

The Primary Scene

Mentors/Coaches/Teachers

Dunnamaggan Parish was represented on the Primary Schools Board by Dunnamaggin principal Paul Mac Loughlin N.T. until his retirement in 1967. Both he and Con Harrington N.T. (Kilmoganny Principal) in co-operation with the teachers in Kells N.S., did excellent work in promoting Gaelic games in the schools. Michael (Gus) Moran N.T. assumed the Dunnamaggan principalship in 1967. His contribution to parish life in general was incalculable, and with the assistance of Con Harrington and later Vincent Cummins N.T. he also nurtured and inspired a generation of players who have contributed handsomely to Dunnamaggin's recent successes. The All-Ireland Féile na nGael triumph in 1978 was one of the many sporting highlights of Mr. Moran's almost 20 year period at the helm of Primary Schools hurling in Dunnamaggin. His untimely death in 1987 was a grievous loss to the parish.

Seán Costello N.T. took on the responsibilities of Primary Schools Hurling in Dunnamaggan in 1988. With the assistance of Vincent Cummins N.T. he had the pleasure of overseeing parish hurling teams reach three successive County Finals from 1989 to 1991, winning in 1990 and 1991. In the process the parish was promoted from Roinn C to Roinn A. The coaching duties were undertaken by Mr. Dick O'Shea in 1994 and by an tAthair Fearghus Ó Fearghail in 1995 and 1996 Their expertise and commitment was invaluable. Mrs. Irene Browne B.Ed. (Kells N.S.) took on the coaching duties in 1997 and continues to fulfil that role. Her enthusiasm, hard work and rapport with the children have ensured that the game of hurling is appreciated by the young in the parish. In recent years the under 9s have the benefit of the coaching and guidance of Mrs. Mary O'Dwyer. It should be noted that many of our parents are involved in the promotion of indoor hurling and some of our minor, under 21 and senior stars have willingly given of their time to coach the young in the skills of the game.

Dunnamaggin Hurling & Football

While the early decades of Cumann na mBunscoil were relatively quiet ones for Dunnamaggin the tremendous Féile success of the Parish in 1978 heralded a period of great activity in school games and not a little success. The nineteen eighties were very busy with finals in either football or hurling being contested nearly every year of the decade. There was evidence that the galaxy of young stars might yet bring greater glory to the parish.

Some notable events

While the concluding two years of the eighties did not yield any hurling silverware, there was plenty to enthuse about with promising young players such as the 1988 hurling captain Tom Hickey and Kenny O'Shea making an early mark and the exploits of the young 1989 team which reached the under 12 final ..

The path to the 1989 under 12 final was an arduous one with good victories being notched up over such teams as Bennettsbridge, Clara, Coon/Muckalee and Mullinavat. Captain Michael O'Neill was an inspiration to the team throughout the campaign. Dunnamaggin entered the final very much as underdogs as their opponents Ballyhale sailed through to the final accounting for Dunnamaggin on route. For three quarters of this game little separated the teams. At half-time Dunnamaggin trailed by 0-1 to 0-2. Half way through the second half Ballyhale, with Michael Kennedy as their scorer in chief, began their final assault and finished deserving winners on a scoreline of Ballyhale 3-4, Dunnamaggin 1-2. The Dunnamaggin panel and scorers were: Anthony McCormack, John Hickey, Tom McCormack, Fergal O'Shea, William Kearney, Andrew Hickey, Ramie Cahill, Michael O'Neill, Captain (0-2), Noel Lahart (1-0), Brian O'Shea, Shane Ragget, Noel Enright, Pdraig Moore, William Drennan, Richard Wallace, J. P. O'Neill, Matthew Enright, Niall Brett, Kevin Ryan, James McCormack, Pat Egan and Niall McCormack.

Dunnamaggin parish did, however, taste success in the 1988/89 season at schools level when the under 13 footballers captured the Roinn B trophy for the third time in the 1980s. Their opponents in the final were Mooncoin. The final was played in Piltown. The Dunnamaggin team under the expert tutelage of Malachy Hogan gave an exhibition of skilful tenacious football. The first half produced excellent football with Dunnamaggin enjoying the better of the exchanges. Goals from Willie Drennan, Pat Hogan and Michael O'Neill and a point from Ramie Cahill left them in front at half-time by 3-1 to 1-1.

In the second half Dunnamaggin asserted their supremacy despite the sterling efforts of Mooncoin's Ger Kirwan, Billy Kelly and captain Mark Walsh. Ramie Cahill Michael O'Neill and Willie Drennan were on target with points while Noel Lahart's goal sealed victory for Dunnamaggin on the scoreline of 4-7 to 1-2. The victory was a great team effort. The defence marshalled by captain and centre back Andrew Hickey was totally solid. Mid fielders Mick O'Neill and Anthony McCormack were dominant in that sector while the rampant forwards caused endless problems for the Moocoin defence. The panel and scorers were: John Hogan, Matthew Enright, John Hickey, Fergal O'Shea, William Kearney, Andrew Hickey, Richard Wallace, Michael O'Neill (1-1) Anthony McCormack, Ramie Cahill (0-5), Noel Lahart (1-0), Shane Phelan, Brian O'Shea, William Drennan (1-1), Pat Hogan (1-0).

The footballers of Kilmoganny/Dunnamaggin also had a historic triumph in 1989 when winning the I.N.T.O. sevens. This was an under 12 all County seven-a-side competition. Each side was confined to a panel of 10 players and the competition was on a blitz basis. The panel was Michael O'Neill, Tom McCormack, Noel Lahart, Andrew Hickey, Ramie Cahill, Brian O'Shea, Anthony McCormack, John Hickey Shane Raggett and William Kearney. Dunnamaggin then participated in a football tournament in Tullamore where players from all the 32 Counties got the opportunity of playing alongside footballers from various counties in a round Robin tournament.

The old maxim of having to lose a final before winning one was borne out by the experience of the hurlers in 1989 and 1990. From their first game in the 1990 campaign, the Dunnamaggin boys made it abundantly clear that they would not be stopped in their quest to win the Roinn C final for their first time. Their first opponents were the much-fancied St Canice's side but not even home ground advantage was enough to enable St Canice's to justify their tag as favourites. After an impressive march through the league, Dunnamaggin accounted for Bennettsbridge in the semi-final

and qualified for a final meeting with Mullinavat who had looked scintillating in defeating Tullaroan in a semi-final replay.

This was a closely fought encounter with both defences battling heroically throughout. The losers' gritty determination and sustained pressure meant that it was only with the sound of the final whistle that Dunnamaggin could relax in the knowledge that they had secured a historic triumph.

William Kearney and Anthony McCormack registered early points for the victors while captain Noel Lahart got a goal from a finely struck 65. Mullinavat replied with a good goal from Niall Madigan. At half-time Dunnamaggin led by 1-2 to 1-0.

The second half was a nail-biting affair with the forwards being afforded little freedom. Half forward Anthony McCormack broke through the loser's defence for a fine opportunist goal. Mullinavat fought gallantly to obtain the needed scores but Dunnamaggin goalkeeper Niall McCormack and his mighty defence gave a sterling performance. Indeed great credit must go to the whole Dunnamaggin team who hurled with skill and great spirit and richly deserved their victory by 2-3 to 1-0. The team and scorers were: Niall McCormack, Matthew Enright, John Hickey, Brendan Moore, William Kearney (0-1), Andrew Hickey, Fergal O'Shea, Brian O'Shea, Ramie Cahill, Anthony McCormack (1-2), Noel Lahart, Captain (1-0), Dermot Maher, J.P.O'Neill, William Drennan, Patrick Drennan; subs: Richard Wallace, Andrew O'Neill, James McCormack, Niall Brett, Pat Egan, Jim Butler, Brian O'Shea, David O'Connor, Noel Hickey and Ciaran Moore.

The campaign of 1991 was a momentous one for the under 13 hurlers. As 1990 winners of the Roinn C championships they were promoted to Roinn B. The hurlers rose to this new challenge, however, and the veterans of the 1989 & 1990 campaigns led by example. Their only defeat, which was by a single point to Callan in an early round of the league, proved a blessing in disguise and served as a timely warning against complacency. Having duly qualified for the quarter final they eventually scored a convincing victory over Urlingford by 2-3 to 1-1. Goalie, Niall McCormack, backs, John Hickey and Matthew Enright, midfielders, Ramie Cahill (captain) and Brian O'Shea, and forwards: J.P. O'Neill and Dermot Maher shone.

The Rower Inistioge provided the opposition in the semi-final. Dunnamaggin were worthy and impressive victors by the somewhat flattering margin of 4-4 to 2-2. Captain Ramie Cahill had a storming game scoring 1-4 in the process. Other solid performances came from Niall McCormack, Brendan Moore, Andrew O'Neill, Brian O'Shea, Clayton Delaney and Noel Hickey.

The final against favourites Callan, who were seeking to bring off a football and hurling double, was eagerly awaited and lived up to expectations in providing a fast skilful exhibition of hurling with little between the sides until the last ten minutes. Dunnamaggin's delightful first time hurling was a decisive factor in their success.

Their defence was rock solid. William Kearney at centre back was outstanding and with his wing backs, Pat Drennan and Matthew Enright, soaked up early Callan pressure. Good work from midfielders Ramie Cahill and Fergal O'Shea enabled Brian O'Shea to register an early point and Clayton Delaney to raise the green flag with a great ground shot. Callan broke through for a goal but the by now unstoppable Clayton Delaney found the net with another great ground shot. Callan scored a point before the break to leave Dunnamaggin leading at half-time by 2-1 to 1-1.

Dunnamaggin started impressively in the second half, and with centre forward J.P.O'Neill and wing forward Noel Hickey laying off a generous supply of ball the team registered some classy scores. After five minutes Brian O'Shea sent a sizzling ground shot to the net and some minutes later full forward Clayton Delaney capped an unforgettable day for him by notching up a similar score. Captain Ramie Cahill pointed beautifully from play. Callan fought tenaciously to get back into the game and in John Paul Corcoran and Andrew Power they had real heroes. However they encountered a stubborn and exceptional defence. Dunnamaggin's goalie Niall McCormack was totally reliable while full back Brendan Moore, John Hickey and Andrew O'Neill were sound and unyielding. The half-back line amply compensated for their lack of physique with a display of mighty determination and fast skilful stick work. A pointed free in the 16th minute was all that Callan could obtain from their second half endeavours. Dunnamaggin, on the other hand, notched up further scores. Brian O'Shea netted from another good ground shot. Ramie Cahill pointed in the 22nd minute and William Kearney concluded a memorable hour for him and for his team with a final point.

This was a glorious performance from the full team and substitute Brendan Delahunty. From goalie to full forwards Dermot Maher, Clayton Delaney and Niall Brett, the emphasis on the direct no-nonsense ground hurling paid ample dividends and mesmerised the much-vaunted Callan side. The final score was 5-4 to 1-2. No one doubted the merit of the victory. The team and scorers were: Niall McCormack, Brendan Moore, John Hickey, Andrew O'Neill, Matthew Enright, William Kearney (0-1), Patrick Drennan, Fergal O'Shea, Ramie Cahill Captain (0-3), Brian O'Shea (2-1), J.P.O'Neill, Noel Hickey, Dermot Maher, Clayton Delaney (3-0), Niall Brett; sub: Brendan Delahunty. The rest of the panel was: James McCormack, Brian O'Shea, Colin Herity, Leonard O'Shea, Rory Dunne, Patrick Butler and Canice Hickey.

As Roinn B winners in 1991 Dunnamaggin were promoted to Roinn A and were in this division from 1992-1995. Dunnamaggin were unfortunate that their promotion to the top division coincided with a very significant drop in the pupil enrolment figures in the parish. Indeed there was almost a reduction of a third in pupil numbers from the 1988-1990 period. Nevertheless there were some valiant performances and significant victories.

The footballers scored a notable success in capturing the Country Cup in the first year of the competition, 1993. A successful campaign brought them to Ballyhale for the final where Thomastown provided the opposition. Both teams delighted the spectators with their tremendous enthusiasm, good passing movements and some fine long-range points. Dunnamaggin opened the scoring with a long-range point from Richie Cahill. Thomastown were held at bay by a strong defence in which the full back line performed especially heroically under the able leadership of David Hoyne. Elusive corner forward C.J.Delaney earned a free, which he directed all the way to the top corner of the net. Thomastown's reply was a fine point from diminutive corner forward Shane Walsh. Richie Cahill was on hand, however, to score another good point for Dunnamaggin whose flair and panache was exemplified by a beautifully executed long-range point from Liam Heffernan. Dunnamaggin played equally well in the second half to run out worthy winners on the score, 1-6 to 0-5.

Following a complete re-appraisal and re-adjustment of all divisions by the Schools Board, Dunnamaggin competed in Roinn C in 1996 and 1997 and Roinn D in 1998.

Representative Games

Inter county Primary Schools competitions/challenges in hurling have taken place periodically over the past twelve years. Dublin, Wexford and Offaly have in the main provided the opposition, although games have also been played against Tipperary. Occasionally inter county football challenges have been played. Many Dunnamaggin players have represented the county in these games. The list of names below is not comprehensive.

In 1989/90 Michael O`Neill was on the hurling team while Andrew Hickey and Noel Lahart were on the football team. The following year William Kearney, Ramie Cahill and Brian O`Shea played in the under 12 Dublin hurling festival on the successful Kilkenny team. Niall McCormack, John Hickey and Brian O`Shea represented the parish in the same hurling festival on another successful Kilkenny team. Noel Hickey was on the victorious Kilkenny team of 1991.

In 1998 Richard O`Shea had the distinction of wearing the Irish jersey when a Kilkenny Primary Schools' hurling selection representing Ireland faced a Scottish Shinty team in Nowlan Park and emerged victorious.

Dunnamaggin parish has a very proud record in Primary Schools football. The 1980`s were particularly successful with the under 13 Roinn B title being won on three occasions. Malachy Hogan coached the footballers in the `80`s and the early part of the nineties. His expertise and dedication was a crucial element in the successes in football in this period. He was succeeded as coach by Christy Whelan who has been unstinting in his dedication. Christy took up duty at a time when falling pupil numbers made success in terms of trophies very difficult. Nevertheless he continues to afford the young the opportunity of playing and enjoying football.

Seán Mac Coisdealbha