

## **Round Towers Lusk**

### **Secretary's Report for 2017**

#### **Introduction**

A little over 11 months have passed since we last gathered in this hall for the Annual General Meeting of Round Towers Lusk Gaelic Football and Hurling Club. I for one came away from that meeting invigorated from the club's achievements in 2016 and confident in its ability to meet the challenges of 2017. This evening I can say that that confidence was well-founded and that the club continues to grow and prosper. That is not to dismiss the many challenges and difficulties that we face, but to recognize that most of our challenges stem from our very success and that the key to overcoming them lies within ourselves.

The success of the club is seen on and off the pitch. We are now in the enviable position where we participate in Gaelic Football, Ladies Gaelic Football, Hurling and Camogie. The club's growth reflects the ongoing residential development of Lusk and its locality. Quite simply, as the population grows the club too should grow. This basic point is worth emphasizing and it is important that we are ready to meet the varied needs of a growing town. Our success to date has been based upon one single element: the incredible work carried out by an exceptional, evolving group of volunteers over many years. Our greatest challenge will be to continue to develop and expand that group to ensure that we can take full advantage of the potential growth of the club.

#### **Adult Games**

In 2017 the club fielded 6 adult teams – 2 adult Gaelic Football teams, 1 U21 and 1 Minor Gaelic Football team, 1 Ladies Gaelic Football team and one Hurling team. In 2018 the club will take another significant step forward when we field a third Gaelic Football team.

In 2017 the Adult Football League Division 3 team built upon their previous years' successes and missed out on a promotion play-off spot on the last day of fixtures despite a brilliant final performance against Naomh Fionnbarra. The management team have stepped down after several years and after having achieved multiple successes in Championship, League and Cup. Huge plaudits go to Leo Neary, Gay Kelly, Brian Heffernan, Morgan Doran, Mark Grimes, and Pat Taffe, with the support of Paul Gilmartin, for their achievements which have set a clear standard and culture of success within the team, and more importantly, within the club. We extend our condolences to Mark Grimes once again on the tragic loss of his son.

There are also a host of juvenile coaches and mentors and volunteers who contributed and shared in the success of the team throughout the years and on match days. Special mention must go to Robert Naughton, Noel Shields and Damien Hughes who previously coached the adult team as part of Leo's teams. Our thanks go to everybody who played a role in this remarkable success. Our best wishes for further success go to the newly appointed management team led by Declan Patton.

The entire club rejoiced in the success of Aaron Duffy and Cormac Howley in the U21 All Ireland Football Final triumph against Galway on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April. Their success is also the success of the club and the many coaches and mentors who trained them over the years.

The Adult Football League Division 8 team had a clear target in 2017: bring home some silverware. The culmination of several years' hard work was reached in style with a Sheridan Cup victory on a warm evening in July with a hard fought win over Naomh Oilibhéir Pluincéid Eoghan Ruadh. The Sheridan Cup victory is a sign of the strength of football within the club and just reward for the work put in by the players and the management team of Stephen White, Damian Hughes, David Neary and John Connell. The team's drive for promotion was scuppered when the CCC inflexibly refused to reschedule their promotion play-off semi-final which took place at the time as the Minor Football Championship quarter-final, thus depriving the team of several players.

The Minor football team enjoyed a remarkable year which culminated in the Minor Football League Division 2 triumph over Naomh Jude in O'Toole Park. The management team of Richard Kelly, Colm Fogarty, Neil Hanlon, Pdraig Howley, Robert Naughton, and Noel O'Brien, and the entire group of players are a credit to

the club. Their disappointment in losing a Minor Football A Championship quarter-final was mitigated somewhat by the stunning success of the U21 team which drew the playing year to a close with a fantastic win over our neighbours from Skerries in the U21 B Championship final. The quality, discipline and style of performance on the day was outstanding and reflects the attitude and work ethic of management and players.

The adult Ladies Gaelic Football team continues to progress at a steady rate and the team's dedication to training ensures that 2018 and beyond will open the door to success. 2017 featured a steady league performance and unlucky defeats by a single score in Championship and Cup semi-finals to Naomh Oilibhéir Pluincéid Eoghan Ruadh. Our thanks go to the 2017 team management which included Michael O'Hehir, Jer Doran, Christopher Moore and Peter McMahan with the support of Linda Neary and Linda Grimes. The hard work of the Ladies Committee will ensure a bright future for Ladies Gaelic Football in Round Towers.

In 2017 the adult Hurling team continued to build on the steady progress of several years and achieved promotion for the second year in a row with a superb play-off final win away to the Wild Geese. The hurling knowledge and skill on the pitch and on the side-line enabled the team to turn an earlier, heavy league loss into a remarkable play-off success. Since its very inception the team manager has repeatedly driven one point into the players and demanded their full commitment on that basis: we are doing this for the young lads coming up in the club. It was fitting so that three of those young lads, Dónal Clarke, Jonathan Niall and Luke White, played such significant roles in the promotion semi-final and final victories. Behind them there are other young hurlers coming through and we look forward to seeing more of them in the Round Towers colours. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the management team of David Power, Martin Doyle and Tom Farrell for their work in building a platform for hurling in the club. Our thanks also go to former Dublin hurler Kevin O'Donoghue for providing top-class training when the occasion arose and to neighbouring clubs Naomh Maur and Cláirseacha na Sceirí for their assistance and cooperation in the promotion of hurling.

### **Juvenile Games**

The Juvenile section of any GAA club should be recognized as the very heart-beat of the club. It is commonly said that if you look after the Juvenile section, then the adult section will fall into place. We are truly fortunate to have a very competent Juvenile team in Chairperson Kevin Niall, Secretary Linda Boylan and Treasurer Gearoid Hennigan. Last week's Juvenile AGM featured a presentation from a mentor of each Juvenile team. The most striking aspects of this process is the debt of gratitude we owe as a club to the mentors who selflessly dedicate their time and skills to the club's teams. It should also be said each group of coaches, mentors, volunteers and players are at the forefront of the discussions of the Executive Committee. All decisions are taken in the best interest of the club and based on the common values and ambitions that we share. Our role as a club is to provide them with the support needed to allow them to flourish and to bring those teams through to adult level. Another striking aspect of the Juvenile AGM was the actual number of presentations made and the consequent number of Juvenile players within the club. The players and their families are the future of the club and constitute an untapped potential for the club's growth.

Our thanks extend to our referee coordinator Darragh Sheppard for his work with Juvenile referees within the club, and congratulations once again on his flourishing club and county refereeing career.

Special mention should also go to our budding Camogie section as they set out on the path already taken by Football, Ladies Football and Hurling in the club. The club will field two teams in 2018. In years to come that number will increase and we look forward to that.

Many thanks to coaches Robert Naughton, Colm Fogarty, Noel O'Brien and Noel Shields who have put together another development panel for the close season and are currently building for tomorrow's success. They are further examples of the exceptional talent and commitment within the club.

### **Games Promotion Officer**

The first contact of Juvenile players is generally through the club's thriving academy which is managed by our Games Promotion Officer James Costello. The team of coaches assembled by James is exemplary and evident in the success of the academy. James' work takes place in close coordination with the Juvenile section

and extends to the promotion of Gaelic games in local schools, a key factor in the development of the club. As well as school blitzes, summer leagues and summer camps, James promotes the training of our coaches, ensuring the club's mentors are prepared for future demands and ready for success.

### **Facilities and Pitches**

A further challenge faced by the club is the provision of adequate playing and training facilities for the teams of today and tomorrow. We currently struggle to play all home matches at our one pitch at Thomas Ashe Park. Firstly, I would like to thank all mentors and players for their patience and understanding when applying to use the pitch. Secondly, I would like to thank the Pitch Committee for their impartiality and fairness when assessing the weekly use of the pitch. Thirdly, I would like to extend special thanks to Kevin O'Neill for the superb condition of the pitch throughout 2017. It is a privilege to play on such a pitch, which is generally also one of the first comments of visiting teams to Lusk. Thanks also to Kevin for maintaining the training facility at Station Road. Many thanks also to Jer Doran and Stephen O'Connell for managing varied aspects of the grounds maintenance.

I also wish to thank the members who have contributed skills, materials and sweat to the maintenance and repair of our facilities at Thomas Ashe Park. This work, varying from a simple clean-up to the repair of boundaries and fences, often goes unnoticed but clearly demonstrates their pride in the club. Without their efforts our facilities would rapidly degenerate.

Thanks to the hard work over several years of the Lusk Community Sports Plan 2020, the pitch by Lusk Community College promised to the club by Fingal County Council should be available for matches in 2018. The club recognises the crucial role played by former Chairperson Mark McCann on Lusk 2020 and for ensuring the delivery of the new pitch. The cooperation with other sporting organizations in Lusk should also be remembered.

The club's new pitch at Thomas Ashe Park is under construction. The works on the pitch and training area, which may accommodate a Juvenile pitch, should be complete in spring 2018 and should further alleviate the pressure on playing facilities from late 2018 on. The Development Committee of Frank Kiernan, John Bohan and John Connell deserve huge praise and thanks for having taken on and delivered this project which proved exceptionally problematic.

We are in debt to the volunteers who helped build Thomas Ashe Park and we should build on their success into the future. Our shared ambition is to see as many juvenile and adult teams as possible line out in the colours of Round Towers Lusk and play in the club's home grounds. The next item in this report addresses one occasion on which that ambition was achieved spectacularly.

### **Thomas Ashe Centenary**

2017 saw the unveiling of the Thomas Ashe statue on club grounds on Saturday 30th September. The remarkable day featured the unveiling of local artist Paul Darcy's statue of Thomas Ashe by the Lord Mayor of Fingal Mary McCamley, as well as a festival of juvenile and adult GAA matches, children's entertainment, historical talks, films, traditional music, theatre, Irish story-telling, a Pop Up Gaeltacht and Irish dancing. The club was joined in the Thomas Ashe Community Group by the Black Raven Pipe Band, Lusk Tidy Towns and Lusk Heritage to work together to recognize the contribution made by Ashe to Lusk and Fingal. The wreath ceremony in Corduff National School and the subsequent march - featuring many of the club's Juvenile teams - from Corduff to Thomas Ashe Park behind a piper from the Black Raven Pipe Band and *Sliabh na mban* provided an inspirational start to an extraordinary day for Round Towers Gaelic Football and Hurling Club and the community. The unity and strength of the club and the community on this day was manifest to all present, whose number also included a most welcome and large group of Ashe's family members. I would like to offer particular praise in this report to Linda Neary, David Neary and Stephen O'Connell for their incredible achievement in putting together this most fitting tribute to our founding member. More than any other event, in my opinion, it drew the club together, demonstrated its strength and its potential for future

growth within the community. Our sincere thanks also go to many members, too numerous to mention here, who contributed in many different ways to the success of the day.

Irish language, music and culture were at the heart of Tomás Pádraig Ághas' life and ideals. These values were appropriately celebrated on the day. Special thanks to Lisa Nash for reading stories in Irish to a group of enthralled listeners. It was also wonderful to see these values enacted and performed by the youthful members of Power Drama Group and Scoil Rince Fingal. As the inheritors of Ashe's values, the club should take an active role in the promotion of the Irish language and culture as well as Gaelic sports. There are an ever-growing number of appropriate initiatives open to the club and my sincere hope is that we will partake in them in the coming years.

### **Public Relations**

There is a huge amount of activity happening within the club on a daily and weekly basis. A further challenge and one of the major priorities to be addressed in 2018 is the dissemination of this information to club members and to the community. The myriad of portals and options available make clear the complexity of the problem: RTL website; Facebook; Twitter; Instagram; MyClubFinances website; GAA website and communications; Match Tracker; local on-line and traditional newspapers; club noticeboard; traditional mail; Flickr; multiple email accounts; multiple Whatsapp groups.

The Executive Committee is aware of the problem and will be working in 2018 to establish a streamlined and efficient manner of communicating with members. We plan to launch a new website by the close of the year. In terms of image the club is equally aware of the importance of presenting a polished, consistent image of its members to the community. We have moved our online shop to O'Neills, ensuring in one manner that club gear will be presented in a harmonized manner.

The achievements of the club should be shared with members and with the entire community. A prime example of this is the multi award-winning photographer Mark Condren's photoshoot with members of Round Towers who have represented Dublin at various levels in the past two years: footballers Josh Connell, Aaron Duffy, Cormac Howley, and Daniel Sutton; hurlers Darragh Kiernan, Luke Codd, Cillian and Oisín Johnston; Ladies Gaelic Footballers Grace Codd, Kate McKenna and Oma Uchenda; and Camogie player Niamh Howley. Thanks to Mark for his generosity and congratulations to all the players for their achievements.

Our Facebook page is perhaps the most useful tool for communicating among members and their contacts. Its use will be reconsidered in the New Year. Our thanks go to all who have contributed to the promotion of the club in the past year and, in particular, to the Match Tracker team who provided a much appreciated service over several years.

### **Finances and Fundraising**

I would like to thank Club Treasurer Cathal Clarke for the excellent job completed in 2017. He addressed the task presented to him with exceptional expertise, diligence and understanding. To our Registrar, Karen O'Brien, I would also like to extend a special thank you for the huge work in overhauling the membership system and, in cooperation with Cathal, for managing the move of club subscriptions to the myclubfinances portal. The cooperation and support of mentors was also crucial - and greatly appreciated - in enabling the club to achieve previously unimaginable rates of membership payment.

Fundraising is critical to the survival and prosperity of the club. The development of the new pitch at Thomas Ashe Park will require a fundraising drive of at least €70,000. Development of additional facilities will be necessary as multiple teams will make further demands on our resources.

Many thanks to Liam Fitzgerald, Claire Myers and the team involved in the Golf Classic. Similar thanks to Tom Farrell and Karen Harford for managing the GAA National Club Draw. I would urge all members to support the 2018 initiative which has been launched recently. Our gratitude goes to Pauline for having supervised the Lotto for many years and best wishes to Nicola Dwyer in managing the Lotto into the future.

I wish to pause to thank Bernie Keogh Diaz for her management of the bar this year and for previous years. It is an unenviable job for any volunteer that requires attention and skill each and every day of the year. The extent of the workload, much of which goes unseen, is evidently not fully understood by many of our members. Our thanks also go to the bar staff who looked after the members in 2017.

Our major fundraising event in 2017 was our Lip Sync Battle night in City North Hotel in October. The organizing committee of Bernie Keogh Diaz, Tom Farrell, Sharon Hayden and Ger Moloney are to be thanked for their Trojan work in putting together a wonderful night's entertainment. It should also be noted that the idea was first discussed at a meeting of the Executive Committee in January 2017. We should also remember the participation of Lusk Athletics in the event, a further example of constructive community cooperation.

Thanks to our many sponsors whose contributions helped the club function and prosper in 2017.

A Finance and Fundraising Committee, consisting of Pat Codd, Cathal Clarke, Nicola Dwyer and Pdraig Tully, has been formed to oversee fundraising and finances within the club over the next three years. I trust that all members will support them in their work.

### **Strategic Plan 2018-2023**

Many thanks to Pat Codd for preparing the first draft of the club's Strategic Plan for the next five years and to the members who have sent in contributions to the plan. This document, although not binding, will guide the club's activities on and off the pitch for the foreseeable future. It is an ambitious document that, when complete, will require commitment, hard work and cooperation to bring to fruition. Some of the ambitions and challenges have been touched upon in this document: our facilities need to be developed to cope with the demands of a growing club and community, our volunteer base needs to be broadened, and our communication with our members and the community needs to improve. Many other challenges will present themselves along the way and we need to be able to deal with them.

### **Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee met on 26 occasions in 2017. I wish to thank each and every member who contributed to the management and growth of the club in this period. The meetings are good humoured and the discussions are honest. At all times we bear in mind that the Executive is working, in fact, to promote three associations: the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Ladies Gaelic Football Association and the Camogie Association. Our responsibility is to hold each section and team within each of these associations in the same esteem and to treat each one on an equal basis with regard to team support, finances and playing facilities. The three associations have formulated a document, "One Club Guidelines", to address these matters.

I would also like to extend best wishes to incoming Chairperson Pat Codd on his new role and to thank him for all the assistance and advice received in 2017. I can safely say that his finger-prints can be found on practically every task I faced during the year and that I am often embarrassed when people give me credit due to Pat.

I wish to thank Chairperson Stephen O'Connell for his leadership and drive during his most recent stint as Chairperson. He has shown remarkable dedication to the club and consistently demonstrated that hard work is the first step in finding a solution to any problem.

Finally, I wish to sincerely thank all the members who promoted the club in whatever way in 2017. Apologies in advance if any name has been omitted.

Is mise,

Naoise Mac Fheorais