

## **Tuarascail Bhliantúil 2010**

A Chairde,

The darkest hour is just before the dawn and in many ways this could be the summation of the past year. We have lived through difficult times and the apparent loss in confidence of our people is a serious cause for concern. It is hard to explain the demise of the economy when we have the finest and best educated generation in our history. We have the option now to decide to light a candle or curse the dark. We are at a time when criticism and repercussions are commonplace but if we are to build a better way forward then we must learn from the past and develop the ethics of integrity, hard work and respect as we go forward. The recession has created a new set of challenges that will permeate everything until we decide to build structures that will deliver a better and sustainable future that enhances the scholarly attributes of the people while ensuring that fairness and community benefits are for all. In these difficult times we had much to motivate our members, Clubs and Counties and indeed the Association as a whole.

From an Ulster point of view we saw Tir Eoghain win the Minor All Ireland Championship on a day that witnessed An Dún lose out in the Senior Football Final to Corcaigh. It was a great occasion for the GAA and for Ulster. Aontroim won the senior, under 21 and Minor Championships again but Ard Mhacha also achieved a tremendous hurling success in the Nicky Rackard Cup. When this is added to their performance in Ulster at senior, Under 21 and Minor level, it is clear that significant progress has been made in that County. Tir Eoghain won the Senior Football Championship final and made it a notable double with their minor team winning the Minor Football Championship also. Donegal won the Dr. McKenna Cup.

Our Clubs too had a successful year with pride of place going to St. Gall's on winning the All Ireland senior Club title and deservedly so, while Fr. Rocks Club from Cookstown won the Intermediate Club title with an outstanding performance. On the Schools and Colleges front there was success for St. Colman's College in the Hogan Cup maintaining Ulster's great record in senior Colleges. In hurling, Cross and Passion Ballycastle won the All Ireland senior 'B' title and demonstrates the excellent work of the school in developing hurling in its hinterland. Holy Trinity College won the Under 16 All Ireland Schools Championship while St. Malachy's High School were defeated at the final hurdle as they sought their third All Ireland title in a row but the team maintained the previous high standard of this province Under 18 Schools level even in defeat.

Handball in Ulster remains at the World and we are endowed with top class performers at all levels and the successes at the recent US Underage Championships gives testament to the tremendous work being undertaken by our players, Clubs and Counties. The continued standards being achieved by Paul Brady (Cavan) have ensured that he is the new standards for the game given his continued winning of titles and the outstanding quality of his skills and competitiveness. It also demonstrates that handball is played, coached and administered by motivated people.

## **Finance**

There is little doubt that we are working through a very difficult economic time and this has led to pressure on the capacity of our Council to deliver the various programmes and support

mechanisms to our Counties and through them to our Clubs and Communities. However, against the most challenging of conditions we substantially met all of our requirements and we are looking forward to maintaining our efforts in 2011. The attendances have remained relatively constant due to the lack of replays. The Council has seen a significant reduction in disposable monies deriving from the gate income. The overall investment in games, coaching and other areas of responsibility have been maintained from external sources despite the challenging environment that are prevalent and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

The stewards, team officials and members of Comhairle Uladh give an enormous amount of time to act in many capacities such as stiles men, stewards, counters and supervisors throughout the year. We could not do without this outstanding input by a great team. We are also indebted to our staff, who gave generously of their time in working in a voluntary capacity within the management and control of games and are actively involved in the delivery of key elements of the championship programme. An Cisteoir, Micheal O hOsain gives generously of his time to the wider benefit of Comhairle Uladh and provides the necessary support in managing all aspects of our financial matters and for which we are deeply indebted to him including being Chairman of Coiste Airgeadas. We also acknowledge the input of Proinsias MacGabhan as Runai of the Committee and the members of the Committee for their help and active support for the work of the Council. Michelle McAleer is a very important part of the team as Head of Finance and keeps our finances under strict control at all times. We are grateful to Michelle for her work, diligence and support in this vital area for the Association in Ulster.

Comhairle Uladh finances are still dependant on the level of support for our games programme, from external sources and from the Association in the delivery of several aspects of our Strategic Plan. The total income amounted to €5,737,338 inclusive of all grants. Our gate income, €1,524,232 represented 27% of this compared to 29% of the total income in 2009. In 2010 our grant income, €1,265,118 represents 22% of our total in comparison to 23% in 2009. The expenditure amounted to €5,463,504. In addition, the investment in Grounds and Infrastructure amounted €329,224. There was an operating loss on the years working equating to €55,390 which was met from our accumulated funds. The monies from Ard Comhairle have also assisted in achieving our objectives but we need to be mindful that we are working to the interests of our Association in difficult economic times.

## **Games Activity**

In our Senior Championships, we again had familiar faces at the top the tree, with Tír Eoghain and Aontroim emerging victorious in the Ulster Senior Football and Hurling Championships, respectively. The Ulster Club Championships once more proved to be an extremely popular and well supported competition and the return of Loughgiel Shamrocks as senior champions in hurling brought about a real freshness to the competition. The football competition was fiercely competitive and it was unfortunate that the three finals were delayed due to the adverse weather conditions but it was Crossmaglen Rangers that reclaimed the senior football title. At this stage, I must compliment the six clubs who were directly affected by these postponements and I thank them for their understanding and co-operation at that difficult time.

At club level, there were again five divisions in the Ulster Senior Hurling Club League in 2010 with 70 teams competing including representatives from Leitrim, namely Glencar/

Manorhamilton who reached the final of Division 5. Their inclusion highlighted the importance of this competition, especially for clubs in those counties who are unable to provide regular games programme for their clubs. With regard to the Ulster Football Club League, 2010 saw the introduction of an Intermediate grade in addition to the Senior section, with a total of 52 clubs involved. This again provided clubs with competitive action at their appropriate level prior to the commencement of their internal county games programmes.

Data provided for presentation at the Annual Fixtures Seminar repeatedly outlines the mammoth number of games played in Ulster. In 2010, this amounted to 22,025 games in both codes at youth and adult level, with significantly more hurling games taking place at youth level which is extremely encouraging. I would like to take this opportunity to commend all those involved in fixture making in their roles on the Competitions Control Committee in their respective counties. The scheduling of games can be an arduous task but we are fortunate in all our counties, to have the personnel to cope with this and I hope that this continues in the years ahead. Counties do need to assess the requirement for all registered teams to ensure that activity meets the objectives set in the Strategic Plans.

In 2010, Ulster were back being represented on All Ireland Final day. As a proud Down man, we almost had the perfect celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our maiden All Ireland success. Unfortunately, this did not materialise but the performance of Tyrone minors in collecting the Tom Markham cup made it another day to be proud of our Ulster roots.

Additionally, we had three representatives in all the National Football League finals. Ard Mhacha defeated An Dún in the Division 2 decider while Aontroim lost out to Sligeach in the Division 3 Final. Consolation for both Aontroim and An Dún is the fact that they will be competing in a higher grade in 2011. With regard to hurling, I must commend Muineachán for their success in the National Hurling League Division 4, while Doíre were unfortunately defeated in the Division 3A Final by Ciarraí. Dún na nGall lost out at the final stage of the Lory Meagher to Longfort, while pride of place on the National stage in hurling must go to Ard Mhacha who collected the Nicky Rackard Cup by defeating Londáin in a highly entertaining final. Such a success highlights the immense hurling development done in the Orchard County over the past number of years. Congratulations to all involved.

In our first competition of the year, the Dr McKenna Cup, Dún na nGall collected their second successive title by defeating Tír Eoghain by 1-11 to 0-13 at Brewster Park. The Dr McKenna Cup continues to serve a valuable purpose for all our nine counties and also for the three universities, as they prepare for the National Football League and the Sigerson Cup respectively. I also extend my gratitude to Barrett Sports Lighting for their continued sponsorship of this important competition in the Ulster GAA calendar.

### **Senior Football Championship**

The 2010 Ulster Senior Football Championship commenced at Celtic Park on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May, where Ard Mhacha, fresh from their National League success, took on Doíre. An opportunist goal from the young Jamie Clarke ensured that Ard Mhacha were victorious on a scoreline of 1-10 to 1-07. One week later, Casement Park was the venue where Aontroim took on Tír Eoghain in a repeat of the 2009 Ulster Final. First half goals from Owen Mulligan and Kevin Hughes ensured that Tír Eoghain had enough to spare as they ran out 2-14 to 1-13 winners, despite a strong second half comeback from the hosts. On Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> May, extra time was needed for the only time in this year's Ulster Championship, as An Dún powered by a superb display by Benny Coulter edged out Dún na nGall by 1-15 to 2-10 at

MacCumhaill Park. The following weekend, Muineachán took on Ard Mhacha at Casement Park and produced a fantastic team performance to emerge comfortable winners on a scoreline of 1-18 to 0-09. In the last Quarter Final, Fear Manach gained revenge for their 2009 defeat to neighbours, An Cabhán as a Ryan Carson goal proved crucial in a 1-13 to 0-13 victory at Kingspan Breffni Park.

On Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> June, An Dún and Tír Eoghain faced up to one another in the first Semi Final that was played at Casement Park. An Dún produced a blistering start but Tír Eoghain used all their craft and experience to recover as they emerged to another Ulster Final on a scoreline of 0-14 to 0-10. The second Semi Final took place the following Sunday, with Muineachán and Fear Manach contesting for the right to face Tír Eoghain in the Ulster Final. Muineachán produced another strong performance as they ran out comprehensive winners on a 0-21 to 2-08 scoreline at Kingspan Breffni Park.

The final took place three weeks later where Muineachán and Tír Eoghain met in a repeat of the 2007 Ulster Senior Football Championship Final on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July. Over 32,000 spectators attended the Final on a day when the historic Down team of 1960/61 and the Ulster Senior Football Champions from 25 years previous, Muineachán were honoured. It was also fitting that our greatest players of the past were present and introduced to the crowd by Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh in his final year of broadcasting on a memorable day for Ulster GAA. With the inclusion of honouring great teams from the past, Cumann na mBunscol, Scór representatives, band entertainment, the Minor Football Final and the Senior showpiece, Ulster Final day continues to be a celebration of our great Association in the province. On that day, gaels from across the province gain a snapshot of the past, the present and the future. When the action began, a brilliant first half blitz by Tír Eoghain laid the foundations for an impressive 1-14 to 0-07 victory and a 13<sup>th</sup> Ulster title for the Red Hand County. Congratulations go to Tír Eoghain for another well merited success.

### **All-Ireland Football Championship**

The All-Ireland Football Championship for Ulster representatives began with five of our counties involved on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June. In the all Ulster clash, Ard Mhacha produced a strong team performance to overcome Dún na nGall in Crossmaglen. On the same day, An Cabhán produced a memorable comeback with 13 men for most of the game to overcome Cill Mhantáin by 0-15 to 2-08 at Kingspan Breffni Park. Doíre came away from Ceatharlach with a 1-18 to 2-09 victory while Aontroim played out a thrilling 0-15 apiece draw at Newbridge with Cill Dara on an emotionally charged day, being the evening of the funeral of the late and great Dermot Earley. In the replay, the following weekend, Cill Dara provided a glimpse of what was to come in the ensuing months as they produced a strong performance to overcome Aontroim by 1-15 to 0-09.

In the next round, our beaten provincial semi finalists entered the race for the All Ireland Championship with contrasting fortunes. An Dún secured a hard fought victory over Longfort at Pairc Esler on a 1-14 to 1-10 scoreline while Fear Manach suffered a 0-11 to 0-07 loss at home to Ard Mhacha. Doíre recorded a notable victory over Íar Mhí in Mullingar on a scoreline of 0-13 to 1-07. On the same day, An Cabhán suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of Corcaígh in Pairc Uí Caoimh, going down by 1-19 to 0-04.

The following weekend on the day prior to the Ulster Final, three of our counties were again in action in the All Ireland Football Qualifiers. Doíre could not stop the Cill Dara juggernaut which was gathering momentum as they ran out convincing 2-17 to 1-09 winners at Celtic

Park. Ard Mhacha also suffered defeat by Baile Átha Cliath at Croke Park on a 0-14 to 0-11 scoreline. On the same day, An Dún had a great victory over Uibh Fhaili in Tullamore as they edged out the home side on a scoreline of 1-12 to 1-10.

One week later, An Dún produced a sparkling display to comprehensively defeat beaten Connacht finalists Sligeach by 3-20 to 0-10 at Kingspan Breffni Park. Earlier that day, beaten Ulster finalists Muineachán became the third Ulster county to fall to the ever improving side from Cill Dara in the 2010 All Ireland Football Championship. Despite a late comeback, Cill Dara ran out 1-15 to 1-11 winners at Croke Park.

In the All Ireland Quarter Finals, both An Dún and Tír Eoghain were in action on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> July in Croke Park. An Dún, after a number of encouraging performances through the All Ireland Qualifiers, rolled back the years as they produced some fantastic football to defeat Ciarraí. A great start including a fine Mark Poland goal saw the Mourne men return to the All Ireland Semi Final courtesy of a 1-16 to 1-10 victory. That left Tir Eoghain playing Baile Átha Cliath for a place in the All Ireland Semi Final. A rejuvenated Baile Átha Cliath side grabbed that place by virtue of a late goal to send the Ulster champions out of the race for Sam Maguire on a scoreline of 1-15 to 0-13.

In the weeks leading up to the third Sunday in September, the Mourne County was awash with red and black. Fifty years after their first ever success, expectations were high that James McCartans' side could guide An Dún to another All Ireland title. Unfortunately, the wait for a sixth Sam Maguire was to continue as Corcaigh edged out An Dún by 0-16 to 0-15 in an intriguing tussle.

As regards the 2010 All Stars, I extend my congratulations to the five Ulster players who received awards. Brendan McVeigh, Danny Hughes, Martin Clarke and Benny Coulter (An Dún) were joined by Philip Jordan (Tír Eoghain).

### **Minor Football Championship**

The Ulster Minor Football Championship continues to be a thoroughly competitive knock out competition with 2010 proving to be no different. First in action were Doíre and Ard Mhacha where Ard Mhacha looked to be coasting to victory until a late comeback left them hanging on to a one point lead at the full time whistle, 2-09 to 2-08. A week later, Aontroim looked like causing an upset for long periods until Tír Eoghain resumed control to run out 1-13 to 1-08 winners. Remarkably, the same scoreline emerged from the Ard Mhacha and Muineachán game six days later, as the Orchard County took the honours in a great game at Pairc Esler. The following day, we had two games in the Ulster Minor Football Championship. An Dún defeated Dún na nGall in a good game at Mac Cumhaill Park by 2-10 to 0-12 as the curtain raiser to the senior game. Later that day, An Cabhán gave an exhibition of attacking football as they defeated Fear Manach by 2-16 to 1-10 at St Tiernachs Park, Clones. This completed the line up for the semi finals with four extremely strong sides remaining.

In the first Semi Final, Tír Eoghain met An Dún before their senior counterparts at Casement Park. This was one of the best games of the championship and a fantastic late save from Mark McReynolds ensured that Tír Eoghain held on to progress to the Ulster Final on a scoreline of 1-10 to 0-10. A fortnight later, a late Conor Gough goal was enough for Ard Mhacha to withstand the challenge from An Cabhán in a 1-10 to 0-11 victory. A great final was anticipated, but unfortunately, Ard Mhacha lost their team captain Peter Carragher prior

to the throw in and as a team did not play to their full capacity and it was Tír Eoghain who collected another Ulster Minor title on a scoreline of 1-14 to 0-05. Congratulations to Tír Eoghain for a well deserved success.

As Ulster champions, Tír Eoghain took on Ciarraí at Croke Park in an All Ireland Quarter Final. Goals from Michael Donaghy and Harry og Conlon saw the Red Hand side comfortably defeat the Kingdom by 2-11 to 0-09. The following day, Ard Mhacha scored a remarkable 19 points but still lost, courtesy of the now trademark comeback from Corcaigh minors, on a 3-11 to 0-19 scoreline. In the All Ireland Semi-Final, Tír Eoghain, aided by goals from Richard Donnelly, Dara Donnelly and Ronan O'Neill saw off the challenge from Maigh Eo as they collected a marvellous 3-10 to 0-16 victory, after trailing by seven points with twenty minutes to go.

On Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> September, Tír Eoghain lined out against Corcaigh and in doing so ensured that Ulster have been represented in 11 of the last 14 All Ireland Minor Finals. The Munster champions had earned a reputation of playing to the very death during the entire campaign. The young men from Tír Eoghain played from the front thanks to a goal from midfielder Harry og Conlon, throughout the 60 minutes as the crowd anticipated another comeback from Corcaigh. The comeback did materialise but it is a testament to this young Tír Eoghain side that they were the only team to withstand this challenge and added late points from John McCullagh and Ronan O'Neill. Team captain Shea McGarrity collected the Tom Markham cup as the Red Hand County held out for a historic 1-13 to 1-12 win. This was a tremendous achievement for all concerned and I extend my congratulations to Raymond Munroe and the entire backroom team for delivering another underage title to Tír Eoghain and indeed, to Ulster.

### **Under 21 Football Championship**

This Championship continues to thrive in its current slot in the fixture programme where it does not directly impinge on counties preparations for National Football Leagues and also benefits from an increased interest from our spectators.

The modernisation programme has greatly aided the playing of this competition midweek with the advent of floodlighting in our county grounds. Action commenced in Healy Park, Omagh on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March where Doíre comprehensively defeated the home side in the Preliminary Round by 1-14 to 1-07.

The following week, the four Quarter Finals took place across the province. Dún na nGall defeated Ard Mhacha by 1-09 to 0-09 at Brewster Park. Muineachán came away from Casement Park with a 2-12 to 2-06 victory over the hosts, An Cabhán comprehensively defeated An Dún 3-14 to 1-08 at Kingspan Breffni Park while Doíre defeated Fear Manach in a goal fest at Celtic Park on a winning margin of 5-09 to 2-12.

The Semi Finals were postponed by three days as a result of the weather conditions and I must pay compliment to the co-operation of the counties regarding this matter. On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> April, in a double header at Brewster Park, An Cabhán met Muineachán while Doíre faced Dún na nGall. An Cabhán edged out their neighbours out by 1-10 to 1-09 while a Michael Murphy goal proved enough for Dún na nGall in a 1-11 to 0-10 success. The final took place four days later again at Brewster Park, where goals from Dermot Molloy and Michael Murphy were crucial in a 2-08 to 0-07 success for Dún na nGall.

In the All-Ireland Semi Final, Dún na nGall faced new Munster champions, Tiobraid Árann at Parnell Park where they collected a fine win by 0-12 to 0-04. On 1<sup>st</sup> May, Dún na nGall took on Baile Átha Cliath at Kingspan Breffni Park in the All Ireland U21 Football Final. For the second year in succession, an Ulster side were defeated in the dying seconds. Dún na nGall conceded their only goal in the entire campaign and trailed by 1-10 to 1-08 when they awarded a penalty in the last minute. Team captain Michael Murphy took the kick and it crashed against the crossbar as Baile Átha Cliath claimed the All Ireland title in dramatic fashion. Commiserations to all involved in this campaign as the Under 21 side from Dún na nGall were undoubtedly, the hard luck story of 2010. Michael Murphy has recently been named as captain of the senior side and I have no doubt that he has the correct temperament to recover from this setback. The challenge lies ahead for this team to progress through to the senior ranks in years to come.

### **Club Football Championship**

Another interesting Senior Club Football Championship emerged with experienced campaigners such as Crossmaglen and St Galls being joined by relative newcomers such as Naomh Conaill, Eoghan Rua and Roslea. In the Preliminary Round, Kingscourt and Dún na nGall champions Naomh Conaill faced up to one another. In a great game of football, Naomh Conaill produced a second half scoring spree to emerge 1-12 to 0-11 victors. In the Quarter Finals, the big clash saw the current and former All Ireland Club champions take on one another at Crossmaglen. It was the home side that produced the match winning performance as they dethroned the Ulster and All Ireland champions, St Galls on a scoreline of 1-12 to 0-09. In the other games, Coalisland defeated Roslea by 1-10 to 1-07 at Omagh, Naomh Conaill had another fine victory on a scoreline of 2-11 to 0-09 over Clontibret at Ballybofey and Burren saw off Eoghan Rua Coleraine by 1-12 to 0-05 at Pairc Esler. In the Semi Finals, Naomh Conaill and Crossmaglen both had one point wins over Coalisland and Burren respectively. Naomh Conaill won out on a 1-10 to 1-09 scoreline at Brewster Park, while Crossmaglen had a 1-11 to 2-07 success at Casement Park to set up a final meeting with Naomh Conaill. After two postponements as a result of the weather, Crossmaglen met Naomh Conaill at Kingspan Breffni Park on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December. In an intriguing tussle, in which Naomh Conaill led by a point at half time, a revitalised Crossmaglen Rangers side emerged for the second half as they reclaimed the Seamus McFerran Cup for the eighth time on a scoreline of 2-09 to 0-10.

In the Intermediate Football Club Championship, Doohamlet and Bundoran met in the Preliminary Round at Clones. Two late scores from the Muineachán champions saw them claim a 1-12 to 1-10 win. In the four Quarter Finals, Rasharkin defeated Castledawson (1-10 to 0-11) at Casement Park, Lisnaskea beat Tullylish (2-12 to 1-08) at Pairc Esler, Doohamlet defeated Sarsfields (1-10 to 0-08) at Crossmaglen, while Derrylaughan needed extra time to overcome Drumalee (2-15 to 0-16) at Kingspan Breffni Park. In the Semi Finals, Lisnaskea defeated Rasharkin by 2-12 to 0-09 at Healy Park while Doohamlet secured a 2-12 to 1-05 victory over Derrylaughan at Brewster Park on the same day. The Final was played at Kingspan Breffni Park on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December and a late rally from Lisnaskea saw them collect the Patrick McCully Cup for the first time on a final score of 0-13 to 1-07.

In the Junior Football Championship, Corduff and Killyman played out a draw after extra time in the Preliminary Round. In the replay one week later, the Muineachán side secured a 1-10 to 0-07 victory at Inniskeen. The Quarter Final stages saw victories for Maguiresbridge over Drumaness (1-14 to 1-07), Swanlinbar over Ardmore (4-16 to 1-06), Grange over O'Donnells (0-14 to 0-06) while Corduff defeated Dún na nGall champions Naomh

Colmcille (1-08 to 0-06). The Semi Finals saw Swanlinbar and Corduff emerge. Swanlinbar defeated Drumaness (0-16 to 0-07) at Healy Park while Corduff saw off Grange (0-15 to 0-10) at Casement Park. Like the other two finals, the Junior Final was postponed until Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> December. At Kingspan Breffni Park as a curtain raiser to the Senior Final, Corduff produced their best performance of the competition to emerge victorious on a scoreline of 2-07 to 0-08. However, as a result of a successful objection and the decision of Comhairle Uladh being upheld by the Central Appeals Committee, the title was awarded to Swanlinbar under the rules of the GAA.

### **All Ireland Club Football Championship**

St Galls defeated Corofin in the All Ireland Senior Club Semi Final. It took extra time to separate the sides as the Ulster champions emerged victorious on a scoreline of 1-15 to 1-11 at Parnell Park. St Galls reached the promised land on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010 when they collected the Andy Merrigan cup for the first time in the clubs history, courtesy of a 0-13 to 1-05 victory over Clare champions, Kilmurray-Ibrickane. Congratulations to all involved in a tremendous success for St Galls.

In the All Ireland Intermediate Club Championship, Cookstown Fr Rocks made it a double for Ulster as they defeated Spa from Kerry in the All Ireland Final on a scoreline of 1-07 to 0-08 at Croke Park. I must again congratulate the Tyrone club on this fantastic success.

In the junior grade, after a good win in the quarter final, Emyvale went down to Kiltimagh from Mayo on a 1-10 to 1-05 scoreline at Pearse Park in the All Ireland Junior Club Championship Semi Final.

### **Senior Hurling Championship**

The 2010 Championship commenced on 8<sup>th</sup> May with First Round games involving Fear Manach and Muineacháin, Tír Eoghain and An Cabhán, Dún na nGall and Ard Mhacha. In the first game at Brewster Park, Muineachán squeezed past Fear Manach on a 1-15 to 2-10 scoreline. In Healy Park, Tír Eoghain comprehensively defeated An Cabhán by 6-24 to 1-14. In O'Donnell Park, Letterkenny, Ard Mhacha had a comfortable 3-23 to 1-12 victory over Dún na nGall. In the Second Round, Londáin had a comprehensive 3-16 to 1-15 victory over Muineachán at Casement Park while Ard Mhacha had a facile win over Tír Eoghain by 3-20 to 2-09 at the same venue.

The Quarter Final stage again saw the introduction of Doire and An Dún to the competition. Doire were drawn against Londáin and in a titanic struggle Londáin emerged victorious on a 2-12 to 0-15 scoreline. In the other Quarter Final, the Mourne men were in devastating form as they comprehensively defeated Ard Mhacha by 4-24 to 0-09.

As a result of the current format, there was only one Semi Final scheduled for Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June. Londáin were scheduled to play An Dún at this stage but unfortunately, due to their involvement in the Christy Ring Cup, they opted not to fulfil their fixture in the Ulster Senior Hurling Championship. This resulted in An Dún receiving a bye to the Ulster Final where they would face Aontroim. In the Ulster Final on 27<sup>th</sup> June, Aontroim produced a display that An Dún could not match as the Saffron County ran out comprehensive winners by 4-22 to 1-12 to collect the Liam Harvey Cup. As part of our Ulster Final day celebrations, the Aontroim team of 1970 who won the All Ireland Intermediate Hurling title were honoured on the day, and it was great to see so many of the people involved in this memorable achievement at Casement Park. Congratulations to Aontroim on securing another Ulster title.



### **All Ireland Hurling Championship**

Antrim were involved in the McCarthy Cup where they were drawn against Ceatharlach in the First Round. In a thoroughly entertaining game that was played as a double header at Casement Park with the footballers taking on Cill Dara in their All Ireland Footballer Qualifier, Aontroim held on to progress to the second phase by a narrow margin, 2-18 to 3-12. Such a victory secured a Croke Park date against Baile Átha Cliath where Aontroim produced a terrific display to defeat their Leinster opponents by 1-17 to 0-19, with a P.J. O'Connell goal proving crucial. Eight days later, Aontroim lined out in the All Ireland Quarter Final stage but were defeated by Corcaígh on a scoreline of 1-25 to 0-19. The return of Aontroim to this stage of the Liam McCarthy Cup augurs well for the future and hopefully, they can build on the progress that they made in 2010.

In the Christy Ring Cup, An Dún and Doire were again Ulster's representatives. Doire were knocked out courtesy of a disappointing defeat in Round 2B to An Mhí at Banagher on a scoreline of 2-16 to 0-15. One week later, An Dún were defeated by An Iarmhí in the Quarter Final at Navan by 2-21 to 1-18.

The Nicky Rackard Cup saw Tír Eoghain, Muineachán and Ard Mhacha compete with contrasting fortunes. Tír Eoghain were knocked out following a 1-18 to 2-09 defeat to Fingal while Muineachán were eliminated by virtue of a 3-10 to 0-13 defeat by Sligeach at Markievicz Park on the same day. Ard Mhacha had great victories over Fingal, Londáin, Sligeach and then Londáin again in a thrilling final in Croke Park by 3-15 to 3-14 to collect the Nicky Rackard Cup.

In the Lory Meagher Championship Ulster had four representatives – An Cabhán, Dún na nGall, Fear Manach and An Dún Theas. An Dún Theas were eliminated by Longfort on a scoreline of 5-13 to 1-13, while An Cabhán were defeated by Fear Manach in the Quarter Final by 0-19 to 1-07 at Brewster Park. In the Semi Finals, Dún na nGall saw off the challenge from the Erne County by 2-22 to 0-11 only to lose out at the final stage for the second consecutive season. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July, Dún na nGall were defeated by Longfort at Croke Park on a scoreline of 1-20 to 1-12.

### **Minor Hurling Championship**

There were a total of eight counties competing in the Ulster Minor Hurling Championship in 2010. As in the Senior Championship, Aontroim got a bye into the Ulster Minor Hurling Championship Final. In the First Round, Fear Manach defeated Muineachán at Brewster Park by 0-15 to 0-07. In the Second Round, the new Minor League Division 1 champions, Ard Mhacha had a comprehensive victory over Tír Eoghain (7-16 to 0-08) while the Minor League Division 2 winners Dún na nGall had a 3-14 to 1-10 victory over Fear Manach. In the Quarter Finals, both played at Casement Park, An Dún defeated Dún na nGall (1-17 to 0-07) while Ard Mhacha defeated Doire in a great game (4-15 to 2-14). The Semi Final saw neighbours An Dún and Ard Mhacha go head to head and the Orchard County's revival continued with a 0-13 to 0-09 victory. The Ulster Final saw them come up against the dominant force in Ulster hurling. Ard Mhacha competed strongly in the first half, but Aontroim produced some great hurling in the second half to emerge victorious on a 2-19 to 0-10 scoreline. Congratulations to Aontroim and commiserations to Ard Mhacha who made tremendous strides in the minor grade in 2010. In the All Ireland Quarter Final, Aontroim were unfortunate to lose a man early in the game and went down to Baile Átha Cliath at Crossmaglen by 3-13 to 0-11.

### **Under 21 Hurling Championship**

Five Ulster counties competed in the Under 21 Championship, which was played on a knock out basis again. Round One brought Ard Mhacha and U21 Shield winners Fear Manach together, with Ard Mhacha progressing on a scoreline of 2-20 to 2-08. In the semi finals, which were played as a double header at Casement Park, Aontroim defeated An Dún (0-19 to 1-12) while Ard Mhacha had a great win over Doire (2-12 to 0-10). The Ulster Final produced a great game and a late rally from Aontroim ensured that it was them who took the title courtesy of a 0-21 to 0-16 victory. In the All Ireland Semi Final, Aontroim came up against a superb Tiobraid Aránn team as they suffered a 2-32 to 1-07 defeat to the eventual All Ireland champions.

### **Under 21 Hurling Shield**

In the Ulster Under 21 Hurling Shield Semi Finals, Dún na nGall defeated Tír Eoghain in a brilliant game of open hurling (2-20 to 1-16) and Fear Manach beat Muineachán (0-14 to 1-09). Fear Manach collected the shield by beating Dún na nGall in the final at Healy Park (3-10 to 0-11) and went on to compete in the All Ireland Under 21 'B' Championship, where they were defeated in the Semi Final (1-09 to 3-25) by Ciarraí.

### **Club Hurling Championship**

In the Ulster Senior Club Championship, Antrim Champions, Loughgiel Shamrocks, emerged as victors after defeating Ballygalget in the Semi Final followed by a victory over Ard Mhacha winners Keady. In the Intermediate Club Hurling Championship Antrim club, Naomh Eoin made it a double for Aontroim when they emerged as champions by defeating Eire Óg in the final. In the Ulster Club Junior Hurling Championship, played before the Senior Final, Inniskeen won their first ever Provincial title in a thrilling encounter with St Brigids Cloughmills with a two point winning margin, 0-14 to 1-09. The presence of club teams from Ard Mhacha, Tír Eoghain and Muineachán in the respective grades is extremely encouraging for the future of club hurling in the province.

### **All Ireland Club Hurling Championship**

Cuchullians Dunloy were Ulster's representatives in the All Ireland Club Championship, having won the 2009 Ulster Club Championship. In the All Ireland Semi Final on 14<sup>th</sup> February, they came up against a very strong Portumna side and were defeated by 2-18 to 0-12 at Parnell Park. In the All Ireland Intermediate Club Championship Ulster Champions St Galls defeated Tynagh-Abbey/Duniry in the All Ireland Semi Final before losing out to Kilkenny champions, St Lachtais in the Final at Croke Park on a 3-17 to 0-10 scoreline. On the same day, Naomh Colum Cille from Tyrone went down to Blackrock from Cork on a 1-18 to 0-10 scoreline in the All Ireland Junior Club Hurling Championship Final. Comfort can be taken from the fact that Ulster teams are now being represented in All Ireland Hurling Club Finals and I commend these clubs for their continued efforts.

### **Inter Provincial Championships**

It is with great disappointment that the Inter Provincial Championships in both football and hurling did not take place in 2010. As the current holders of the Football competition, we have always been committed to both these championships and we hope that they can return to a regular slot in the GAA calendar in the near future.

### **Hurling Development**

The work in developing hurling is ongoing and there has been solid achievement during the past year. We again have organised the hurling leagues and all have provided much needed activity while at the same time creating the necessary competitive framework to allow for players and Clubs to develop the relevant coaching and administration skills that will ultimately improve the overall structure of hurling. The work with development Squads and the coach based approach has clearly set the objectives of expanding the skill and the enjoyment of participation in this activity. This area is supplemented by the Counties themselves through their own programmes and it is apparent that while progress has been made there is still a very significant amount of work necessary to progress our national game. We need to recognise the need for the schools sector to be able to compete at acceptable levels so that our young people will see the importance, enjoyment and personal development that the team concept of hurling can engender. The need to encourage more participation by teams at underage and particularly at minor level is obvious and this is borne out by the significant fall in participation from the Feile age group. We are continuing to work on our Hurling Strategy and it can lead to the overall standards being improved and we must remain committed to the advancement of hurling while at same time we need to ensure that the structures and systems are capable of carrying the weight of expectation for hurling. Hurling needs to stay the course rather than trying for short term advantage.

Coiste Forbartha Iomána collectively are very dedicated to delivering the requirements of hurling and it needs to be recognised that the membership of this Coiste are all dedicated to its advancement. They need the interaction and support of our County Committees as well as our Hurling constituent units if we are to achieve our goals. We recognise and acknowledge the work of the members of the Committee and their total dedication to hurling. The Committee Chairman, Mairtin MacAibhne has given total commitment to the work of the Hurling Development Committee and to him and his Committee and we thank them for their endeavours on our behalf. We also acknowledge the outstanding work of Jimmy Darragh aided by Kevin Kelly for all the developmental work, seminars and coach improvement programmes. We thank all those who work for hurling and assure them that they are recognised for their dedication and supported in their quest.

### **Referees**

The past year has been a difficult one for referees with reviews, changes in policies in respect of grading and appointments. We are even examining the use of electronic technology to determine scores or no scores as the case maybe. In the midst of the prospect of changes we need to focus on the referee and their pivotal role within our overall games programme and for most the status of the referee needs to be recognised as central. We cannot have Hawkeye at every game or a panel of 'experts' to analyse the pros and cons of every decision. Therefore, we must work to create a climate of proper application of the Rules and these do require umpires, linesmen, players and team managements to know the Rules and to respect the bona fides of everyone involved in the control of our games. We need to work on building respect through recognition of rights and responsibilities of all involved and rather than creating a blame culture, we collectively have to be prepared to acknowledge that mistakes occur but as the Court of Arbitration in Sport decided 'that before a CAS Panel will review a field of play decision, there must be evidence, which generally must be direct evidence, of bad faith.' I think that in examining any external intervention seeking solutions to controversial decisions that this position is centre stage as the referee's decision on any question of fact is final. It is the referees responsibility to ensure that our games are played in accordance with the rules and to achieve this position requires the respect and support of players, mentors and administrators alike towards the referee, the games and the concept of fair play.

Our Referees Committee do a fine job in the recruitment, training and assessment of our referees and we are indebted to those that work to support the referee. Paul Doris, Michael Hughes and Frank McDonald have worked diligently to support the referee in every way throughout the year and I would like to record our gratitude to them for their work. The Chairman of our Referees Committee, Joe Jordan and has been totally committed to all aspects of refereeing throughout his first year at the helm. He has been fully supported throughout by our Referees Administrator and Secretary, Tiernach Mahon. We are grateful to them both and to their Committee for all their work in this vital area of activity. We thank our referees for their time, commitment and involvement in the delivery of our games programme and also acknowledge the continued work of the County Referees Administrators, Assessors and Tutors to whom we are also indebted and who continue to do outstanding work for our Association.

### **Education**

The Coaching in Schools Programme continued to deliver physical literacy to Key Stage 1 pupils in three hundred and twenty schools as well as a substantial contribution to the related Summer Camps. This work is a critical element of games development and the outcome should be a generation of young people that are active, motivated, healthy and from our perspective capable of playing our games to whatever level they wish to be involved. This work is to ensure that all pupils involved, both male and female, will be better skilled and more competent as they participate in our Gaelic games. We are well served by the excellent young Coaches who are delivering a world class programme that is admired by everyone that has observed it in practice. The leadership of the programme by Eugene Young is excellent and the interaction with the Department of Education is also a key element of this work. He is supported by Terence McWilliams, Diarmaid Marsden and Bernie Fox in providing the necessary support in the delivery of the complete programme. Michelle McAleer deals with the complexity of financial drawdown from the Department and ensures that we are well served in this regard. We acknowledge the work and support of all the Schools involved for their assistance in delivering the Coaching in Schools Initiative. We are grateful for the support of the Department of Education and thank their staff for all their work in terms of the overall programme. We are very grateful to the Minister of Education for her support of what we do and we thank Caitriona Ruane, for her encouragement and wholehearted support.

The Second Level Schools Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sean Ó Duibhánigh is in place and working in conjunction with the two schools bodies in the delivery of competitive activity. The Vocational Schools Committee and the Ulster Colleges Council are still active and administer a tremendous amount of games activity commensurate with the demands within their respective schools environment. We acknowledge the input of the teachers and the support staff for what they have achieved. Second level schools are doing an outstanding amount of work and they need to be supported within our constituent units to deliver and expand our games. Many Clubs are helpful by allowing the use of their pitches for games and it is also a matter of significance that partnerships have been formed and significant development of facilities has been undertaken and is acknowledged as a long term commitment to our games and our Association.

Cumann na mBunscol have already demonstrated their full support for our games and our heritage through their complete activity programmes. We are grateful for the tremendous work of our Primary Schools and thank the teachers involved, their helpers and their local Clubs for development of the Club Schools link so that all our young people have the opportunity to be part of the sense of pride of place in addition to the enjoyment of being part

of the games of the GAA. This input plus our own substantial work then this educational sector will be vital to future development of our Association.

We are working with the Third Level education sector due to its importance within the work of the Association. Our best and most talented young players and potential coaches and administrators are attending University and it is in our best interests to ensure that they are fully supported. We directly award bursaries to ensure that those recipients are continuing to be actively involved in our games, their University Club as well as their own Club and in many cases their own County. We want to see the Gaelic Athletic Association to be at the centre of involvement by our members in the work of our University Clubs. We also are trying to ensure that lifestyle management is factored into their schedules as well as programmes such Drink, Drugs and Sausage Rolls. The role of our Comhairle Ard Oidheachas Uladh has been very good and we shall continue to address the various issues that arise including the provision of playing facilities commensurate with the demand of Gaelic games.

### **Community Development**

**Club Maith:** The Club Maith programme continues to be our primary Club Development and Accreditation programme. During the year Sport NI formally approved the scheme thus making the GAA the first recognised governing body for sport to have a Club accreditation programme in place. Clubs who receive a standard of the Club Maith programme will now also automatically receive the Sport NI Club Mark award giving GAA Clubs a double benefit from their involvement in the scheme. Increasing the level of governance and capacity within our Clubs remains a vital part of our work and is necessary to ensure that we as an organisation are well equipped to provide our games in addition to meeting the necessary statutory requirements. Five Clubs achieved the Club Maith Gold Award in 2010 namely St. Patrick's Eglish (Tyrone), Lamh Dearg (Antrim), Crossmaglen Rangers (Armagh), Derrygonnelly Harps (Fermanagh) and St. Mary's Rasharkin (Antrim). These Clubs are congratulated on their achievement and they are encouraged to aim for the highest standard as this will guarantee that they are the best that they can be. We currently have eighty one Clubs undertaking the Club Maith accreditation at various levels and it is hoped to be in a position to report next year that a significant number of these Clubs have achieved a Gold Award. We now have over sixty fully trained volunteer Club Maith assessors in place who facilitate the accreditation process and support the Club officials with their application and assessment. It is our hope that we can increase this number in the coming year to cope with the significant demand of this programme. There are now over five thousand regular users of our Club Maith web-site which has served as an excellent resource to our Clubs seeking advice on a range of governance issues and providing them policies and procedures as required. The web-site has also been of great assistance to Clubs who are applying for public funding. Each Club also has a copy of the Club Maith tool-kit, which is also available online, we are in the process of adding additional notes to the tool-kit focusing on both facilities development and health and safety and we hope to have these in place by April this year. We record our gratitude to the Community Development staff who under the leadership of Ryan Feeney and Aileen Tohill, continue to expand capacity building aspects of our Clubs and consequently work on behalf of the GAA. The complete Community Development team continue to be innovators in their provision of a first class support service to our Clubs.

**Volunteer Club Officer Training:** One of the success stories of the past year was the high number of Club Officers who attended the first Officer training workshops. This was organised as a half day Saturday session taking place in each of the nine Counties. To date

over nine hundred officers in total have attended the sessions held from January to March. The sessions involved specific workshops for Club officers and a series of support resources have been developed to support the programme. The feedback from the participants in the programme was excellent and once again demonstrates the important role that the Council has in the support and development of Club activities at grassroots level. The current year's programme is now well underway and in order to ensure that Club officers are getting the full benefit of the workshops the format has been altered slightly to focus on specific Club development areas by reviewing Case studies of success programmes in Clubs. Next year the programme will revert to the specific officer training workshops in order to keep the initiative current and up to date. Already the attendance and feedback for the programme has been very good. I would express my thanks to the County Development Officers, Brendan Kirk, Mark Conway, Jarlath Burns, the County Games Managers and the Ulster GAA staff namely Sharon Haughey, Maura Kelly, Gerry McClory, Geraldine McKavanagh, Diarmaid Marsden, Shane McCann, Paul Callaghan, Gerry McClory, Aileen Tohill and Ryan Feeney who continue to facilitate these sessions.

**Club Development Support and Club Planning:** Our staff supported by several volunteer members of the Council visited and assisted two hundred and sixteen Clubs during 2010 offering support and expertise in a range of areas including financial issues, planning applications and grant funding. The Community Development staff has been to the forefront of this work and have been available in the evening time and at weekends to offer support to our Clubs. Once again a significant amount of dedication and work has been evident in this area over the last year. We acknowledge the support of Alex Attwood, the Minister for Social Development and the Department of Social Development for their continued support of the Community Development work that we undertake. The Community Development personnel continue to provide a very substantial resource to our constituent units and we assisted forty four Clubs with grant funding applications, fifty four Clubs in establishing a direct debt fundraising schemes, eighty one Clubs in the development of their Club plans, fifteen Clubs with governance and financial issues and sixty seven Clubs with general Club Development queries. We are grateful to Michael Hasson and the members of the Community Development and Urban Committee and also to Dan McCartan and the members of the Club Planning and Physical Development Committee who give direction and focus to all this work including that undertaken by the staff of the Community Development Department.

**Irish News Club and Volunteer Conference 2010:** The fourth annual Irish News Club and Volunteer Conference took place in November and were held in Armagh. The conference was an outstanding success with the largest ever attendance of five hundred and forty three delegates from two hundred and twenty one Clubs from all our Counties. We also welcomed a small number Club delegates from other Counties to the event. Guest speakers included the Minister for Sport, Culture and Tourism Mary Hanafin TD and Trevor Ringland from the One Small Step campaign. The feedback from the event was excellent and we record our appreciation to the Community and Urban Committee chaired by Michael Hasson and the event team of Sharon Haughey, Aileen Tohill, Maura Kelly, Damian Kelly, Gerry McClory and Ryan Feeney who once again put together an excellent conference.

**Public Affairs:** A significant amount of work went into this area during the past year with meetings taking place with representatives of all political parties and local authorities across all of our counties. We carry out this work to ensure that the GAA collectively receives the public support it is entitled to and requires in order to deliver all of our work at Club and Community level. The first project that the Community Committee completed in early March

was the public affairs brochure which was sent to every elected official in Ulster, the document was also circulated to senior civil servants at both central and local government level and other significant individuals or groups who play a role in civic life. The document was designed to educate its recipients as to the role, remit and functions of the GAA in Ulster highlighting important facts about our Games, Clubs, Counties, Financial distribution as well as introducing the Council Officers and key staff. Feedback regarding the document was very positive and highlighted our interaction with external representatives. We acknowledge the substantial presentational input of Niall Laird in the overall design and layout of the brochure and its contents.

Statutory Committees of the Assembly have also requested presentations or information on several areas of operation within Ulster GAA during the year. The Environment Committee requested a presentation on Live to Play Road Safety Programme which Aileen Tohill, Ryan Feeney and I provided. The Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee asked Ulster GAA to give a presentation on Physical Literacy which Eugene Young, Aileen Tohill, Ryan Feeney and I provided to the Committee. The Department of Social Development Committee required information on Registration of Social Club Licensing and we were asked to appear before the Committee while the Justice Committee requested a presentation on issues relevant to spectator provision as part of the draft Justice Bill process which was provided with the help of Stephen McGeehan and Ryan Feeney. This work is vital in the continued operations of our Association as we need to reflect our position on many areas of the legal framework that represents the increased presence and role of the GAA in civic life. The Association is now rightly recognised for its significant contribution to Community enhancement and cohesion as well as being the largest provider of Social Capital in Ireland.

Significant work was also done at local government level with Ulster GAA contributing to Council led good relations programmes and a lobbying process which took place over an extended period that has yielded significant results for our Association as we now have eleven Active Communities GAA Coaches based across the local government areas in 26 northern local government districts, this programme is rolled out in partnership with Sport NI, the local Councils, the County Committees and Ulster GAA. There are also similar supported coaching programmes in the three southern Counties.

**Urban Development:** The demographic changes that has continued the urbanisation of society in turn has increased the importance of Urban Development within the GAA. A pilot urban development project was put in place in partnership with Derry City Council in 2002 and this programme initiated by Barry O'Hagan, Mark Conway and Ben Corr has served as the template which all urban development work within Ulster is now based. The Belfast Urban Group Chaired by Cathy Gallagher continues to expand participation rates among youth players in Belfast as well as lobbying for increased GAA provision within the City of Belfast from the statutory authorities and agencies. This process has been difficult and significant work has been put into advancing the matter to ensure that the provision of facilities for GAA purposes is commensurate with the needs of our Clubs, Schools, Universities and our Counties. The Derry City Group Chaired by Bernie Mullan are currently in a period of review and are in the process of putting together a new plan for the City for the next five years.

**Community Outreach, Engagement and Diversity:** The policy of being an anti-sectarian and anti-racist Association continues to require us to engage and outreach to those who traditionally would have no involvement in the GAA. A range of meetings have taken place

over the last year which included the visit of the Chief Constable of the PSNI, Matt Baggott, to Ceannaras Uladh in December. The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland Dr. Norman Hamilton was also welcomed to Ceannaras Uladh in January and both meetings were positive and constructive and I look forward to further engagement with them in the future. Good relations, Diversity and Community Outreach continue to be an essential part of the business of the GAA and our Council is playing a full part in the ongoing implementation of the National GAA Integration and Inclusion strategy. We take the lead on behalf of the GAA in the Community Outreach section of the National Strategic Plan and we are represented on the Integration and Inclusion Committee. The Department of Foreign Affairs also provided support to the Ulster for diversity programmes and I am grateful to the Minister, Micheal Martin and the departmental officials who recognise the important work we are doing in this area.

**Cardinal Ó Fiaich Library and Archive:** Over the last year, Comhairle Uladh has done much to achieve its objectives in respect of culture and heritage through its working in partnership with the Cardinal Ó Fiaich Library and Archive on the ‘Carlann CLG Uladh / Ulster GAA Archive’ project. During this time, hundreds of old Gaelic-games documents, programmes, books and magazines have been catalogued, and work towards the publication of a comprehensive catalogue of the institution’s holdings relative to the GAA is at an advanced stage. Old documents, including half a dozen minute-books from Fr Rock’s GAC, Cookstown, from 1907 onwards, and a dozen Tyrone County Board minute-books from 1926 onwards, have been deposited in the library. The library has also begun to digitalise these documents. The availability of many historical records has stimulated ever more research. During the past year, the Ó Fiaich Library has assisted with queries relating to Gaelic-games history. These queries were received by visits, e-mails and telephone communications from researchers from twenty - one of our Irish counties, as well as others from Germany, the USA and Canada. The library has also continued to expand in its outreach work. Two lectures in connection with the Ó Fiaich Library were held during the ‘Mórtas an Chabháin’ festival, in Blacklion and Bailieborough; another was held in An Charraig Mhór (Tír Eoghain). In relation to the research on John McKay, a lecture was delivered at the Sports History Ireland conference at Mater Dei Institute, Dublin. Two further highlights of the year were the Tír Eoghain GAA history nights, which brought packed houses to the Ó Fiaich Library to hear historical talks and see archive film footage. On the first of these occasions films shown had not been seen in public since the late 1940s.

During the past year the library produced additional literature with reference to Ulster GAA history: a short booklet entitled, **The Story of Gaelic Games in Ulster**; and a chapter on the Gaelic-games archive was included in the ornate **Treasures from the Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive**. The library has acted in an historical consultative role also for projects such as the new portrait in Belfast City Hall, in which GAA co-founder John McKay is depicted; the Comhairle Uladh memorials to early officials George Martin and M. V. O Nolan, whose contribution was marked at the Aontroim versus Tír Eoghain Senior Championship game in May 2010 and the commemoration to Dr. George Sigerson who will be recognised by the Ulster History Circle by the unveiling of a Blue Plaque in Strabane and a further plaque will be erected at his former residence in Dublin. Furthermore, the library held its third national GAA programmes and memorabilia fair, which brought collectors from seventeen counties to Armagh, and enabled the library to further enrich its archive collection while at the same time strengthening its relationship with the GAA as a whole.



**The Cuchulainn Cup:** Enniskillen Cúchulainns were winners of our cross community Gaelic Football Tournament which was held in the Mid Ulster Sports Arena in Cookstown. The Enniskillen side beat off strong competition from Armagh Cúchulainns in the final. Four teams competed in the cross-community tournament: Lurgan-Armagh, Dungannon, Magherafelt and Enniskillen. All teams were made up of players from schools within both the controlled and maintained sectors. The tournament is an extension to our cross Community Initiative, which brings together young people from a range of backgrounds who have little or no experience participating in Gaelic Games.

The initiative is backed by the 'Unite Against Hate' Campaign which embraces the future as: "A peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust and the protection and vindication of human rights for all". Teams competing in 2010 Cúchulainn Football Cup were: Enniskillen Cúchulainns, Armagh-Lurgan Cúchulainns, Dungannon Cúchulainns and Magherafelt Cúchulainns. All teams received free coaching from Ulster GAA Coaches and County Coaches.

**Game of Three Halves:** We are working jointly with Ulster Rugby and the Irish Football Association, along with Peace Players International to organise a significant event at the Civil Service Sports Pavillion under the auspices of 'A Game of 3 Halves'. The concept was first developed by Paul Brown, Youth Co-ordinator at Knock Presbyterian Church, together with Peace Players International as a cross-community initiative which would bring the three governing bodies together and offer children from both sides of the community the chance to experience Gaelic Games, Rugby and Soccer. Each governing body invited young people from local primary schools with whom they have formed lasting relationships over the years, and throughout the day participants received top class coaching from Development Officers from all three sports. There is need to work within an umbrella body to help organise these events and we would wish to recognise the significant contribution made by Trevor Ringland in taking these matters forward and for which we thank him.

**Enniskillen Cuchullian Tour:** The Cúchulainn Initiative is our flagship cross community project which aims to promote Gaelic Games to those from non-GAA backgrounds while at the same time using our own sport to break down barriers and to help build respect and reconciliation. Twenty boys from Fermanagh represented Ulster at the 2010 Continental Youth Championships in New York. The 15-year-old boys were selected from four schools in Enniskillen namely Portora Royal, St Michael's, St Joseph's and Erne Integrated College. The week-long trip focused on competitive games with some of America's best GAA teams including New York and North America Board plus three New York based youth teams. The games were held at Einsenhower Park on Long Island. The boys also had the opportunity to make lasting friendships with players from other teams and most importantly with their own team-mates who live within the Enniskillen area. The travelling party were well received by all of the GAA teams, the organising Committee and also were received at the Office of the Consul General in New York and by Uachtarán na hÉireann at Áras an Uachtaráin on their return from the trip.

**Community Health and Wellbeing:** Live to Play is Ulster GAA's Road Safety education programme was launched in 2010 and has seen a very positive response from GAA members and non-members alike. The programme was piloted in Tyrone and Fermanagh initially and has since been launched in Cavan and Donegal. To date twenty two Club education events have taken place involving over fifteen hundred people. Many of our officers made a

significant impact in the rollout within their own counties including Cuthbert Donnelly (Tyrone), Brian Armitage (Fermanagh), Aodh Mairitin Ó Fearaigh and Mick McGrath (Donegal) and Liam McCabe (Cavan). I would also highlight the input of Mickey Harte and Joe Passmore in the development of the programme. The education events will be delivered to all the remaining Ulster counties in the spring of 2011. The rollout of the programme at Club level has been accompanied by promotion during the football and hurling championships and with the launch of a poster campaign in December, it is anticipated that GAA members across the province will benefit from the messages and be safer on the roads as a result. It should also be noted that there was significant reduction in road deaths in all of our Counties and with renewed effort we can try to continue this trend.

The ASAP programme is well established within Clubs in Ulster with the majority at this stage now having a policy in place and an officer to lead its delivery. Education events are taking place to reinforce the Club policy with youth and adult alike benefiting. Tyrone County board were successful in grant applications which enabled them to avail of pitch side signage for all their Clubs to promote the initiative. Other Counties have followed suit for their County grounds. The ASAP programme intends to offer intervention training for coaches as part of its' aims for the coming year and this would enable coaches to respond to any player who may present with a problem in this area.

Drink, Drugs and Sausage Rolls, the student health programme proved a success once again with over two thousand students taking part in the initiative at various University campuses across the north. We acknowledge the continued sponsorship from [www.squareball.com](http://www.squareball.com) of this programme which has ensured that its message has been kept fresh and appealing to students.

As part of the DENI Sport in School programme, ten thousand Health Booklets, sponsored by Tesco, were made available to P3 and P4 children. This interactive learning publication proved not only educational but fun for the children involved and received very positive feedback from both teachers and parents alike. With the booklet produced in English and Gaeilge it allowed all children involved in the DENI programme to engage in the appropriate language within the relevant schools ethos.

Following an approach from the Department of Health, we have agreed to take part in a pilot Training scheme for Defibrillator use. Initially, twelve tutors will be trained in the use of a defibrillator and will then be capable to cascade this training to Clubs in their county and to be recognised as competent. Many of our Clubs currently have a defibrillator in place and they will be aware of the importance of training and refresher training and an initiative such as this will be helpful in ensuring clubs can meet these requirements on an ongoing basis. In addition to this the Council continues to expand the Heartstart Courses which teach basic life saving skills to participants and are highly recommended.

**Strategic Development:** As we enter the third year of our current Strategic Plan we are exceeding our set targets and timescales. The Developments Committee received five reports on each of the strategic themes during the year from the Chairpersons of the relevant Committees and the relevant Senior Staff member tasked with co-ordinating the undertaking and delivery of each theme. These reports were followed by a useful appraisal and debate among the members of the Committee who monitor and review the progress of the Strategy on an ongoing basis. The Management Committee also received six reports on Strategic Development throughout the year. An annual report on the strategic process was also

submitted to the Ard-Stiúrthóir for review in September. Aogan Ó Fearghail is also the Ulster representative on the National Plan Implementation Committee and submits reports to this group on an ongoing basis. Ryan Feeney has direct responsibility for Strategic Development and meets with representatives from Central Council and the other three Provincial Councils on a monthly basis to review progress.

**Integration:** The work of the Integration Committee continues to be a top priority for the Ulster Council. This committee which meets six times a year serves as an excellent forum for the leaderships of each Ulster Provincial Council to discuss areas of cooperation and interaction. There has never been more interaction and cooperation between the five Provincial Councils, relations continue to be strong between all bodies and there are more joint projects and programmes than ever before. The establishment of the new “One Club” Work Group at national level is a welcome and important development step. The Ulster Council hope to make a significant contribution to the development of the new “One Club” model based on the governance and games structures for integrated Clubs that we have been promoting for over five years. I would recognise the support and cooperation from our colleagues in the Aontacht Uladh Confederation which provides the protocols for our ongoing interaction at Provincial level namely; Hugh Devaney and Mary Keegan, (Ulster Ladies Gaelic Football Council) Catherine O’Hara and Jennifer Cultra (Ulster Camogie Council) Dr. Robert Maguire (Ulster Handball Council) and Peadar O Tuatain (Ulster Rounders Council). The Integration Committee under the Chairmanship of Mairtin Mac Aibhne and including the Uachtarán and Rúnaí Comhairle Uladh provides the natural framework for the full integration of the Gaelic family under our whole family for the whole life motto.

**County Strategic Plans:** The completion and launch of the Monaghan Plan in October now means that Ulster have a Strategic Plan in operation in all nine counties. The plans in Cavan, Derry and Antrim are up for a review in the coming year as these three plans have been in place for almost five years. Officers, Members and staff of the Council meet with the Strategic Implementation Committee in each County at least twice a year and provide reports to the Management and Developments Committee at Provincial level and also report as required to Central level. I would like to express my thanks to Mark Conway our honorary strategic advisor who undertakes a significant amount of strategic work for the Council.

### **Grounds**

**Major Stadium:** The work of the Stadium Steering Group has been concluded and a Project Board has been established. This is a consequence of the conclusion of the Outline Business Case and the process having moved through the political process. Within the Steering Board operation, three Workgroups have been established to develop the areas of Design and Planning, Governance and Finance and Community and Public Affairs. Each of these bodies plus the overall Steering Board will have a hectic period of work should the final decisions be taken to have the Strategic Stadium Development progressed between now and 2015. The capital investment by Government has been included in the draft budget but until the final decision is taken then we are still in potential rather than delivery mode. We are enthused by what might be achievable but before we can predict the final outcome there are still hurdles to be crossed before the next element begins. We have the continued support of Eamonn Prenter (Planning), Des McMahon and Deirdre Lennon (Stadium Design) Barry McGurgan (Economic Appraisal) along with Tomas O Dalaigh, Peadar O Coinn, Sean O Raghallaigh, Paraic O Dufaigh, Donal O Murchu supported by Stephen McGeehan for which we are grateful. It has been a long and arduous road but with a clear and determined vision we can

deliver a stadium that will meet the stated objective of our Association. We acknowledge the input of Cristeoir O Cuana and Tomas O Riain to our deliberations and we also acknowledge the input to the process of the Minister, Nelson McCauley, MLA, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and Sport NI in reaching the current position. Much has been done to date but there are more major challenges ahead that will require our concerted efforts if we are to progress through the next stage.

**Safety Certification:** During this past year there has been an enormous amount of work done by Comhairle Uladh, our Counties and some Clubs in working with the local authorities to satisfy the requirements of the Safety Certification process in 14 designated venues. The Red Guide requires a Qualified person to be identified for the GAA this position is fulfilled by myself. We had a very significant requirement placed on meeting the various documentation, having the physical capacity established, producing the necessary certificates and assisting in the establishing the highest 'S' factor at each ground. The input to the process of Stephen McGeehan and Liam Nelis in dealing with the licensing process and representing me at meetings with local authorities supporting Counties in all areas of safety management and physical integrity documentation and the need to meet the deadlines for each designated ground also needs to be acknowledged. In addition, Ulster GAA representatives attended all of the Safety Advisory Group meetings with the relevant stake-holders during that time. At the time of writing this report thirteen GAA venues will be certified with the only exception being Davitt Park, Lurgan due to ongoing construction work on site. The responsibilities now placed upon the Counties who operate licensed venues is very significant and in terms of Event Plans, Contingency and Emergency Planning, Personnel, Stewarding and operations, Ulster GAA will continue to support them in ensuring their needs will be compliant with the legislation. During the past year, sixteen Safety Officers were trained through the Sport NI accredited course and by the end of April two hundred and seventy stewards will have completed the NCFE Level Two Qualification which will be very helpful in organising games. We also need to work with the counties for the future sharing of the stewards and other resources as required.

**Infrastructure Projects:** With the efforts of our units assisted by the support of our Council, significant progress has been made during the year on the completion of Main County Grounds at the Athletic Grounds, Armagh and Pairc Esler Newry which has been the result of a ten year investment support plan by the Council. During this past decade the Council has facilitated the investment of over €10m in County Grounds through collaborative working with Sport NI and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and our own Association. It is a tremendous credit to all our Counties that they have worked tirelessly to achieve for the first time that all our Main County Grounds are capable of hosting Senior Inter County Football and Hurling Championship fixtures. We are continuing to work with Counties and lobby Government to expand the emphasis for development now to our main Secondary Venues and the remaining designated and potentially designated grounds and ensure that over time we can achieve similar improvements to these facilities so that they meet the increasing needs for other County fixtures and the vitally important Club Championship programmes. Through the Strategic Investment Fund, 2010 proved to be a very busy year with work continuing on the Regional Centre for Excellence at Dunsilly, Antrim with the laying of four pitches including the dedicated club pitch for St Comghalls GAC. The GAA's investment in this development brought about by the Ulster Council and Antrim County Boards has secured a prime site for the Association in a town that is ideally located not only to provide facilities in Antrim but also at Regional and Provincial level. The Garvaghey project in Tyrone has progressed magnificently during 2010 with major progress in the laying of pitches and the installation of floodlighting on the elevated site at their Centre of Excellence. The success of

Tyrone Gaels in raising their own finance through the Club Tyrone Patrons scheme is a model for the entire Association to learn from. We hope to support Tyrone in seeking government support for the scheme during the coming year. The other Strategic Investment Fund sites in Ulster at Owenbeg, Derry and Convoy, Donegal were advanced during the past year and both Counties are planning for infrastructural work to begin in 2011. We shall support the work of Derry and Donegal in taking forward their projects from the procurement of contractors through to supporting the operational needs of the Counties during the construction phase.

It has been a very disappointing year in relation to the support for Ulster capital projects from the National Infrastructure and Safety Committee. Unfortunately, a reduction in funding levels and new centralised application processes contributed to frustrations and delays in taking forward a number of projects at main County Grounds, Secondary Grounds and Centres of Excellence, despite the fact that our Strategic Plan clearly identified Provincial priorities. The situation was compounded in relation to the construction of the excellent new playing pitch at St Tiernach's Park in Clones where despite the fact that, with the exception of Pairc an Chrocaigh, over this past ten years this venue has hosted the largest collective attendances at Championship venues in the country. It is very disappointing to report that despite the fact that the new pitch hosted our 2010 Ulster Football Finals in July, to date the National Infrastructure and Safety Committee has not provided any support to the project and the level support to this venue at central level is entirely out of kilter with their support for similar venues. Other problems permeate around the processes within Counties for the nomination of Secondary County Grounds and the availability of finance at the National Infrastructure and Safety Committee level to support such projects. These issues can only be resolved by the NISC Committee working in partnership with Provincial Councils to identify the strategic priorities for the GAA in their jurisdiction to agree the process and to adhere to it.

We are liaising with local authorities in seeking the development of facilities in many Council areas and we are optimistic to improve the statutory provision of playing pitches including third generation Astroturf pitches. We will continue to work with and where necessary, to challenge the public provision of playing facilities. It is also important that we encourage local partnerships between our own units and schools where this can be mutually beneficial to the greater good. Our schools are expanding facilities and where partnerships exist they have demonstrated the benefit of this type of arrangement.

The Parks and Safety Committee deal with the application and processing of County projects. This then allows for those that are approved to be supported and to be submitted to the National Infrastructure and Safety Committee. The Committee are also responsible for all safety aspects applying to grounds under the Blue or Red Guide. This involves working internally and externally to ensure that compliance is centre stage to all our grounds, events and in the training needs stewards, safety officers, event controllers and the overall legal requirements placed on venues. We are indebted to the Southern Regional College, Sport NI, the Overseeing body and the Local Authorities for their input into this area of operation. This Committee also process the grant applications from Clubs and disburse Central Council grant aid to approved projects.

The Club Planning and Physical Development Committee are also very active and are our Club support and advisory body on a wide range of matters. We acknowledge the assistance of the County Development Officers, Paul Sanders and Maura Kelly in dealing with all of

these issues that have arisen and this includes a significant amount of legal advice and support to our Clubs. Our appreciation is extended to Dan McCartan as Cathaoirleach and the members of the Committee for their expertise and time in these very worthwhile elements of our Associations work.

### **Provincial Council**

The Provincial Council has had very substantial change in both officers and membership it needs to be understood that the requirements on our Provincial Council are continuing and we diligently have to work in the key areas of games development, governance, child protection, support of Clubs and Counties. The function of strategic planning is vital to our future and we welcome the fact that all our Counties are working within a Strategic Plan. The importance in defining the direction that we as an organisation intend to travel is central to ensuring that we need to see change as beneficial as it means that our core work, values and vision are made with the best interests at heart.

The interaction with the various external bodies, Non Departmental Public Bodies and the various people who influence the wider community agenda has been part of our community work. This has seen significant engagement across the complete spectrum of communal life. We have brought forward the Associations views on legislation being prepared and in advising our constituent units on issues and we also provide a Club and County support on a range of matters that have ensured that our units are in receipt financial support across a range of areas. This can range from local authorities to the Office of the President of Ireland. This can relate to matters as diverse as Games Development to areas of Community Development that has important implications for our future. These can influence public provision of facilities to the grant aid support for our Clubs and Counties. We acknowledge the support of the Irish Sports Councils, Sport NI, the Departments of Education, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Department of Social Development, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Department of Tourism and Sport, the Department for Foreign Affairs, the North/ South Ministerial Council and all political parties, who have been encouraging us in the work that we do. The GAA must be relevant in its time.

Today, we say farewell to three outgoing members of Comhairle Uladh. They are Sean P. O Greachain, Criostoir de Brún and Seamus O Muiri who have given sterling service in representing their respective Counties over many years. They have been very active on the various Committees and Sub Committees and they following on from the substantial changes of last year. Our thanks to them for their work and wish them well into future where we know that they shall remain active and committed to the GAA.

Aogan Ó Fearghail, Uachtarán, has been a totally dedicated Officer who has given generously of his time in the best traditions of the Association in Ulster. He has been at the fulcrum of the work of Council. He has worked at National level on the Strategic Implementation Committee and he has been representative on Coiste Bainisti Naisunta and Ard Comhairle. He has represented the Council across a diverse list of functions and events. In all his functions he has been exemplary and has represented the Council at a wide range of events. We acknowledge his work on our behalf and thank him for his work and support across the full spectre of our activity.

Mairtin Mac Aibhne, Leas Uachtarán, has also given generously of his time and has played a very important part in the administration of the affairs of Comhairle Uladh. He has been the

Chairman of Coiste Forbartha Iomana and has ensured that the interests of hurling are adequately provided for. He also was Cathaoirleach of the Integration Committee and has worked diligently to ensure that the continuing work of integration is centre stage. We acknowledge his work and we thank his input to the affairs of the GAA in Ulster.

Our Cisteoir Micheal O hOsain has rendered excellent support to the work of the Council and in particular to the financial aspects of our games programme. He has acted as Cathaoirleach of our Finance Committee and they have worked diligently to ensure that the governance of our Council and our Counties are fit for purpose. He has been a tremendous support throughout and we thank him for his efforts on our behalf.

Oilibhéar Ó Gealagain as our OCP, has also been of tremendous assistance in dealing with the public, the media and external demands. He has dealt very efficiently with the various issues and statements that arose in a very positive and constructive manner. He also ensured that our results were available to the media outlets and he was always on call to our units and the outside requirements. We record our appreciation to him for his help, support and advice throughout the year.

The members of Comhairle Uladh have provided a tremendous service to the Council, our Counties and to the wider GAA. They have contributed to a massive amount of work on many fronts while at the same time they have represented their Counties with integrity and distinction. They also provide a substantial contribution to the GAA through their membership of the Council and the Executive Sub Committees of Comhairle Uladh and for which we are deeply grateful.

We acknowledge Nollaig Mac Cumhaill and Eamann Mac Mathuna who have as Chairman and Secretary of the Hearings Committee carried out a tremendous amount of work and who have dealt with the delivery of our appeals and disciplinary process in a most efficient and competent manner. We are grateful to the members of the Hearings Committee for their fortitude and availability in resolving these important matters. Stephen Donnelly gives a tremendous service to our Coiste Cheannais na Chomortaisi, the Counties, Referees, the Clubs and to other fixture making bodies as required. His detailed report on our Fixtures is a very valuable resource in the overall assessment of the delivery of our Games programme and we are well served by his total commitment and dedication. Bernie Fox, who is involved in event planning ticketing and administrative support of the work of our Coiste Eisteachta Cuige and Bernie along with Geraldine McKavanagh, provides full support to the throughput of cases and the process all matters as required. Geraldine McKavanagh has continued to service Coiste Bainisti, County Secretaries and Senior Staff as well as her work as Child Officer while at the same time is a tremendous support to me in the work that I do and for which I am deeply indebted to her. The other remaining staff are enthusiastic and give generously of their time in the interests of the GAA in Ulster and for which we are grateful. I would recognise the work of the Senior Staff and thank them for their continued dedication to the GAA and their support and loyalty to me. We thank Eugene Young (Director Coaching and Games), Michelle McAleer (Head of Finance, HR and Business), Ryan Feeney (Head of Community, Strategy and Public Affairs) and Stephen McGeehan (Head of Operations, Compliance and Infrastructure) who continue to undertake outstanding work on our behalf.

Tomas O Dalaigh concludes his membership of Comhairle Uladh today and he has served the GAA with distinction throughout. He has been a constant part of our affairs since 1988. In every capacity including his term as our President and he has made a truly outstanding

contribution to the Association at all levels. He has given clear, incisive and forthright leadership to the GAA in Ulster as well as giving very generously of his time. He is the true committed volunteer. In his dealings at all levels he has contributed substantially and articulated the views of Ulster on many occasions with clarity and decisiveness. He has been totally committed to all of our work and to the programmes that we as a Council have advanced. Tomas Ó Dalaigh was and is an outstanding ambassador for this Association that has visions of what can be while at the same time ensuring that the affairs of the Association are dealt with in a fair and dispassionate manner. He also continues to serve the Ulster Council as Chairman of the Stadium Project Board, the Human Resource Committee and Chairman of our Twining Work Group responsible in respect of our engagement with the GAA in Britain and Canada and we are grateful for his ongoing input within our affairs. Well done Tomas and thank you for a job excellently done and we wish you well into the future.

### **Games Development**

The work of Games Development has been central to the wider development of our Association. It is important that we ensure that everyone involved is adequately trained, supported and that we recognise the importance of all coaches and administrators on this key area. It is important that we examine the enjoyment and fun aspects while at the same time ensuring that there is an adequate games programme that is challenging and inclusive. To this end the GAA have developed the Go Games model and we must ensure that multiple games on a few dates do not replace the need for a games programme that is developmental and delivers what is needed to satisfy the needs of our young players. Coaching and Games Development continues to flourish in the Province. Ulster GAA has staff working directly in schools and hurling development officers working within schools and clubs on a regional basis. The staff are located centrally and deliver workshop and competition programmes locally within clubs and counties to development squads and elite level players. The network of County Games Development Managers supported by our provincial structure provides the framework to deliver National and Provincial policies and programmes. Unfortunately systems in place are performance management driven and has created an ever increasing administrative work load for the Games Managers that is underpinned by a management information system that is being replaced at present to improve efficiency. Ulster GAA is also lobbying to retain Government funding to sustain the current level of coaching support within the counties.

For the children, the Go Games programmes are now well established in schools and clubs and the Respect initiative needs further embedding to be fully effective. The Gaelic Start programme has been well received and carries forward the work done in the primary schools into the juvenile sections of our clubs. The Activity days in Croke Park for 2010 changed their focus to children. These were well received by the counties and the children. In-service opportunities have been provided for coaches employed by counties to assist them to develop their skills and knowledge base. However, the programme would need to be more than simply promotional if we are to replicate the success of the previous programme that was targeted at development squads.

GAA for all has focused on providing opportunities for people with disabilities and older people. This focus links closely with the Active Communities programme funded by SportNI and Local Councils. The focus in this programme is specifically on disability, older people and female participation. Partnerships and networks have been evolving with local community groups and community agencies to target and delivery our games to these young



people. Challenges are emerging in our ability to attract the over fifty age group and these will be addressed in coming year.

The focus on juveniles in 2010 at the Annual Coaching Conference was a progression from the 2009 focus on children. The Conference speakers challenged coaches as before; the content was well received and lots of ideas were exchanged. Further work with development squad coaches through the Pipeline to Performance Coaching Programme supported the good work going on within counties. The Team Fit programme ran again in association with St Mary's University College. A new programme, Ulster GAA Team Management, provided a new opportunity for coaches to fine tune management skills and competencies. All three programmes provided a welcome opportunity for coaches to move beyond their Level 2 qualification. Run initially as pilot programmes, Ulster GAA has progressed some way in having these programmes accredited as a qualification and set within the National Qualifications Framework. We are currently seeking to engage with an Awarding Body partner to accredit and deliver the programme in conjunction with our Coaching and Games Development Committee.

Ulster has been to the fore in driving and implementing the policy to develop tutor trainers to train our own coach tutors. Ulster now has nine tutor trainers and in the past they carried out four training programmes, training up one hundred and forty tutors across Ulster and Britain. The next challenge is to ensure that programme content and delivery is quality assured, tutor trainers and coach tutors receive development opportunities and new programmes that are delivered according to the required content and level and to the established standards.

Ulster GAA's relationship with the Sports Institute has taken a new direction after some negotiation. The Sports Institute continues to support three of our talented young players of Handball, all of whom are making excellent progress. In addition they have agreed to support a series of high performance workshops for our senior and u21 County team managers, physiotherapists, doctors and coaches. Our challenge is to get the key people within these teams to show an interest in what is on offer. We need the support from our Counties to make the new arrangements work however this is not always forthcoming at the highest senior inter county level. We can always learn from best practise and the Sports Institute can open this door to the next expansive step for our teams in their pursuit of success.

The work with referees has been ongoing and a series of workshops delivered in sports science, video analysis support, rules and sports psychology have all added value to the referees programme. Plans are in place to implement the Referee's Academy for 2011 and the need has been identified to recruit more hurling referees.

Ulster GAA continues to deliver programmes that have evolved from National and Provincial policies.

The added value is coaching that is ongoing in a range of programmes that promotes inclusion and diversity both within and outside of the GAA. The Cuchullains programme was expanded in 2010 from hurling to include football, the coaching in the Games of Three Halves programme was also expanded. Coach Education programmes with local community groups and within the young offenders centre provided more opportunities to expand people's understanding of all of our Gaelic Games. Coaching and Games Development has worked closely with the Community Development Unit in the delivery of these programmes.

We continue to work with Ladies GAA and welcome a closer operational relationship with Camogie in the coming year. The National Handball Association has assisted Ulster in developing more handball coaches for schools. This work needs to be taken to the next stage in 2011 with the development of more one wall opportunities. There has been a lot of work completed but still more to do. We thank the counties for their continued support and recognise the volume of work being done by the representatives on the Provincial Coaching Committee. It is inevitable that Coaching and Games will feel the strain of financial constraints and as such we must work more efficiently in maximising the resources that are available to us for 2011 and beyond.

The Coaching and Games Committee through its membership and staff personnel carry out a very large remit in dealing with volunteer coaches, community projects, developmental games and blitzes to overseeing the strategic development of our games. We are indebted to the members of the Committee for their diligence, their effectiveness and cooperation in delivering a truly outstanding programme. Gearóid Ó Brolcháin as Cathaoirleach and has been a clear and decisive representative of all that is best in Coaching. He has been exemplary in duties and a clear advocate for Coaching and Games Development within Ulster and indeed elsewhere. He is ably assisted by Brendan McGeary who has fully supported the work of the Committee and also has ensured the secretarial support required for such an important committee. The work of Committee is assisted by Gerard McNally in ensuring the vast administration and statistical requirements are met. Dr. Eugene Young continues to provide leadership and direction that is required to ensure that the objectives clearly set, advanced and ultimately are met. The games coaching staff are an enthusiastic team that represent the GAA very well and are an outstanding team.

### **Gaeilge agus Oidhreacht**

The Seamus de Faoite Course in the Downings was again very successful and continues to deliver a GAA based course for the promotion of the language. It is well supported and meets the requirements of those attending. At this time there is opportunity to expand the scope of the course to include young people from GAA Clubs into the environment of the Gaeltacht. The work being undertaken in Fear Manach in conjunction with their local District Council to advance the understanding and use of our language in everyday life is most noteworthy. This fits very closely with the objectives set in our work being undertaken by the Grupa Oibre Cursai Seamus de Faoite, the Irish Terminology Work Group and the work that we are doing in creating a usage of our Townlands names and to link these to the work of our Clubs and units. Indeed we have contributed to an understanding of this important work when Aogan O Fearghail delivered a tremendous lecture at a seminar in the Cardinal O Fiach Library and Archive to a wide audience setting out the historical linkage between the language, townlands and the Clubs of the GAA. The inescapable fact is that to the heritage of our Country and our Language we need to ensure the proper historical background of the names and their importance is work needing a full commitment from our Association.

The Coiste have an enormous field in their remit and we are working to ensure that all aspects are being advanced. We are indebted to Sean Ó Duibheannaigh as Cathaoirleach who has provided the coordination needed to deliver the strategic needs. Alma Ni Chámhanach supports this works as Runai and for this effort we are indebted. Nollaig MacCumhaill and Tomas O Cuilinn have continued to ensure the success of Cursai Seamus de Faoite and we acknowledge their continuing efforts on our behalf. The Coiste and its Work Groups are also fully supportive of this work and several members contribute generously to various aspects of the Course and for which we are indebted to them.

### **Culture and Scór**

The development of our Cultural dimension is epitomised by our work for Scór. We have adopted our motto for the GAA being for the whole family for the whole life. Nothing demonstrates this better than the complete effort of everyone involved in Scór and Scór na nÓg. Indeed, it can be stated that the work to promote, administer and adjudicate on the competitions is for everyone. While much is talked of in the context of the Scór competitions, we must also be mindful of the requirement of our Rules that states that 'The Association shall actively support the Irish Language, traditional Irish dancing, music, song and other aspects of Irish Culture'. That is our challenge into the future to maintain the completeness of the Association across all of the constituent needs.

Coiste Scór continues to carry out important work for the Association in Ulster. There is a need to review the overall structure of Scór so that all constituent units are engaged in the development work. They do a tremendous amount of for which we are very grateful. They ensure the various events and programmes for Scór and Scór na nÓg are concluded in an organised and appropriate manner. We acknowledge the work and input of all involved in Scór, Miceal O Grianain has given clear direction and leadership to Scór in Ulster and has developed a much stronger Scór as a consequence. We are deeply grateful to Miceal for all his work on our behalf and to the advancement of Scór. Fearghas Mac Aoidh has given outstanding service as Runai and has been to the fore in the continued expansion of Scór and those who participate in it.

### **Code of Ethics and Good Practice**

The increased demands by our internal units and external agencies have ensured another busy year for this Committee and those involved. Keeping up to date with current legislation and its demands on us is a very onerous responsibility and one that is forthrightly and diligently undertaken. This Committee is under the leadership of Pat Darcy and Gerry Soden who acts as Secretary; the County Children's Officers are now members of this Coiste and can directly report back to the clubs on the various issues that are dealt with. The Committee concentrated its efforts on putting together a child protection and vulnerable adult's policy template for clubs which is now available to download from Chomhairle Uladh website.

Chomhairle Uladh is registered with both the Garda Central Vetting Unit and AccessNI and to date over 8,500 vetting applications have been processed with these bodies on behalf of the counties, clubs, and associated bodies including Ladies Gaelic, Camogie, Handball and Rounders within Ulster. This is a very important process that Counties and Clubs must adhere to, it is Ulster Council Policy that all those who work with children or vulnerable adults must be vetted and it is also a legal requirement within the six counties. There are a lot of very complex matters emerging for the Association and the legal implications that these matters may have for our Association must continue to be addressed.

I spoke of the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) in my report last year, the legislation for this is currently under review, however if implemented up to forty percent of the population may be subject to comply with this legislation. When we have further information on the outcome of the review, we will be in contact with our counties and clubs to advise them on any requirements that they may need to take forward in order to comply with whatever changes in legislation that may emerge. Part of the ISA legislation has already been implemented which places a legal requirement on organisations from November 2009 in which organisation now have a legal duty to refer a worker or volunteer to the ISA, if they

remove that person for causing harm or risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult, and we must all take cognisance of this.

Good record keeping is a vitally important for the Association in this area of work and we all have a role in maintaining accurate records for the future, while at the same time adhering to and complying with Data Protection Legislation. The training and awareness workshops for those who work with children or vulnerable adults are ongoing and to date within the Association in Ulster over 20,000 members are recorded on our database as having attended and availing of the workshops. Attendance at the training and awareness course by our members, who have access to children or vulnerable adults within our counties and clubs is key in ensuring that our members are trained and meet standards that are laid down.

We acknowledge the support of the work at National level and thank Gearoid Ó Maolmhichil the GAA National Children's Officer for his ongoing support, advice and assistance throughout the year. We are indebted to the continued work of our Ethics and Best Practice Committee and to Pat Darcy who gives outstanding leadership to ensure that matters are taken forward. We are very well served by our own Children's Officer, Geraldine McKavanagh, who provides a tremendous support to all our constituent units and at the same time administrates a very sizeable amount of work in ensuring compliance with the requirements of our Associations policy but our compliance with the law. Geraldine is fully supported in this work by Kathy Kelly who is also directly involved in the administration and delivery of our vetting programme. We also acknowledge the input of Access NI and Garda Vetting Unit for their assistance in this area of our work.

### **Association Issues**

The recessionary times that we live in has caused much consideration to the GAA and we have worked as an organisation at all levels to ensure that everyone is recognised as having a contribution to make, that collectively we can contribute to building a new Ireland built on respect and fair play. Our clubs encourage community development as an indication of their commitment to achieving a better future for their area and for all involved with them. The GAA has demonstrated throughout its existence the attributes that made our Association central to local community confidence that set goals for the greater good of everyone. Franklin Roosevelt stated that 'without vision the people perish' and we need to provide a vision of a stronger and vibrant Association that will be the motivator for the rebuilding of confidence within all of the people who make up the Gaelic Athletic Association.

The agreement between our Association and the Gaelic Players Association, is again in focus but I believe that working with the GPA within the structures of the GAA is the better way forward. We recognise the tremendous commitment of our players as they are our most essential assets and they are deserving of our respect and support. We can all improve the relationships by having the administration structures in place as well as having the necessary players and management charters in place that ensure respect of and adherence to the amateur and voluntary ethos of our Association.

It is a matter of contrasts that identify the approach of the GAA to every level of our Association. It is the sense and pride of place that motivates our Clubs to do extraordinary things in the pursuit of excellence. Likewise the competitive structures of our counties are based on a loyalty to the County that is ours. The marketing in recent years have demonstrated the importance of the players, people and even inanimate objects have the sense

participation in this identification with place. We are in danger of eroding another element that evokes pride of place namely the intention to discontinue the Interprovincial Championships that have been a source of motivation, competitiveness and locale to our provinces. This is recognised by one of our competitor sports and the recent developments are based on provincial recognition. We are moving in the opposite direction and while there is scope within development squads to create provincial interaction we seem reluctant to embrace this concept. Likewise, the demise of the Interprovincial series is seen as progress but it will be a loss to the GAA as we will lose the linkage to our province, the great games and players of the past. It is an important element of our players and mentors and can be utilised to be developed and if needed be developmental. To achieve any objective then we need to be committed to what we want to achieve. When this is examined against the International dimension we are creating a top tier of recognition that is fine and in the case of Shinty creates scope for the development of a Celtic partnership that can be mutually beneficial but the interaction with the Australian Rules is flawed and cannot contribute to the development of a game that is other than manufactured. We seem intent on supporting this created concept to the disadvantage of our own games and our own important sense and pride of place.

The interaction between Comhairle Uladh and the Counties and Central Council continues to increase. This is as a consequence of the improved structures and systems that have emerged as a consequence of proper strategic planning. To this end we acknowledge the excellent working arrangements between Comhairle Uladh and Ard Comhairle. There are proper engagements between key personnel at National level and the respective personnel at Provincial level. This has ensured that there are clear avenues to allow for proper planning and delivery of programmes within the defined parameters. These arrangements are replicated at Ulster level with the meeting of County Secretaries, Games Development Managers plus the Sub Committees and their interaction with the current issues and the efficient flow of information can only be beneficial to the GAA in general and to the work of our Clubs and Counties. We acknowledge the tremendous work and commitment of our County Chairmen, Secretaries, Treasurers and all the County Officers in delivering the key elements of our Association work within Ulster.

I would like to thank the staff at Central Level for their help and cooperation and would particularly like to acknowledge the assistance of Tom Ryan, Dermot Power, Pat Daly, Peter McKenna and Lisa Clancy for their work. We acknowledge the huge input of our Ard Stiurthoir, Paraic O Dufaigh, who has been a tremendous source of support and encouragement while at the same time he has provided the leadership to our Association that has ensured that the issues are properly discussed and that decisions are made. We also record our thanks to Cristeoir O Cuana, who as President of our Association carries out a tremendous amount on our behalf and for which we are grateful.

### **Information Technology and Marketing**

This committee is often the catalyst for the delivery of much of our advice and support to Clubs and individuals. The development of our Web based services, the presentation of our news items, compiling the results of our games and an extensive record of every area of our work and our monthly e-magazine demonstrate the scale of its operation. When you add the complete usage of IT as a means of communication, then very substantial progress has been made and to a certain degree a level of dependency on its facilities has been created. Therefore, when our National Membership database was compromised it was a major cause for concern as to its security and the Association moved quickly to reassure everyone that our

systems are secure and that we are very mindful of the material that we have and the need for complete confidence of everyone in our IT programmes and our important databases.

The marketing aspects of the Committees work is evident in the imagery used in our advertising campaigns, the input into events and aspects of our games programmes have been praiseworthy and at times outstanding. The Committee are innovative, motivated and focused on what we need to do to keep our GAA brand readily identified and continually refreshed. Information Technology is now firmly established as the main communication facility we use in many aspects of our daily written communications with the Association, the media and the general public. We acknowledge the excellent work of the Committee and its related Workgroups. Oilibhéar Ó Gealagain has been a tremendous asset and his leadership to this work has been outstanding and we are indebted to him for all the work he does on our behalf. We also appreciate the work of Damian Kelly in advancing our IT, Website and the functionality of our systems.

### **Media**

The media is a significant part of our interaction with the public. We deal with them across a wide spectrum of matters from games and related items to news and public affairs and we try to respond to these matters in a fair and respectful manner. We do not always agree but if we treat each other fairly then we can deal with critical matters as positively as we can while at the same time assisting in the dissemination of views, opinions and facts relating to the complexity of the GAA. We have in general a good working relationship with the media and we do appreciate the input of the written, visual, spoken and photographic in coverage of our games and other related matters.

The level of television coverage in the past was substantially improved and the complete coverage of the senior football championship testified to the efforts of the BBC and RTE to provide a satisfactory platform for our main games. We acknowledge the continued support of Paraic O Dufaigh and Dermot Power in the delivery of these packages to the Association and our audience for which we thank them. The position of UTV has improved and we have worked with them to advertise our games to our potential supporters through very powerful imagery relating to our major games. During the year, the Association were involved in rationalising the accreditation applying to the various media involvements and in general this has proved successful. While some issues arose it must be stated that all those who cover our games are accredited by the GAA and where appropriate contracts do need to be in place.

We pay tribute to the journalists, photographers, radio and television personnel for bringing out the build up to games, reporting on the events and occasions and recoding for posterity our great occasions and events. We particularly acknowledge the work of The Irish News in their intensive coverage for every aspect of our Associations affairs and their support for The Club Conference and the Club and Schools Awards. Our thanks are due to Oilibhéar Ó Gealagain for his work as our Public Relations Officer. He has assisted me in many ways and always represents a very positive image for the Association. Our thanks are due to Stephen Donnelly, Damian Kelly and Sharon Haughey for their work in dealing with the media on a daily basis and also for their ongoing support to our Council in this area of our engagement with our members, supporters, the public and all aspects of the media.

### **Comhbhrón**

The death of our members are sad occasions for our Association and the loss of each person is worthy of our sympathy and support. In the past year we have bade farewell to Jack

Bratton, who had played a pivotal role with Ard Mhacha including his part in the 1953 All Ireland final. Ollie O'Rourke, who played his part in Monaghan teams in the same era has also gone to his eternal reward. The past year witnessed the golden jubilee of the first All Ireland title won by An Dún and it was very sad that Patsy O'Hagan and Seamus Kennedy should die in the midst of such celebrations. During the past year we bid our farewells to Peter Harte who had provided forthright leadership at a critical time and was an outstanding advocate and supporter of the GAA. When we laid Peter to rest in his native Ballymacilroy we did so with heavy hearts but we did not expect to be returning there in the midst of a tragic and traumatic death of Michaela McAreavey who was murdered while on her honeymoon. This caused communal grief and we again saw the dignified and supportive aspect of our Association to the fore demonstrated by tremendous efforts of Club Aireagal Ciaran, Choiste Chontae Thir Eoghain and Club Tullach Lios. The contribution of the Harte family to the GAA has been immense and we all experienced some sense of loss suffered by the Harte and McAreavey families but as we knew the deceased in life so their courageous spirit will motivate us in the days, week, months and years ahead.

Our sympathy is extended to all the bereaved families, friends and to the extended GAA family who have lost loved ones who have been part of our Association as players, officials, referees and administrators. We are a better organisation for their involvement and their legacy is the Association we cherish today.

The Sacrifice of the Mass will be offered for all the deceased members of our Association in St. Patrick's Cathedral on the morning of Convention at 11.00 a.m. It is hoped that all delegates can attend as a mark of respect for all our deceased members.

### **Conclusion**

The Association is working in difficult times and we can see hurdles and the impact of recessionary times around its affairs. It was born in much more difficult times and it survived. It lived through difficult and dangerous times and it expanded. We are living in challenging times but the core strengths, the aims and ideals of our Association should be utilised to regenerate our nation and build the confidence of our people because we must have the vision of a better future based on endeavour, fairness and mutual respect if we are achieve our full potential.

Is mise, le meas,

Dónall Ó Murchú,  
Rúnaí, Comhairle Uladh