

## **An Chraobh na Clairseacha/Stewartstown Harps GAC**

### **Secretary's report to AGM 27/11/11**

A chairde gael,

I would like to welcome you all here on this Sunday evening to review the 2011 season and look forward to our centenary year in 2012. The past year has been a successful one for our club both on and off the field. The highlights of the year were the official opening of our new pitch, the winning of the Ulster title in Óg Sport (U-15 7 a side) and the U16 grade two league.

#### **Senior team**

The senior and reserve panels returned to training at the end of January with Malachy Coyle as coach/manager for the second season. We again entered the Ulster intermediate league and began playing in February at Ardoyne in Belfast. We played five games and narrowly missed out on a semi final place as a result of a late defeat to Madden. Hopefully our new management team will be in favour of entry next season.

The intermediate league (Division Two) got underway in April away to Edendork. A poor first half cost us dearly and while we improved in the second the concession of goals proved too much in the end. Indeed, this was to become a problem as we progressed through the league.

Our second game was away to Augher and we put in a fine performance to win by three points, a rare occurrence at Augher. We continued to gain points in the league as the new fixtures plan ensured that we had 12 games played by the July break. A few close defeats at home to Kildress and away to Galbally costing us a top four place at this stage.

After the break we were away to Gortin and lost with an experimental line up. We faced the same opposition two weeks later in the first round of the IFC and won a high scoring game by 4-9 to 2-14, having opened our new pitch the previous weekend (14<sup>th</sup> August).

In the quarter final we played Augher on a Friday evening at Healy Park, Omagh and put in a great second half performance to win by 1-12 to 2-5. In between we had league victories over Newtownstewart and Urney to finish in sixth place in the league.

We were drawn to play Galbally in the championship semi final, which was played in early October as part of the double bill in Coalisland. A poor start left us trailing by 9 points but we cut this to 6 by half time.

We went behind by eight after the break but a great comeback saw us beaten by 2 points at the finish. Some controversial refereeing decisions contributed to our defeat but cannot be cited as the main reason for it.

Overall it was a good year for the senior team, finishing in sixth place in Division 2 and beaten in the IFC semi final, so there are positives to be taken from the season.

#### **Reserves**

With large numbers at training and several promising minors in the squad we had healthy numbers for the reserve team. Adrian Devlin and Rory O'Neill took over as managers and we played several challenge games before the league started.

We began with a good draw away to Edendork and then let a good lead slip away to lose at Augher. We were finding the football more competitive but still managed some good victories in the league to finish in a mid table place.

The long delayed RFC finally started on a wet Monday night in September away to Gortin, where we lost by 3 points after a poor first half. It should be noted that Gortin won the intermediate reserve double so who knows what we could have achieved.

Once again I return to the endemic problem in reserve football- that of teams not fielding especially later in the season. We were given walkovers in three of our games, but our reserve players want to play games rather than gain handy points.

We had a motion into the county convention to play the reserve league at 13 a side if both teams could not field 15 players. In their wisdom the CCC delegates rejected the recommendation at the May meeting. However, the concession of reserve games grew as the season passed with less football once again with even more games conceded this year.

## **Youth**

We competed at all levels from U-8 to U-18, indeed 8 teams in boys competitions and took part in some of the girls competitions, details of which will be given in the ladies report.

### **U-14**

We began our grade 3 league in late February and competed well, reaching the semi final of the championship but lost to Tattyreagh.

### **U-13**

The U-13's also played at grade three level. Starting in September they finished second in their group and were then beaten in the semi final away to Beragh. This team will improve as they play in U-14 grade next season.

### **U8/10/12**

The U12's played ten games in their Go Games league and their skill levels improved as the season progressed. The U8 and U10 boys played in a series of six blitzes and we hosted two of these, thanks to our young referees who helped on the day and to those who did the catering. We also had a successful summer camp in mid August with 56 boys and girls in attendance. Thanks to all who helped in any way.

### **U18**

Our minor team played in a good quality grade 2 league and performed well. Having beaten Coalisland in the league we then lost in the championship to the same opposition. We reached the semi final of the league where we were held to a draw at home to Greencastle. After a long delay we lost the replay and so finished a potentially promising season with no trophy.

### **U16**

We played in a strong grade 2 level and had a good league campaign despite having a small panel of players. We reached the semi final of the championship but played below par against Kildress.

However, we recovered well to reach the league final where we faced Owen Roes at Dunmoyle. After a game of good quality football we won by 4 points to the great joy of a large band of supporters.

### **U15 Óg Sport**

This is a seven a side competition played with a panel of ten players. The first round began on a wet night in Ardboe where we won the group stage. The finals were held in Greencastle and we recorded a historic first win in grade one to become county champions.

There was a long delay to the Ulster finals played in September in Glen, Maghera, County Derry. The competition was very high but we won our group and reached the final where we beat Donaghmoyne of Monaghan to win the Ulster title- what an achievement for these boys and their managers Rory O'Neill and Gerard Donnelly. A special thanks to Rory for having the foresight to move our team from grade 2 to grade 1 in this competition.

As a result of winning the Óg Sport we will be hosting the Ulster finals in 2012 and thankfully we are in a position to do so with our two pitches.

## **Culture**

We competed in the Scór Sinsear and reached the semi final in 3 events (solo singing, recitation and quiz), with the quiz team narrowly losing out in the final. Preparations are underway by our cultural officers, Martin and Stephen Campbell for next years senior Scór at the end of January.

We entered two events in the Scór na nÓg, solo singing and quiz, with the quiz team reaching the semi finals.

The Irish language signage is well developed around our pavilion and grounds and is something to be proud of - I hope you can all pronounce the notices – if not we need to run a beginners class in Irish!

### **Pitch Opening Weekend**

I cannot let this report pass without reference to the memorable opening of our magnificent new playing field.

A sub committee, under the leadership of Conor Kelly was formed, to plan for the opening weekend. A massive effort was made by club members and supporters to have all aspects ready for the weekend of Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August.

A wide variety of events were successfully organised, culminating in the visit of GAA President, Mr. Christy Cooney on the night of Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August.

This weekend will live long in the memory of Harps members and supporters. It brought about great joy and happiness and generated real community spirit in these pessimism – filled recessionary times.

Next year will see all our home games played on the new pitch and I hope it inspires our teams to many successes.

### **Thanks**

There are a wide variety of people who have played a part in the successful running of the club this year and who deserve our thanks:

- My hard working and dedicated fellow committee members
- The various sub committees who carried out their duties so well (facilities, grounds, sports development, finance, culture etc.)
- All those who managed/coached teams (boys, girls, men's, ladies)
- Those who provide food after training and for visiting teams
- All our sponsors
- The members of Club na Claireseacha
- The sponsors for our pitch opening, in particular McAleer and Rushe and Keystone Lintels.
- Those who washed jerseys for the various teams
- Our referees, Marty Devlin and Stephen Campbell (men's) and Gerard Devlin (ladies)
- Those who collected gates at home games

Forgive me if I have left anyone out, you are all vital cogs in the Harps wheels!

### **Conclusion**

As we look forward to our centenary year in 2012 we have several major events planned. We encourage people to join the committee to make a success of these events.

Fundraising must continue to pay off the new pitch and help with the running of the club. It is vital that all players and club members do their best to support these ventures.

Ladies football needs to be nurtured and supported so that we are providing the best for our girls to develop. Thanks to the promptings of our development officer Paddy Park we are almost ready to submit our application for the Club Maith award, which will be essential for future funding applications which we will be needing!

Finally, I hope that we all work together, discuss and agree to disagree, players, committee and members to have a successful centenary year in 2012 – we will only get one chance at it!!

Go raibh maith agat, go leir.