

Round Towers Lusk Secretary's Report for 2019

Introduction

2018 was recorded as the most successful year on the playing field in the history of the club. It is truly remarkable that 2019 has matched and surpassed those achievements. We reached four adult championship finals and, extraordinarily, won all four. We also celebrated an U14 girls football championship.

There is an extraordinary breadth and depth of activity within the club, both on and off the field, and we have volunteers filling challenging roles and putting in huge work to drive the club forward in the tradition that built the club. My first thought is always to thank those volunteers - past and present.

Adult Games

Our Ladies Gaelic footballers claimed the first adult championship of the year in Páirc Uí Thuathail on 28th August as they overcame Na Gaeil Óga on a score of 3.11 to 2.05. They completed a fantastic league and championship double as they later claimed the Division 7 league title, following up on their 2018 Division 8 success. Congratulations to the players and management team of Linda Grimes, John Kiely, Linda Neary and David Neary. Many thanks also to Ashley Down, Eimear Clarke and Nuala O'Neill who represented Ladies Gaelic Football on the Executive. As well as the U14 championship success, the inclusion of players from the club on under-age Dublin teams points to further future success.

Intermediate championship winners and intermediate league runners-up in 2018, our senior football team approached 2019 with confidence but few people outside Lusk would have foreseen their incredible success. The club's first senior football game took place in Thomas Ashe Park on 17th February and ended with a nine point win over Whitehall Colmcille. A series of exceptional victories in the Senior Football Championship '2' culminated with an astonishing victory over the same opposition in Parnell Park on 3rd November. A brilliant performance of attacking football will live long in the memory of the numerous supporters at a match that flowed from end to end and finished with RTL running up a staggering total of 3.21 over sixty minutes. There were heroes all over and off the pitch as this incredible group of players and management made their own history. Thanks to the management team of Leo Neary, Rob Naughton, Noel Shields, Andy Moore, Neil Hanlon, Declan Smyth, John Handley and Pdraig Howley. Congratulations to Cormac Howley who represented the club on the Dublin senior team in the annual Blue Stars challenge and in the O'Byrne Cup. This year Cormac has had the honour of being selected for the Blue Stars. Congratulations to Jack Hussey for his success with the Dublin U20 team that contested the All Ireland final in August. A week after our senior success RTL supporters were on the road to Garristown where our AFL6 team, Junior 4 All County Champions in 2018, completed another remarkable double by claiming the Junior 3 All County Championship. They achieved back-to-back championships by defeating Na Fianna on a score of 0.13 to 0.11, finishing strongly and confidently in what had been a gripping contest. Congratulations to the players and the management team of Colm Fogarty, David Neary, Noel O'Brien, Neil Hanlon and Stephen White. The club took another major step forward in 2019 as we fielded a third adult mens football team for the first time in the club's history. Many thanks to John Sligo, Edel Bonner and Jer Doran for its substantial development during the year. The mix of experience and youth blended extremely well and the team went from strength to strength. The inclusion of minor players on this team as the year progressed points to success in the near future. It was particularly gratifying to see the positive impact of several of the club's adult footballers on the minor football team itself who were guided by Bernie Keogh Diaz, Christopher Moore, Tom Bell and David Hogan. Thanks to Timmy Doyle for his work representing adult football at the Executive. Thanks to the management team of David Power, Brendan Starling, Martin Doyle and Frank Kiernan who helped our adult hurling team consolidate its position in an extremely competitive Adult Hurling League Division 7. They also qualified for the Junior F Championship final against a strong and experienced Raheny team and displayed strength of character and nerve to draw a match that seemed to be slipping away. This strength of character was again to the fore in the replay when the team played with greater freedom and deservedly brought a first adult hurling championship back to Lusk since 1951. The team's captain, Chris Neville, recognised the unparalleled role played by David Power in the revival of hurling in Lusk and invited him to be the first man to lift the cup on behalf of the team and the club. I would also like to thank the many players, supporters and neighbouring clubs who have contributed to the development of this team since its inception five years ago. Thanks to Colm O'Brien for representing adult hurling on the Executive.

Special congratulations to the club's dual players who picked up championship medals in both codes.

An Adult Games Committee was established following last year's AGM to administer adult level games within the club. This committee met once in April 2019 and, thanks to increased communications between various sections, was not called on again.

Finally, many thanks to the many players from our successful teams who have visited our nursery and local schools and participated in our street leagues and juvenile awards night. They are outstanding role models for future generations of players.

Juvenile Games

2019 will be remembered for our unprecedented success on the playing field and several important steps taken in the expansion and improvement of our facilities. Experience from other clubs indicate that this is a potentially dangerous time for a club's juvenile section as the club's fundamental focus on future players can be lost. With this in mind I would like to thank Juvenile Chairperson John McKenna, Secretary Donna Hayes and Treasurer Paul Ryan for their work during the year to secure and improve the future of juvenile boys hurling and football into the future. Best wishes to Pdraig Sheerin who has taken over the role of Secretary for 2020. Chairperson John McKenna has produced a juvenile age structure aimed at strengthening our under-age structures and avoiding some of the common problems faced by many clubs in fielding teams in multiple age groups. We can look back at an exceptionally well attended Cúl camp and successful Street Leagues which also brought in a number of new players.

We are grateful for the cooperation with local clubs Naomh Maur and Fingallians in entering joint juvenile hurling teams and facilitating our players where necessary. Such cooperation also allowed our U14 players participate in the hurling Féile. Our U15 hurlers enjoyed a great year with Fingallians and the club was proudly represented on the Dublin team in Arrabawn U15 tournament. Our juvenile camogie teams have completed another year on their unique journey. Congratulations to our three players who won minor camogie league medals with Naomh Maur and, thanks to the work of our underage mentors, we look forward to the day when we will field our own minor and adult teams. Our aforementioned U14 girls football team won their championship final by the minimum margin, 4.08 to 4.07, over Beann Eadair on 23rd October 2019 in Beann Eadair. Many thanks to our referee coordinator Ciara Kerrigan.

As said in previous years, we are extremely fortunate to have a person as capable as David Power in the role of Children's Officer.

I would, as a parent as well as a member of the Executive, like to express my huge admiration and gratitude to the many mentors and volunteers in our juvenile section. Their excellence and commitment is a constant source of inspiration.

Games Promotion Officer

I wish to record our thanks for the work carried out by former GPO David Stephenson who we welcomed in 2018 and who left us earlier in the year. We have since welcomed a new GPO, Gavin King, who has already reviewed and modified the structures of our nursery. Best wishes to Gavin and the committee put in place to support his work. I would also like to acknowledge the roles played by Kevin Niall, Alannah Harford and Anthony Mason and the wider team of coaches in the success of our nursery. We also hosted a Child Protection Course, one of the pre-requisites for all juvenile mentors along with Garda Vetting, on 19 November.

Health and Well-Being

Our Healthy Club Officer Joan Ward continues to make an important contribution to the health and well-being of our members and the community. The club is an ideal position to assist in this regard and duly signed up for the North Dublin Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force initiative Substance Abuse and Mental Health (SÁMH). As part of our on-going initiatives to promote responsible drinking, the club also reduced prices on alcohol-free beer.

Facilities and Pitches

2019 will also be remembered as the year that we opened our second pitch at Thomas Ashe Park. This historic event took place on Saturday 3rd August and was marked by a series of juvenile and adult games. Thanks to the Black Raven Pipe Band who led our juvenile players onto the new pitch where the honour of playing the first match fell to our 2019 U8s. Thanks also to the many people who contributed in many other ways to the build-up and success of the day itself. We owe a huge debt to the people who have contributed over the years to the development of this pitch when, at times, we seemed to be moving further away rather than closer to our goal. All our teams should also recognise and appreciate the exemplary work and commitment of Kevin O'Neill in maintaining our top-class playing pitches and

facilities, ably assisted by Jer Doran and Neil Hanlon. We should also recognise that, with the opening of extending playing and training facilities, the work load has more than doubled and the need for more members willing to put their shoulder to the wheel has increased.

We have started to reap the benefits of such hard work as the new pitch began to take on increasing numbers of fixtures towards the end of the season. I would like, hopefully for the last time, to thank the managers and teams who displayed patience and understanding in working together in the past to ensure that as many or as few fixtures as practical were played on our established pitch.

The use of Chapel Farm as a dedicated juvenile playing facility on Saturdays for our U8 and U9 teams has also proved a great success and our thanks go to Fingal County Council for this facility. We continue to work with our partner organizations in the Lusk 2020 group and Final County Council in the development of community sports facilities at Lusk Recreational Hub and look forward to the opening of a full-sized GAA pitch in 2020. We should also thank Fingal County Council for their support through the GAA Club Sustainability Competition.

Two of the highlights of this remarkable year took place off the field as members and volunteers stepped up to upgrade our facilities. I am referring, firstly, to James Cunningham who led a team of volunteers in the painting of our clubhouse in July in the run-up to the opening of our new pitch. As word of the project spread Declan Cruise sent his men down to prep the building. A steady stream of volunteers then joined James and his men as they worked their way around the building.

Tom Farrell addressed one of the long-standing issues in the club by supplying metal fencing to replace the wooden panels around the astro facility. A team of volunteers responded to Tom's generosity as the job of removing the wooden panels and inserting the metal ones took place over two days. Martin Doyle was, of course, among these volunteers and perhaps hopeful that he would not be called upon to re-fix or replace yet another wooden panel as he has done for several years.

There are many other individuals who contribute to the maintenance of our facilities and the running of our events. I will, inevitably, omit somebody as much of the work takes place without my knowledge but the members should also be grateful for the work of Thomas Hand, Lorcan Harford, George Leech, David Neary and Pádraig Allen.

I would like to thank Liam Fitzgerald for his management of the scheme workers and their contribution to the upkeep of Thomas Ashe Park.

Many thanks to the management and staff of our bar for their work and support throughout the year. We had some massive days in 2019 and they made sure that we were able to celebrate them fully: Saint Patrick's Day, the opening of our new pitch and our county final victories. Thanks to Joe O'Sullivan who is always available to help with club events.

Public Relations

Huge thanks to Claire Myers for her work over several years in the role of PRO. Claire plays the key role in promoting our achievements and events among our members and the wider community. Her work also provides an unrivalled history of the club in recent years and captures moments in time that will be cherished for many years by families.

Membership

Our membership currently stands at over 680 members. Membership subscriptions were managed by our Registrar, Audrey Starling, through the GAA Management System for the first time in 2019. Enhancements have already been made to this system and it will continue to evolve in the years ahead. Each member has a responsibility to use the GAA Management System to pay their membership as soon as possible in order to ease the intense administrative burden on the Registrar. The numbers involved now and in the future are simply too large to do anything else.

Finance and Fundraising

All members should be aware that fundraising and finances will be increasingly important elements in the club calendar as the number of our teams and our facilities grow. The support of our members will be fundamental to ensuring that we can meet the ambitious targets outlined in our 2018-2023 strategic plan which was drawn up in consultation with our members and may be consulted on our website. As a note of caution I should point out that nobody took up an invitation to attend a preliminary meeting to organise an awards and social night in February. Similarly, our "Buy a brick in the tower" plans had to be abandoned due to a lack of capacity on the same group of volunteers to take on yet another project.

The 2020 edition of the GAA National Club Draw will also be launched in early 2020. This is an important fundraiser for the club and deserves greater support from our members. 100% of ticket sales remain in the club. Many thanks to the committee who organised our golf classic which provided another memorable day and raised crucial funds for the club. Thanks also to the members and volunteers involved in the running of the draw and the promotion of sales in our weekly Lotto draw. Namu Kwon was welcomed to the Lotto team by Pauline Murphy, Willie Murphy and team. Other members would be welcome to join. The annual lotto ticket initiative also made a significant contribution towards the costs of development of the new pitch.

The club, as always, is very grateful to the many local businesses and companies that provide generous sponsorship of the club and our teams.

An Ghaeilge

Tá an-áthas orm a chur in iúl daoibh go bunaíodh grúpa oibre ar mhaithe le forbairt na Gaeilge sa chlub le déanaí. Beidh fáilte roimh gach duine ar an grúpa seo agus beidh muid ag obair le Glór na nGael agus roinnt clubanna eile chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met 22 times in 2019 prior to this AGM. Individually, each member makes an important contribution to the club. Collectively, they keep the club moving forward and enable our teams to concentrate on their games. This is achieved through hard work, mutual respect and reasoned discussion. The Executive is strengthened by difference of opinion and it is very rare that any decision or action is agreed unanimously. However, once agreed, the Executive supports that decision or action and moves on to address the next item on the agenda. This is only possible because we share the same fundamental convictions and aspirations.

In this regard, I will pause to thank Pat Codd. He is an outstanding Chairperson with a great vision and huge ambitions for the club. The vision is very simple: it is to make Round Towers Lusk one of the best clubs in Dublin. However, to make this a reality will require the full and active support of current and future members.

I would also like to thank two individuals who are stepping down from the Executive. Treasurer Donal Sherry returned to and excelled in one of the most demanding and important jobs within the club while Niall Harford took on the role of Players Representative and ensured that our players had an independent voice at the Executive.

I also wish to recall the contributions made to the club from mentors and volunteers who have moved out of Lusk during the year and to wish them the best of luck in their new clubs.

We are grateful as always to the Dublin County Board for their support and assistance. This year we owe a particular debt to the Competitions Control Committee who managed our club's hectic schedule of finals in November to allow our teams and players to dedicate themselves fully to each final without detriment to the other.

In conclusion, I would, once again, simply like to thank everybody who contributed to this very special year.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Naoise Mac Fheorais
Rúnaí