not be so skilled but love to play. Personally I feel we need a little more fun and enjoyment for some in our games, a little less win at all costs, and room for every child to participate at their own level of skill for enjoyment as player retention is important and the young players are the future of our great Club. As the saying goes “ Mol an Óige agus tiocfaidh sí.”

Thanks to all the codes for submitting reports which now follow.

Is mise Deirdre Nic Giolla Earna.