

## Official Opening of Dunamaggin G.A.A. Club Grounds.

The official opening of a new G.A.A. club grounds is a major event not just in the life of the G.A.A. club and its members but for the entire Parish. The dreams of so many people are at last being realised and the club has finally developed its own home where Gaelic Games will prosper and flourish for many more years. The Dunamaggin club has crammed a huge level of activity into the past ten years in particular. There have been many days of great excitement and achievement and I suppose a few disappointing occasions also. I heartily congratulate all involved with this historic event.

We are experiencing unprecedented interest in Gaelic Games right now, yet all the hype and activity belies a great challenge at club level. The need for astute and strong leadership was never more important. One has only to look at the financial statement of accounts prepared by the Club Treasurer for the annual general meeting to see the growing costs of running a G.A.A. Club particularly when hurling is the dominant game. Regretfully the cost of running a G.A.A. club will not reduce and it concerns me that such a scenario is having a very negative impact in attracting young people to become club officers. This is where the over-all club membership has to show a much greater appreciation for the work of club officials and play their part in assisting in the many promotions and funding raising activities which the club will undertake during the year. A club is not just about officers, but too often this seems to be the case.

The G.A.A. response to this difficulty over the past few years has been the delivery of the Comhairle Programme, which afforded an opportunity to all club officials in the thirty-two counties and many overseas units to undertake appropriate training covering the key functions of club officers. This was an extremely successful venture and will be repeated on a regular basis as club officers change basis. I strongly encourage all club officers to undertake this training programme when it returns to Kilkenny. The programme will be updated to reflect the on-going changes which happen in the G.A.A., so there will be new material included all the time.

Being closely involved at Leinster level, I have a particular responsibility for the area of Coaching & Games Development. Our financial outlay this year will be in the region of IRE1,000,000, with over IRE850,000 coming directly from our own funds and the remainder from Croke Park. Leinster Council currently employs thirty-six personnel in the area of coaching and games development. These people operate in all twelve counties and in Primary Schools, Second Level Schools and Third level Colleges. The primary activities each year are submitted by each County Board as part of their annual plan. This outlines the range of activities and initiatives to be covered during the year. The delivery of these plans is the responsibility of each County Board and their Coaching & Games Development Officers. Monitoring is carried out by the three Leinster Coaching Directors who report directly to the Comhairle Laighean Coaching & Games Development Committee.

During this year we anticipate in the region of 25,000 children taking part in Summer Camps. Over 2,200 pupils will take the Transition Year Coaching Course in Second Level Schools with around 1,000 expected to complete their coaching logs books to qualify for a certificate. We also have numerous hurling and football initiatives being undertaken in each county each year. While the level of Gaelic Games activities in Primary Schools remain high, major difficulties are emerging at Second Level and these will not be easily addressed. Gaelic Games are thriving in Third Level Colleges at present.

There is no doubt that Kilkenny's progress in the hurling arena over the years owes a lot to the start we all made in our Primary Schools and while this area is still strong in our county we should not be complacent. We cannot expect the same level of commitment from the teachers in the future due to other demands on their time. The void will now have to be filled by clubs who must play a far greater role in liaising with their local schools to ensure there is an adequate level of Gaelic Games activity. Failure to address this issue by clubs will have serious knock-on effects. The time for action is now.

Nioclás Ó Braonáin.

Leas Cathaoirleach.

Cumann Luthchleas Gael - Comhairle Laighean.

#### Obituary

On the 3rd of February 1999, one of the gentlemen of this world, John O'Shea passed on to his eternal reward. Though not a hurler himself John had a keen interest in the GAA. Nothing gave him more pleasure than the rise of Dunnamaggin hurling in recent years, he never missed a game. In leaner times he was secretary and treasurer of the club. In recent years his energies were directed towards the developments of the new hurling field. His gifts of communication and gentle persuasion were especially valuable when it came to fundraising for this venture. The many other gifts and the personal contacts that he had made near and far were of enormous benefit to the development committee of which he was a member until his departure from this world. The huge crowds who flocked to his funeral bore ample testament to the huge contribution John made to this sporting and rural community. 'Ni bheidh a leithéid ann arís'.