



ANTRIM LADIES INTERMEDIATE CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS



BRID OG NIPPER QUINN SHIELD 2020



U13 ANTRIM LEAGUE



ANTRIM, U12 BELFAST 2 LEAGUE



U14A ANTRIM LGFA LEAGUE



U15 ANTRIM FEILE A



U11 DROMINTEE TOURNAMENT



U15 LADIES FEILE B



SENIOR MEN RESERVE CHAMPIONSHIP



U15 Div 2 CHAMPIONSHIP FINALISTS



SENIOR MEN RESERVE LEAGUE



U13 O DONNELL PLATE



Mol an óige

ANNUAL REPORT
2021



Cumann Luthchleas Gael Naomh Brid Béal Feirste

st. BRÍGÍD'S gac BELFAST

Founded 1998



Annual General Meeting 2021

**The Annual General Meeting will
be held in**

Malone Lodge

on Sunday,

28th November 2021,

at 8:00pm



CHAIRPERSONS'S ADDRESS

Welcome to the 23rd Annual General Meeting of Naomh Bríd.

In my report to the club last year I expressed the hope that in 2021 the effects on St Brigid's, and indeed the wider Community from Covid 19 would be diminished. That we would get back to some form of normality. Unfortunately that was not the case as we entered the new year.

Contact was restricted, pitches were closed, meetings and even training was by "Zoom". Despite this our club members adapted again to the new normal and prepared for the new season.

Our commitment to the local community continued, and our club members raised funds for the SVP De Paul Christmas appeal at the end of last year with our 12 days of Christmas Appeal.

Our return to the pitches in April was much anticipated and thankfully a number of our juvenile competitions not played in 2020, were amongst the first fixtures played during the year.

It was great to see lots of new faces join the Fun Sunday training which was greatly effected last year. It caused a headache for the Coaches and Covid Officers in terms of numbers however the adapted quickly to situation to run a fun and safe session. Thanks John O Connor, and Claire Flanagan who looked after things both on and off the pitches.

The Secretary's report will go over the various teams' achievements in further detail, however it is worth calling out some highlights.

The Senior Ladies captured the Intermediate Championship (again!), and enjoyed their journey into Ulster. A youthful team under the

guidance of Anthony Carleton will improve further next year. Thanks to Noreen as for overseeing the ladies side of the game.

Senior Hurling returned to St Brigid's for the first in a number of years, a team spanning the years took to the field in 2021, a great result for Gerry, Oliver and the wider back room team. With more younger members joining next year, the only way is up.

Our senior men progressed both at senior and reserve level, with impressive performances in league and championship. Indeed the reserves won both competitions! Again the age profile of the panel and the strength of the young minors coming through would suggest we will have three strong adult male teams in 2021, another first. Congratulation to Anthony McGrath, the back room team, everyone who made this possible.

Our juvenile teams excelled on the pitches as well, a large amount of silverware came back to the club, with league titles, Feile and championships titles across all four codes arriving in South Belfast during the year. An army of mentors on our pitches **every day of the week**, are doing a wonderful job helping develop our young people into wonderful ambassadors for our club.

The School's calendar was curtailed and there was very little primary school activity, therefore the tireless Frank McGurk couldn't get in as much coaching as he would have liked. Thankfully this was restored as the new academic year started back in September. I have said a number of times winning isn't everything, getting as many people playing our games and having fun is a key aim of the club, and we are certainly near the top of the league when it comes to that.

Congratulations to all players and mentors, who took to the field this year for the club, we



as a committee we value every single one of you.

AnneMarie Walsh and her extended team are to be congratulated on developing the Club's Cultural Activities through the year. Despite the restrictions meeting up at the start of the year. AnneMarie made sure culture and language was front and centre with a number of On Line events during the year including a very enjoyable "Zoom Céilí" from the Leyden's home.

Whilst the games and culture are the highly visible outputs from the club, no club the size of St Brigids could operate without the "invisible" administrative work, that goes on behind the scenes.

As you are reading through this Annual Report Document which runs to 60 pages (up from 40 last year), you will see another example of the fine work that our Club Secretary Phil Convery does during the year. I would estimate that the club receives thousands of communications throughout the year, and Phil deals with them all effectively and efficiently. He works with the three different governing bodies and various divisional boards and makes the role of secretary look easy. I can assure you it isn't an easy job. Thank you, Phil, for another brilliant year. Thanks also to Liz McAree for her artistic input in the design this year as well.

Our registrar Una McGurk is to be commended for her efforts during the year, seamlessly moving our registration system from Servasport to Foireann. This alongside her work with the Antrim County work with the CHC, is invaluable, and something as a club we must do more of.

Thanks also to Carol Lamb and Anna O Hagan who are key figures in the club and look after the health and Wellbeing of our members.

The club finances despite a reduction in income in our finances are in a robust shape, thanks to Peter and Marc for their fastidious attention to detail with the club's money. The pitches at Musgrave got a lot of use this year training and games, also hosting a display of flying Gazebos. We got access to the changing rooms again late in the year, and the building was kept clean, tidy and safe due to the great "invisible" BCC work carried out by Tom Walsh.

As mentioned last year, we still haven't improved with our supply of officials for the senior male games in Antrim. Thankfully Anthony and Conor are still representing us here, and some of younger members have stepped up to referee juvenile games as young whistlers. However bearing in mind the large number of players we field on the male side of the club we need more members to consider refereeing both in Football and Hurling. This is definitely something "the club" (we are all the club) will need to address going forward, and I would appeal to anyone in the club who wants to take up the role of referee on behalf of the club to give it a go. We risk the sanction of losing home advantage in some competitions if we don't provide officials. May I again thank all Coaches, Committee, Players, and members within Naomh Bríd. Thank you to those committee members who have stood down this year and welcome to those members who have joined the team.

I finish up as Chair tonight. It has been an honour and a privilege to hold the position as chair of Naomh Bríd for three years.

Thank you to the previous chairs, Frank, Oliver, Paul and Dermot who have provided guidance during my term. Thanks also to Peter Mulgrew who has served as vice Chair for the last two years, many, many hours have been spent discussing the future of NB over the couple of years.



I have enjoyed many highs during this time. There have been some challenging moments as well. However nothing inspires me more than the efforts, of our players, mentors and members driving forward the club both on and off the pitches. Our local community is much enriched by the efforts of our club members.

We may have different ideas of how to improve the club, and different opinions can be positive. So let us use our positive energies to drive the club forward. Focus on the big picture.

A personal thanks to my family for their support during my term.

I'm very proud of Thomas, Joseph, Owen and James. I am also very proud they are enthusiastic "dual" players with the club. My parents too, who are regular visitors to Musgrave to watch their grandsons. And of course to Una, who is the most understanding woman in Ireland.

I will finish up with this quote from an Antrim Gael who sadly passed away earlier this year. It perfectly sums things up for me.

**'Enjoy life, every day is a blessing.
Live life to the fullest, and if you do
something to help someone, then roll up
your sleeves and get on with it'. – Anto
Finnegan**

Is mise le meas

Máirtín Mac Cearnaigh
An Cathaoirleach

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Foreword to Secretary's Report

2021 was another challenging year for everyone, but it takes more than a global pandemic to keep our club down. While my report last year included a quite a lot of reporting about off field activities resulting from the lockdown, fundraising for frontline workers, helping those in need, online training sessions, etc, it's great to see that this year our teams had the opportunity to play more or less a full season. Our players and coaches still had to adapt to the new normal and try to operate in a manner that minimises the risk to everyone while still getting the most enjoyment out of playing.

Despite the challenges Covid presented, it's great to see the success that so many of our teams had this year. It's a candidate for our most successful year yet. These are a few of the highlights.

The Senior Ladies had a fantastic year, winning the Antrim Intermediate title and progressing to the Ulster semi-final. The most successful Senior Ulster title challenge in the history of the Club. They have been shortlisted for this year's Aisling Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Sport. Best of luck to the ladies and management team for the awards on December 4th. We had 6 Naomh Brid ladies on the Antrim senior team who made it to the Junior football final in Croke Park in September against Wicklow, Maeve Blaney, Ciara Austin, Emma Ferron, Theresa Mellon, Julie Curran, and Mary Mitchell. Three of our girls, captained Antrim teams this year. Hannah Donaghy captained the Antrim U14 team; Aileen McDonnell captained the Antrim U16s; and Theresa Mellon captained the Antrim Minors. Naomh Brid was also well represented on Antrim panels in U14, U16, Minors as well.

Our U14s won the Antrim A league. Well done too to the U15 B Girls Feile Team who won the Feile B Championship.



The Minor ladies reached their first very county Championship Final but lost out to Moneyglass. We also had five U18 girls selected for the U18 county squad that made it to the Ulster U18A final against Monaghan.

After the success of the ladies, the men's footballers had a lot to live up to. The senior men finished a very creditable 4th in the league and reached the quarter final of the championship having topped their qualifying group.

The quarter final was a game that we should have closed out and one we allowed to slip from our grasp.

The season saw 36 players play senior football across the League and Championship. 14 players made their senior debut and 7 made their championship debut. In the quarter final 17 of the 19 players used on the day were U23 and 6 of them were U21. This is a young group who have made big strides forward in 2021 and for this they can be very proud.

The senior men's reserves went a step or two better. They enjoyed a really successful season, achieving the double, winning both the reserve league and reserve championship. The squad played 13 competitive games, winning 12 of the 13. Going through the league undefeated, entailed an impressive run of 9 straight wins. The only defeat in the season came in a group stage game in the championship, after which the squad resumed to winning ways. Over the course of the season, the squad involved 40 players. Encouragingly, this included a strong contingent of youth, with 18 players being U20. Of the team that started the championship final, 6 players were U20. In keeping with the priority goal to help develop the players, a full complement of subs was used in every game

In addition to the championship the team secured the senior league title for the first time in the clubs history – a tremendous achievement.

This was just reward for an excellent group of players who stuck together throughout the season. No doubt, many of these players will move forward and have successful senior careers over the coming years.

The minors had a nearly season, They were top of Division 1 but lost the League Semi-Final play-off, beaten by winners Aghagallon who also beat them in the Championship semi-final. This year we entered a second string u17 team in the ACFL Div. 3. A remarkable achievement as we were the only club to do so and it was another notable first in the clubs history. Only a few years ago we had to amalgamate with St Patricks Lisburn to field a minor team. The team finished a very credible 3rd with one defeat in the div 3 league.

The U15 Boys were one of our most successful teams this year. The U15A team won the Feile A final beating Con Magees Glenravel in the final. It was disappointing that the boys didn't get to experience going away to the Féile Finals. They finished top of the league but lost to St Pauls in the leaguer final. They got their revenge however when they met St Pauls again in the Championship final, lifting the trophy with a resounding win - St Brigids 7-17 St Pauls 2-6. Our U15 B team finished second in their league.

The strength of our club at this level is clear to see when we got to the Championship Final in both Division 1 and with our Division 2 team. Unfortunately, the games were at the same time which denied coaches, players and parents the opportunity to see both games and in fact a couple of our Division 2 coaches didn't get to see their sons win in Division 1, which is something that should be looked at if it arose again. Ultimately only the A team won but it is a credit to the strength of the U15 panel that both teams did so well. When you look at the other couple of teams able to enter 2 squads at this level, invariably the



second team is cannon fodder and usually bottom of the league. Not at Saint Brigids.

The U13 Division 2 Team had a great start to the year winning the delayed 2020 O'Donnell Plate 2 Title against Davitts in a thrilling final in May.

The U13 Division 1 Team had a tough start to the year, beaten by St Pauls in the delayed 2020 O'Donnell Cup Final in May. However, they bounced back to go on to win 13 out of their 14 league games to secure the U13 Division 1 League Title, the first for St Brigids since 2012 just ahead of St Pauls in second place. Unfortunately, despite beating St Pauls home and away in the league, they were then beaten by St Pauls in the 2021 O'Donnell Cup Final in a very tight game.

A number of the younger U13's were involved in the U11.5 Squad who won the U11.5 Dromintee Tournament in August.

As well as the Dromintee success over the year the U11 squad was able to participate in 45+ games across South Antrim Go Games, blitzes, tournaments and challenge games providing opportunities for this group of boys to continue to develop their skills. This combined with 50+ training sessions was a huge effort by players, parents and coaches and is a commendable sign of this groups development.

2021 was an historic year for hurling at St Brigid's as we fielded teams across all age categories, including the men's senior team. In 2021 the club re-established a senior hurling team – the first time since 2009 a senior hurling team has participated in the Antrim Leagues. The senior team fielded in every game, competed in every game, and although we lost every game it was a great learning experience for all the players and management involved and a foundation has been established that we can build on. While

it was a disappointing year on the field in terms of winning games, great strides have been made and the mere fact we managed to field a team in every game was in itself an achievement.

Following the progress made at u16 during 2019 and 2020 it was agreed that we continue with the amalgamation involving Naomh Brid, Naomh Gall, Ard Eoin and Eire Og and continue to play as Ard na Ri. In 2021 there have been many positives to be taken from the season for the U17 hurlers. Despite the limited number of league and Championship games, every player in the squad had the opportunity to play competitive games as a stepping stone to senior level. The U15 Hurlers won the Ulster Tain Og league beating St Eunan's, Letterkenny in the final at Owenbeg

The U13 Hurlers won the 2020 Nipper Quinn Championship held over from last year. Having been promoted last year the U13s played in Division 1A this year.

After an historic 2020 in which the club played its first camogie league game and won its first camogie silverware at u12s, we started 2021 with another first as we assembled a new U13 squad.

Camogie continues to grow steadily in Naomh Brid and there were over 50 girls playing camogie on Monday nights from U8-13 upwards during 2021, securing silverware again at U12 in the Belfast U12 B league. They won every match home and away and rounded off the year by hosting our first Ulster camogie blitz. The future is bright for the Naomh Brid Camogie program.

At Fun Sunday our Primary group continue to learn the basic skills of all the different codes of our games in a fun, enthusiastic setting. The kids took part in a wide range of blitzes and Go Games throughout the year. Numbers attending Fun Sunday remains strong with



large numbers participating in all age groups. The profile of our games for younger ages within the parish is also growing with children attending Stranmillis and Inchmarlo primary schools now also joining those from our main feeder school St. Brides. Many thanks to the large numbers of parent coaches who make Fun Sunday such a success and to John O'Connor who co-ordinated it all. Special thanks is also due to Clare Flanagan who oversaw the running of Fun Sunday on an administrative level, ensuring the younger members and their families were both welcomed into the Club and fully registered.

Once again our summer Cul Camp was a huge success. As has been the case for the last few years, every player participated in both codes of football and hurling/camogie.

There was no shortage of numbers, we had 150 and could have taken more undoubtedly but for the restrictions placed by Covid and ensuring all registrations were covered well in advance.

Thanks must also go out to the large number of coaches and parents across the club who helped out.

Club membership for 2021 saw the GAA/LGFA/Camogie Association introduce a single, integrated membership system; and, for the first time, all membership registrations were completed on the new system called Foireann. The new system allowed members to take control of inputting their own data, choosing to opt in or out of receipt of communications, and managing their personal or family Covid questionnaires. The Foireann system streamlined the fees collection for 2021 and it is hoped the proposed updates to the system will enhance the system in 2022. Club Registrar Una McGurk has overseen the roll out of this new system with the minimum of fuss and the maximum efficiency.

The current membership of over 1130 members comprised of 964 fully registered

GAA members; 172 LGFA members; and, 42 Camogie Association members. Of those registered there were 751 playing members, 165 of whom were adult players, including G4M&O members.

I have thanked some coaches in the team reports which follow, however it's impossible to mention everyone by name. As a club we owe a great deal of thanks to all our coaches and helpers, and we have relied even more this year on their skill and efforts. I want to end by recognizing the commitment, dedication and skill of all the many coaches and helpers who give up their time to work with the teams. Thanks also to the parents who help out with lifts to and from matches and other tasks around the teams. The club would not achieve the success or growth that it does, without all your efforts and on behalf of St Brigids I want to thank all of you.

Thanks also to Oliver Lennon for once again expertly co-ordinating the availability of pitches. A special thank you is also due this year to the many covid officers without whom we would have had difficulty managing to train and play matches in line with the new regulations.

Our thanks go as well to club stalwart Frank McGurk for leading our schools activities again this year, to Irish Language and Cultural Officer Anne Marie Duffy for her excellent work on Cultural Development within the club this year, and to Carol Lamb for her work in ensuring we are compliant with all child protection procedures. There are many activities for which medals and cups aren't awarded in our club, but they are just as essential to its smooth running and the club would not be as successful as it is without the hard work of these individuals.

Good luck to all our players, coaches and members in 2022. Naomh Brid Abu!



Is Mise

Phil MacAinmhire

Runai

FOOTBALL

SENIOR MEN'S FOOTBALL

The season started amid challenging times, with lockdown continuing from January to April. This left it difficult for new management to get to know players. Early preparation took place on-line in order to allow players time to focus on key aspects of the game plan prior to face to face training. This proved very important given the short pitch time before the start of the league.

The first game of the Div.1 ACL was away to Portglenone. A tight game saw the home team edge in front at the death, but an injury time goal secured the win for St.Brigids. This was followed by a good home win over St.Galls. Our third game was away to Aghagallon where after 19 wides we lost by a point. This was a frustrating outcome as we controlled large spells of the game. Wins followed over Gort na Mona, St.Endas and St.Johns leaving us joint top of Div.1. Our next game was at home against Creggan, who we shared top spot with. A one point loss was the net result in a game where the lead exchanged hands throughout the 2nd half and should have secured a better result. We then travelled to county champions Cargin, in what was an exceptionally competitive game. We were ahead at full time but a late Cargin surge saw them secure the win by the narrowest of margins again. Lamh Dearg were next up in what was again a close affair, at home in Musgrave. This resulted in our heaviest defeat of the league, (by 3 points) in a performance that should have seen a better return. Further wins over Ahoghil and Rossa secured a 4th place finish and completed our ACL Div.1 league campaign for 2021.

Attentions turned to the Championship and our first group game away to Portglenone. After going 1.3 to 0.0 down after 5 mins we never recovered and struggled in most sectors of the pitch. Portglenone ran out easy winners in a game that we had to use as a key learning curve. This was a dark night for the entire group but one from which a huge amount has been gained since. 4 days later saw us secure a home win over Ahoghil, to steady the ship before a long break until the return leg at home to Portglenone. In a vastly improved performance St.Brigids secured a 4 point win to put us top of our Championship group, with one game to go. The final group game was away to Ahoghil, which was always going to be a backs against the wall affair. A number of early wides saw Ahoghil's ultra-defensive set up take hold and the final quarter could have seen the game slip away. A draw was the final result which was good enough to guarantee us as winners of Group 2.

As group winners we then qualified for the County quarter final against Aghagallon at Dunsilly. This was always going to be a close affair, as both teams know each other well and the first half bore this out. The 2nd half saw an early Aghagallon goal, which was a big score, given the nature of the game. St.Brigids recovered well and fought back to level the game by the 2nd water break. By this stage St.Brigids were dominating kickouts and pushing forward for scores with attacking options being sprung from the bench. This was during a period when we were squeezing the game, but whilst the chances were created the scores did not come. With 8mins to go the game was level. A free kick to Aghagallon saw them break into space, draw a one-two and score their second goal. A score that was against the run of play, but one that proved crucial in the overall outcome of the game. This was a game that we should have closed out and one we allowed to slip from our grasp.



The season saw 36 players play senior football across the League and Championship. 14 players made their senior debut and 7 made their championship debut. In the quarter final 17 of the 19 players used on the day were U23 and 6 of them were U21. This is a young group who have made big strides forward in 2021 and for this they can be very proud.

The club has been very accommodating and fully supportive in every way, to ensure the continued progress for this group. The senior management team is very grateful for this support. Additional thanks goes to senior backroom team members Ruairi O'Neill, Aidan Cole, Barry McMahan, John Smith, Collie McGuckian, Michael Donnelly, Martin Gallagher and John Mackle as well as coach for Dublin based players Andy Sweeny, medic Joe McKeever and physio Peter Morrison. A huge thanks goes to our hard working analysis team of Stephen O'Neill, Andy Magill, Ruairi McDonnell, Eoin McKernan and Sean McKernan.

Several key proposals will be submitted by the senior management, to ensure further development and progress in 2022. These comprise of 3 senior teams including a team entering the Junior Football Championship. It is vital that the 2021 U.17's are progressed into senior football with strategic nurturing and care. The current senior management intends to work with this group, in isolation, from December. This is to ensure no player is lost and that we maximise their integration into senior ranks. In addition to this it is imperative that senior players not making match day squads are given every opportunity to gain meaningful game time. This in order to allow them to stake a genuine claim for a senior place. The 2021 season has seen considerable progress made but fell short of what it could have been. Rest assured this is only the beginning for this group. Thanks go to Anthony McGrath and his management team for their work with the Senior Men this year. A big

thanks also to our senior mens team sponsor Peak Physique, for their support and for their work with a number of our players across the age grades this year. Their fantastic support for the club is very much appreciated.



Senior Men's Reserve Football

St Brigid's senior men's reserves enjoyed a successful season, achieving the double, winning both the reserve league and reserve championship. The squad played 13 competitive games, winning 12 of the 13. Going through the league undefeated, entailed an impressive run of 9 straight wins. The only defeat in the season came in a group stage game in the championship, after which the squad resumed to winning ways. Over the course of the season, the squad involved 40 players. Encouragingly, this included a strong contingent of youth, with 18 players being U20. Of the team that started the championship final, 6 players were U20. In keeping with the priority goal to help develop the players, a full complement of subs was used in every game. Captaining the squad was wily Paul Finnegan, ably deputised by Joe McCarney.

Senior Reserve League

The campaign started with a trip to Hightown and St Enda's, whom the reserves would later meet in the championship stages. This gave an opportunity for the reserve management to try out new players in unfamiliar positions and to gauge the style of play required for this level. In a tight game, St Brigid's pulled away in the last 10 minutes, to win by 6 points and instil a strong optimism for the season ahead. This "don't let up to the final whistle" ethos would become a trait through the season.



Cargin, senior county champions were next, with a visit to Musgrave. The old adage, goals win games was in force during this game, with the ever reliable Ryan Murtagh grabbing a couple to give St Brigid's a well-deserved win. (Note to management – inform Ryan it is OK to score points too).

Two away games followed against Rossa and Ahoghill, leading to 2 more wins. Oisín McDonnell starring in the Rossa game with some excellent playmaking. At the mid point of the league (round 5), the team had an emphatic win against a weakened Creggan team to continue their good form.

Next up were a seasoned St Johns team.

Despite being physically challenged throughout the game, the team continued with their mantle of discipline and hard work to record an emphatic victory. The team were now starting to believe that the league title could be a possibility.

The next two games were defining moments of the season. A trip to a youthful Aghagallon game was nip and tuck all the way until the last 10 minutes, a superb Paddy Coyle point near the end securing the win, and Niall Lundy putting in a 'tireless' man of the match performance.

A trip to Portglenone with injuries, other commitments and other games taking place, saw a small squad of 17 make the long trip to the Casements. Initially, it did not look promising for St Brigid's, the team were under pressure from the off from a strong Portglenone team including some seasoned senior players.

Mid-way through the second half the team were 8 points down. However, Conor Taylor put in one of the performances of the season to help drag the team back into the game. With the additional introduction of Marcus Lynch and a superb midfield performance from Niall McDonald, the team took the game to Portglenone, scoring 2-4 without reply to win the game by 2 points. Cathal Maguire scoring an absolute stunning goal and his first for the club to seal the victory.

At this point, the momentum was all with the reserves and the team and management felt that they had the ability to win the league outright with 2 games to play.

A nervous performance against Gort na Mona at Musgrave was to be expected with the title at stake, however, the team ground out a 2-12 to 1-10 win to secure the senior league title for the first time in the clubs history – a tremendous achievement.

Senior Reserve Championship

The focus of the team now moved to the reserve championship and making inroads against some of the more established teams.

First up was the visit of St Enda's to Musgrave. The team expected a stern test based on the earlier meeting in the season between the sides and this is how it turned out. Despite a superb individual performance from Reuban Carlton the reserves fell short by 2 points.

Despite the disappointment of the game against St Enda's, the initial stages were on a league basis, giving the reserves the opportunity to reach the semi-finals by winning their next 2 games.

The championship game against Rossa was called off due to Covid-19, leaving the final group game against St Gall's to be a make or bust decider for qualification to the semi-final. In one of the games of the season, an inspirational Peter Lundy led St Brigid's to victory by 2-13 to 1-10 with the ever-reliable Conor Slevin and Ryan Murtagh getting the goals.

Next stop was a semi-final against last year's champions Creggan. And it was it a game to remember and not for the faint hearted.

The game was nip and tuck from start to finish with goals from Magee, Webb and a Peter Webb penalty, to set up a grand slam finish. With 5 minutes of injury time on the clock and St Brigid's a point down, Luke McCann and Ryan Murtagh forced a turnover high up in the Creggan defence. Smartly taking the resultant line in and feeding the ball to Conor Slevin, Conor set Dunsilly alight, with an amazing finish



from the tightest of angles, to put St Brigid's ahead and send them to their first Senior Reserve final by 4-15 to 1-21. Man of the match, with a stunning display of shot taking and general play was Peter Webb.

Senior Reserve Championship Final

The scene was set for the clubs first ever Senior Championship Final against St Gall's at Davitt Park on 25th September led by captain Paul Finnegan who was returning from injury. The inspirational Conor Taylor unfortunately was ruled out, but Toirealach Brolly and Brian McCarthy returned from injury to help boost the defensive options. Confidence was high and a squad of 32 were feeling confident ahead of the game.

The reserves got off to a great start moving into a 1-4 to 0-4 win at the first water break – Ryan Tweedy with 1-3. Darragh Fox was causing all sorts of problems up front, and Conor Slevin and Ronan Devlin were controlling midfield. In the 2nd quarter, St Galls began to gain some momentum and (thankfully) missed a couple of goal chances, a brilliant save by keeper Kevin McGovern and an acrobatic clearance off the line by captain Paul Finnegan. Sean McKernan was then upended in the penalty box to give Peter Webb the chance to extend the lead which he did with some aplomb (keeping the ball low ☺).

Half time score St Brigid's 2-7 St Gall's 0-8.

St Gall's came out of the blocks quickly with 2 points. The introduction of McCarthy and Murtagh at the water break steadied the ship but the game was still very much in the balance at 2-10 to 0-10. At this point St Gall's pushed forward in search of a goal, but the St Brigid's defence was outstanding. A breakdown of a St Gall's attack allowed Ryan Tweedy to run 60 yards before unselfishly finding Luke McCann who rifled his shot to the roof of the net to secure St Brigid's first Senior Reserve Championship to very joyful scenes on the sideline.

This was just reward for an excellent group of players who stuck together throughout the

season and despite some individual set-backs remained strong as a team and focused on doing what they could to make the season a success for the club.

Players such as Joe and Thomas McCarney, Shay Campbell, Rueban Carleton showed their class through the season and were rewarded by making their full senior squad debut. Niall Lundy's limitless energy and physical presence were also massive assets. Other young players such as Ben Doherty and Conan made critical contributions in many games.

The management were grateful to have such a dedicated, determined and disciplined squad to take and coach throughout the year. Nothing was too much and each team member contributed to the success of the team. No doubt, many of these players will move forward and have successful senior careers over the coming years. Well done to Colin McGuckin and the Reserve Team coaches for a fantastic achievement this year.

U20 Football

Sadly there's not much to report on the inaugural U20 squad. The league collapsed after just one game. The championship took a league format with two groups. However, with only the top team from each group meeting in the final it quickly became meaningless for any team that lost a game. Quarter finals or at least semi finals would have ensured teams had a competitive interest for longer. Our lads won their first game away to Aldergrove but lost our second against St Galls. All Saints failed to field. We beat Rossa in a dead rubber before Cargin confirmed that they would not be able to field. Although many of the U20 squad enjoyed plenty of football with the Senior and Reserve squads, Antrim CCC should give this important age group more consideration but they may not. Player retention is essential so as a Club we must do more.



U17/Minor

A Team

Final league position – Top of Division 1

League Semi-Final play-off – beaten by winners St Mary's Aghagallon

Championship – semi-final – beaten by

Championship winners, St Mary's Aghagallon

The season started early for this year's minors with our first strength and conditioning session via Zoom on January 16th. The zoom sessions and individual runs recorded on Strava were to continue for the following three months. Big thanks to Anthony McGrath from the senior panel for facilitating contact with the Senior S&C coach, Martin Gallagher, who set out the sessions for the boys which really motivated them. Martin also assisted with a nutrition session which a number of the boys got a lot out of. Before the end of lockdown we started to take the boys individually at staggered times at the weekends for skills work also. We also broke the squad into groups of six or seven lads (with different ages and abilities deliberately mixed) led by an older, senior player so that they could work separately on their skills in small groups before organised training could start. The purpose of this was to integrate the squad, allow leadership to develop and of course, to get the boys actually playing football. It wasn't universally successful but for the leaders who embraced it and organised their groups, it worked well.

A very big emphasis was put on skills this year as I feel that this group's core skills were not always strong enough. A number of the boys who listened and practiced made good improvements over the season.

When we finally got playing, we made a great start with an easy win over Carryduff and then we travelled to Burren to play their minors. Burren have been dominant Down minor champions for the last three years (including this year). There was some doubt about the wisdom of the fixture but that was set aside when we played very well and won the game.

The boys loved that win, it proved something to them and gave us momentum.

The early start to our season and the preparation obviously helped when we took down a fancied Sarsfields team in the opening game 1-9 to 0-6. It wasn't spectacular but it was a monkey off the boys back as this team had gone down to Sarsfields in the championship group stages at u16 last year, effectively putting us out. Our next game was one we expected to win but came close to losing, only to dig out a draw away to Aldergrove. 2-7 to 1-10. The following league game was against Ballymena who'd beaten Aghagallon and drawn with Cargin in their first two games. We were ready for a battle but we rolled over the top of them very easily, winning 11-15 to 4-4. Momentum was clearly building but the big one was to come. Away to Aghagallon. This team had never beaten their Aghagallon equivalents – having gone down badly to them in last year's championship and previously in extra time in the u14 All-County final in 2018. In this game however, we probably played our most complete game of the season winning 1-4 to 2-11. Our next game was a big win over St Enda's 14-16 to 0-7. And then came St Paul's, one of our other big rivals. It was wet and it was in St Paul's so we were worried but we didn't need to be - our lads rose to the occasion brilliantly, winning 3-10 to 1-7. Another very satisfying win. Our last game of the league campaign brought us down to earth however. Away to Cargin, we went down 4-10 to 1-12. It was a good lesson for the boys after a so-far unbeaten season.

As far as we were concerned, the league was over and we'd won the division pretty easily. We were two points clear and in seven games, we had a points difference of plus 101 (182 for, 81 against). The closest to us in score difference with plus 45 was Aghagallon. We started to prepare for the championship which was then suddenly put back by six weeks and a league play-off system was devised. First was to play eighth, second to



play seventh etc. It was a stupid idea, nobody was interested and of course a few days before our 'quarter final' St Endas (8th) who we'd beaten by 51 points pulled out of the match. We were left with no game and had to wait for a semi-final with Aghagallon which we lost 1-6 to 1-5. There were a number of aspects of that game which were deeply dissatisfying to us as a coaching group. After much debate and distracting correspondence with the CCC, the championship was brought forward eventually and we won our quarter final 2-19 to 1-6 over St Enda's. Aghagallon awaited us at Dunsilly in the semi. The referees calls didn't go our way but the truth was Aghagallon scored goals when they needed them and that was the difference on the day, 3-9 to 0-9. It was a disappointing end on a number of levels but I felt particularly bad for two of this team's greatest servants over the years, Niall Finnegan and James Gorman. Both were injured in the run up to the game and they were unable to play a full part in the match, with James having to come off and Niall only coming on for the last quarter with a heavily strapped knee. To his immense credit, he still nearly turned the game around in that time. James, Niall and Aodhan McNicholl were also part of the Antrim County Minor Squad, though that was a poor experience for all three players and the team exited the Ulster Championship to Donegal in the first round. We could have had a greater number represented but some of our team chose not to participate and having seen how the team was run and organised, I could do nothing other than agree with them. That will be not the case this coming year and five of our players are going forward for the 2022 squad.

Our objective was to win the championship and we definitely had the team to do it, though the championship winners could have come from any one of four teams: ourselves, Aghagallon, St Paul's and Cargin. We played a great brand of football in my view and we hope the boys enjoyed it. Almost the entire

group was very committed and they made a very big effort. We are extremely grateful to the management group of Paul McErlean Peter Gilleece, Una McGurk, Michael Gorman, Iggy McGowan, Eunan Conway and Shane Lynch. We were a good group and we worked hard and in my view, deserved better.

I think a number of players improved over the season which should give us grounds for optimism, there is a strong group now entering the u20 grade such as Jamie Conway, Ronan McKeown, Donal Hanna, Brian McGurk, Samir O'Hare, Niall Duffy and Fintan Cleary, to name but a few. There were also some super scoring performances over the season with Jack Toner and Rory McErlean scoring 6-31 and 9-61 respectively. Some of the goalkeeping (we had a specific kickout from our excellent keeper, John McCooe, set up for Jack Toner which paid dividends in a number of games), defensive and midfield play leading to many of those scores was brilliant to watch and very enjoyable to coach. But in the end, we didn't win the coveted Minor championship and that is a matter of very considerable regret to all of us. Still, with seven of this year's starters available again next year, combined with this year's winning u15s, we have a lot to be optimistic about.

I was very glad also that we made the decision to field two teams and keep the squad as a single squad as much as possible, even attracting two lads who hadn't played Gaelic football for a number of years back into the fold. Inclusivity was an important team value for this group and I think that was reflected in the fun that we had and the bonds that were grown and cemented over the season. I would be very hopeful that the boys progressing into the u20s stick with it and do so with some developed skills and improved levels of confidence.



U17 B Football

It was a battling performance from the B's at u17 this year. Naomh Brid entered a second string u17 team in the ACFL Div. 3. A remarkable achievement as we were the only club to do so and it was another notable first in the clubs history

To have a second team entered at minor level Football (5 and 6 years ago we had one u18 team joining up along with St. Pat's Lisburn)

The second string team had 15 players all named on the first team sheet who could not play and with injuries, covid 19 and holidays Quite often there was 8/9 others not available so the performance of the team and those who stepped up from the u15 age group Has to be gauged in this context, so a remarkable season was had by management and team alike. All league and championship games were at 12 noon on a Sunday so there could be little chance of even any subs for the first team lining out to augment the second string.

With a regular 24 training in total with the minor A team there was reliance for up to 6 players from the u15b team to help field on occasions.

Our eternal thanks to those u15's who helped out and indeed to Shane Quinn and peter Mulgrew who ensured our u17b's would always field.

The team effort from the A team manager Paul McErlean, Mentors and support team Michael Gorman, Una McGurk, Iggy Magowan, Peter Gilleece and Shane Lynch All played a part from pre-season fitness to registration to covid-19 monitoring to coaching A and B teams. Paul ensured a smooth working relationship with our hurlers and made time for hurling development as well as a steely focus on the big ball game.

The season started with a trip to Lisburn on May 16th. When after a very promising

opening 3 quarters the hosts pulled a few score back.

The final score was 5:8 to 4:6 at the long whistle. The two man full forward line of captain Thomas Graham and David Prenter proved too hot to handle for the Lisburn boys as they bagged the goals not for the only time during the year. Pearse Lynch and u15 Peter Mulgrew and midfield powerhouse Daniel Harkin all caught the eye in a promising opener.

Despite huge endeavour on behalf of Naomh Brid The following games were postponed and never played Creggan 3 times Rasharkin once In sheer desperation we turned to Lisburn to play a challenge game again. Another victory ensued and the club fielded an all u17 second string. With Niall MacSherry, Owen McCarney resolute at the heart of defence, Conn Gilleece and Dairmuid Hanna showed their great speed, ability and appetite and the Biddies recorded a fine comprehensive victory.

The second league game took place on the 25 July away to Ardoyne. The scoreline of 8:8 to 0:9 reflected the dominance of the Malone Road boys.

Mel Murnaghan, Shane Gilmartin, Joe Moore and Conor Brown all head and shoulders above the Kickhams opponents on the day. Next up were Lambh Dhearg who with two county minors powered past the biddies at Musgrave in the third quarter after a 3 point deficit at the break.

However the Red Hands knew they had to finish well to take the points and were a little too big on the day for their Musgrave hosts. The following week back at Musgrave we played Naomh Comhghall's of Antrim town and another excellent game ensued, the visitors lost a key player through injury and trailing by 7 points at the last water break the Malone boys staged a magnificent come back to win 3:5 to 1:9 Victory snatched from the jaws of defeat!



Naomh Brid finished a very credible 3rd with one defeat in the div 3 league not being able to play two games, and not getting the points for their inability to field.

The Division 3 league semi-final saw us play Lambh Dhearg at Sarsfields. The improvement from the first league game was clearly evident and the match was in the mix right up to the last 5 minutes when a goal for the Hannastown men gave them a winning margin. Finnan Collins, Luke Myers. Shane Gilmartin and Colm Finnegan featured in a superb performance from the biddies.

The B Championship draw drew us against Rossa from Division 2, a league division above us. However with Ronan McKeown bossing the middle, Owen McCarney.

A solid presence between the posts and a strong bench to call upon the Biddies put in a heroic performance to fight for every last scrap against the fancied.

Men from the west. Due in no small measure to Gilleece, Prenter and Hanna the game was level in the last ten minute a goal on the break for Rossa

Meant they crept through but only just. This was a battling game with plenty of skill and was a fitting end to a good season.

The B coaches Shane, Peter and Eunan would like to thank their fellow coach's u15 and u17 in both codes and a special thanks to the many parents who dropped of their sons to training and games. The enthusiasm of the players meant they were a joy to work with.

Best players of the season were Daiurmuid Hanna in defence, Daniel Harkin in midfield, Conn Gilleece and David Prenter who both scored a bagful of goals.

The club can look forward to seeing all these boys wear the club colours with distinction in

2022, whether with u17's again or u20's and the senior teams

Antrim should ensure these players have sufficient games at u17 level – there was not this year

Antrim should ensure there is a C championship as there is at u 15 level.

Our committee and county Committee delegate are asked to note these two points

U15 Football

U15 A

As there was a change in the football age group structure the 2020 U14s were all still together as U15s for 2021. There were 39 players at end of 2020, and this increased to 41 at the end of 2021.

Due to COVID restrictions at the end of 2020 the coaches didn't want the boys to miss out in preparing for the 2021 season they commenced online fitness training via Zoom.

The Zoom classes were taken by Seaneen McCrory from Peak Physique. They had 2 one-hour sessions per week. One session would be intense and the other session a more relaxed Pilates/stretch session. The first session was on the 18th of Nov 2020. The response from all the boys was fantastic. Seaneen was able to watch the boys and over the course of the training she commented on how many of them increased their flexibility. We had a break over Christmas and started again in the New Year. Our last class was on the 10th of April 2021. We would like to thank Seaneen for all her help with this and with the large numbers attending this reflected how good her classes were.

We did an online presentation with the boys reviewing 2020 and what we can look forward to in 2021 in terms of the league, Féile and Championship. This was followed by an online quiz set up by Quizmaster Brian Morrissey.



Thankfully there were no water polo questions!

As the COVID restrictions eased we decided to follow what the U17s had done and arranged a couple of one-to-one coaching sessions with the boys. All coaches took part at the sessions at Harlequins. Three coaches were spread out over the pitch we went through all the types of catching and kicking (with both feet), handpassing with both hands, soloing with both feet. Finally taking points and goals again using right and left foot. The boys found this very worthwhile as it was the first contact they had with a coach since end of Sept 2020. They were given tips and advice to help improve their skills.

As the restrictions were lifted it was great to get back out on the pitch as a full squad training again on 18th of April. After the session pizzas were delivered. Training certainly builds up an appetite as the pizza didn't get a chance to hang around too long.

Both teams played pre-season challenge games against Bredagh at Musgrave and away to Dromintee who provided food afterwards for players and parents. The Div 1 team also played a game against Magherafelt.

6 of the boys played in the Antrim U14 Development Squad (Conor McKavanagh, Joe Mulgrew, Jimmy Joe Higgins, Luke Logue, Donncha McGurk and Conor O'Connell)

8 of the boys played in the Antrim U15 Development Squad (James Blaney, Oscar Conlon, Dara Quinn, Peter Mulgrew, Techin McGarvey, Sonny Doyle, Luke Cullinan and Michael Gorman)

U15 League Division 1

The U15 Antrim league was all-county, so it was great to play teams out of Belfast for the first time. The U15A league campaign began

against St. Galls on the 20th of May. We won that game easily, but this certainly did not make us complacent as in just a few days we played them in the delayed 2020 U14 Fr Mullan Cup. The boys fought hard and at one stage brought the game to one point, but unfortunately, due to a few early goals by St Galls who were stronger on the day, the difference in the final score being just one goal.

We ended up being top of group in the league (won 5 games, lost 2). We got through to the league final against St Pauls. Games against St Pauls have always been close. This game was no different but we lost the game again by 3 points. We didn't get into top gear in this game. We knew what we needed to work on.

The A Féile was played at the end of August in Musgrave. We came through group stages and played Con Magees Glenravel in the A Féile Final in the afternoon in Glenavy. A few complaints about tired legs from the morning group games soon were forgotten as we dominated the final and won. It was disappointing that the boys didn't get to experience going away to the Féile Finals.



Next up was the Championship. We got through to the final having beaten Ballymena and Creggan on the way. It was a repeat of the league final against St Pauls. We were determined and knew we had to work hard to



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beat St. Pauls. We had a dream start with getting a few great scores. Our movement on and off the ball, passing with both hands and feet was first class. The pure hunger and never say die attitude from the boys was great to watch from the sideline.



At half time the score was St Brigids 5-10 St Pauls 1-3. St Pauls scored a goal quickly at the start of the second half, but the boys just kept going right to the final whistle. Final Score St Brigids 7-17 St Pauls 2-6.



All credit must go to this team as they are the first St Brigid's team to win an A Féile and A County Championship in the same year.

Over the course of the season the boys improved greatly. However, we did have issues in defence. Even though we won games we were conceding a lot of goals. Our kick outs did improve over the season. These improvements came from the excellent attitude at training. This made them more determined to play well. The boys were told this quote from Michael Jordan at the start of the year, and they absolutely took it on board



“My best skill was that I was coachable. I was a sponge, and I was aggressive to learn”.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the hard work put in by the coaches of Greg Blaney, Laurence Higgins Shane Quinn, Peter Mulgrew, Brian Morrissey and Colm McGurk. We also want to thank the parents especially for their support at all the matches.

U15 B Football (Division 2)

The coaching group as a whole always felt that training as a group is vital to the team spirit, so every session started with the whole squad and the GAA Activate Warm Up as a group, before a split of Div 1 & 2 players, but crucially it was always same venue, same time.

As mentioned, we try to get preseason games against teams that also have 2 teams which is difficult and the Div 2 team also played St James and St Pats in the run up to the league opener.

Having trained well and with some strong performances in preseason games the boys went in good heart to the first league outing on May the 20th to play O`Donnells.

Unfortunately it was a harsh lesson in being a second team facing a strong first team.

A key lesson from that game was that we needed a full time Goalkeeper and for our next couple of games we secured the services of Peter Molloy in that role. Peter is a U13 player but has strength and calmness beyond his years and was excellent in that role. With Peter present the whole team had greater confidence and instead of conceding goals which cost us against O`D`s we could go on the front foot.

Our next couple of games saw victories over St Teresa`s (particularly impressive as they had comfortably beaten us in the championship the year before) and an enthralling one point win at Ardoyne in a game that was end to end to the last kick of the ball. Our midfield was in control with James Kelly and Joe Mulgrew and

up front Eoghan Sherry, Conor Austin and Joe McKay in fine scoring form.

After a bit of momentum, it was a crash again with an unexpected defeat to St Pats, again the lack of a keeper was an issue as Peter Molloy had caught the eye of the Div 1 coaches and this certainly showed with a lot of goals conceded and a below par performance. From then on we secured the services between the sticks of the excellent Jonah Power, the U13 Div 1 keeper and again we went on good run beating Rasharkin comfortably and a thriller against St Enda`s. Notable in that game was a great upfront performances from Luke Logue who got 2 – 2 after having always played in the half back line. We also benefited from the introduction of one of our newcomers Alexander Myres who joined having moved to the area and not having played for a couple of years. Alexander brought great energy and skill that defied his couple of years out of the game.

With a few games cancelled/postponed at times due to opposition teams having Covid, it meant that we were sometimes able to call upon a couple of the non-graded Div 1 lads and really make use of our squad strength and thanks to the Div 1 coaches for facilitating that.

With 4 wins and 2 defeats in the league we finished a very credible second, and after a great battle and tight win over St James in the QF, the league playoff SF did not go our way as we faced Naomh Comhghalls. But as so often happens, there was a very quick return game and we faced the same side in the Feile group stage. To say that there was a turnaround would be an understatement. Our lads played like their lives depended on it and we were never more proud of them.

Players like Fionntan Murtagh, Luke Logue, Conor Austin, James Bready and Fintan Coll (I could literally just name the squad they were all so good) really stepped up and went toe to toe against a team that had beaten us by 30+ points just a few days earlier. In a tight encounter from the outset with about 5



minutes to go we brought them to level pegging, but just lost to a couple of late points. Never had we as coaches experienced a defeat that felt more like a victory. Naomh Comhghall's players were rattled, and their coaches stunned by who close we had run them.

It seemed though that our team talk of "leave everything on the pitch" was well and truly listened to as it was a below par performance that saw us lose the Feile play off later that day to Lamh Dhearg who had experienced a much easier path through the morning play offs and arrived with plenty in the tank when our lads were running on empty.

As we moved into September, it was the serious end of the season as one defeat meant that it was all over. This group of lads weren't going to let that happen! In the preliminary round we were up against Gort Na Mona.

Here some of our lads had their best performances, Sam Patterson got 5 goals, Joe McKay, James Kelly and Eoghan Sherry were also in scoring form in an absolute goal fest from the lads. Conor McKavanagh also did great work on the half forward line and there was a welcome return for one of our long term injured players Conor Flanagan who came on and scored. We will see a big season from Conor next year. There were appearances too from non graded players such as the O'Donoghue twins, Daniel Kelly Joe Mulgrew. We also had an outstanding display from Daire Ogelsby in half back and he caught the eye of the Div 1 coaches that day and was called up for the rest of the season. Whilst this always brings a headache, there is immense pride in seeing any player called up and we feel it is vindication of a job well done. Probably having seen our scoreline against Gort Na Mona, Con Magees decided to end the season early so we had a walk over and through to the SF against St James Aldergrove. Although having beaten them twice already this was not a game we could take for granted.

And so it proved, at the first water break we were 6 or 7 down and it looked like we hadn't woken up yet! But wake up the boys did and an end to end battle ensued as we clawed them back, took the lead and lost it again with a few minutes left. It was starting to look like another hard luck story until another of our new recruits Cameron Murphy scored an excellent nerve settling point to bring us back level and then a couple of late goals saw us win by 8 – 6 to 8 – 5. Other important scores came from Mark Morrissey and Pearse Duffy, It was a flattering score line as St James, like in all of our games were tremendous adversaries and there was nothing between the teams, but you always take a victory!



The victorious side, in one of our best games of the season, the SF Championship win over St James's, Aldergrove.

The strength of our club at this level is clear to see when we got to the Championship Final in both Div 1 and Div 2. Unfortunately, the games were at the same time which robbed coaches, players and parents the opportunity to see both games and in fact a couple of our Div 2 coaches didn't get to see their sons win in Div 1, which is something that should be looked at if it arose again.

While we were delighted to hear that our Div 1 teammates had such an emphatic win over St Pauls, our own lads campaign fizzled out in a disappointing very one sided game against O'Donnells.



The lads just before the Championship final.

Unfortunately the lads never got going and the game had fizzled out long before the Final whistle. That is not to say they gave up, it just didn't gel on the day. If we had to mention 1 player who displayed the never say day spirit, it was undoubtedly Conor Austin who along with so many others has progressed very well this season.

In conclusion, throughout the campaign including friendlies, the guys won 11 and lost 7 games. When you look at the other couple of teams able to enter 2 squads at this level, invariably the second team is cannon fodder and usually bottom of the league. Not at Saint Brigid's, and not with lads like these. It was a pleasure being associated with them and the best of luck to all the lads moving to Minor. We will see you again when we too are minors in 2023!



End of season party at Colin Glen Activity Centre for the U15 panel

Under 13 Football

Coaching Team: Brian Kavanagh, Charlie O'Neill, Ciaran Conway, Donall McCann, Gerry Carlile, Laurence Higgins, Martin Hanna, Martin McCarney, Richard Sproule

The dedication of the U13 group was unreal in 2021. Their coaches are so proud of the commitment and dedication the boys have shown this year. They kicked off the year in

January with ten weeks of twice weekly 'Peak Physique Zoom Keep Fit Sessions'. They also undertook daily ball work challenges during the February 'Mid Term Break'. They moved on to '1-2-1 Training' sessions with some of the coaches in March, before focusing on their less dominant side in home training challenges for five weeks leading up to Easter in a 'Road to Croker' themed competition. Full training resumed in April and by the time the season ended in October, we had accumulated 50 on the pitch training sessions, and over 50 games played (Division 1 and 2 leagues, championships and challenge games), on top of all the pre-season home training the boys had undertaken.

The top three priorities for the coaches this year in the following order were: Fun, Skills, Competing. We also wanted to ensure we had the culture right within the squad, in terms of the right behaviours, etc. We are genuinely very proud of the group, they are a great bunch of boys who all get on very well, they are a credit to themselves and their families, and have been an absolute pleasure to coach. We hope that, along with the hard work the boys have put in this year, that they have had a lot of fun along the way. We are delighted with how their skills have developed, and they have competed very well across the various competitions they were involved in.

The Division 2 Team had a great start to the year winning the delayed 2020 O'Donnell Plate 2 Title against Davitts in a thrilling final in May. Trailing by 2 points with a couple of minutes to go, Aidan Flanagan popped up with a brilliant goal for the team to run out 2-04 to 2-03 winners. Having won Division 3 in 2020, they were promoted to Division 2 where they more than held their own with wins secured against Eire Og, Lisburn and Rossa to come third in the league, behind winners St Enda's B's and second placed Ardoyne. They went on to comfortably beat Eire Og in the O'Donnell



Plate 1 quarter final, only to lose out to a strong Ardoyne team in the semi final.



The Division 1 Team had a tough start to the year, getting well beaten by St Pauls in the delayed 2020 O'Donnell Cup Final in May. However, they bounced back to go on to win 13 out of their 14 league games to secure the U13 Division 1 League Title (first for St Brigid's since 2012) just ahead of St Pauls in second place, and Gort na Mona in third place. Unfortunately, despite beating St Pauls home and away in the league, they were then beaten by St Pauls in the 2021 O'Donnell Cup Final in a very tight game, with a goal separating the teams in the end. It's worth mentioning that St Brigid's and St Pauls U13 and U15 football teams played in five league and championship finals against each other in five months this year. It is an exciting rivalry that will hopefully continue for a few years to come.



A number of the younger U13's were involved in the U11.5 Squad who won the U11.5 Dromintee Tournament in August, beating a very good Bellaghy side in the final with a last minute wonder goal from young Rory Magee.



We had a dozen different boys who were asked to play up for the U15's this year, which was great experience for them, and they received a lot of praise from the U15 coaches for how they performed. Two U13 boys won U15 All County A Championship and U15 Feile A titles to go along with their U13 Division 1 league medals. A number of the U13's also helped the U15B team to reach their championship final.

A number of the U13 squad were put forward by the coaches for the Antrim Development Squad trials, which take place in October and November, and we expect at least a few of them to make it on to the 2022 Antrim U14 Development Squad, which will be a great honour for the boys, their families and the club.

Special mention to one boy in particular, who suffered ongoing injury problems throughout the year, yet still turned up to nearly every single training session and match, and was a constant source of encouragement for all his teammates, and a real leader within the squad. He even took the boys for a training session all on his own, which the boys thoroughly enjoyed. Well done James McCarney.

Special thanks to Seaneen McCrory from Peak Physique for the excellent Keep Fit Sessions put on for the boys at the start of the year, and also to Jack Dowling and Finn McKernan for coming along to training to coach and chat to the boys.



Under 11 Boys Football



U11 Football is an important age group as players begin to make the transition to second level education and is a key phase for player retention, recruitment and skill development. With a committed group, our playing numbers continued to rise with 42 registered players at the season end. Undoubtedly the resumption of after school GAA at local schools has been a driver of higher participation (and of player training levels!) and is very welcome. While this squad size has presented some challenges in managing training and match time it has also delivered some terrific in-house sessions and competitive development over the season. Skills development remains to the fore with good habits very much the order of the day focusing on first touch, hard tackle, quick release passing. It was great to see, towards the end of the season, that a number of break out players for this age group have begun to emerge who have taken responsibility to make an impact both in training and in competitive matches. There is more work to do here in ensuring that all players are reaching the appropriate level here. Across the year the squad was able to participate in 45+ games across South Antrim Go Games, blitzes, tournaments and challenge games providing opportunities for the boys to continue to develop their skills. This combined with 50+ training sessions was a huge effort by

players, parents and coaches and is a commendable commitment to this groups development. The group has had a tremendous level of variety in their training with traditional skill development complemented by Aussie Rules, Hit the Pinata, Crossbar Challenges and more. The players had the opportunity to play challenge games ahead of the clubs senior team matches and to then see the adult team in action – memorable occasions for the boys to see some feisty matches in the sun.



A highlight for this group was participation in an u11.5 team fielded in the Dromintee Tournament which they managed to bring home the Cup from, a terrific achievement,





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One downside to the season was the departure of one of our coaching team, Aidan Cole in a mid-season transfer to Rostrevor, The AC Posterior Tackle Technique™ is one that will live long in the memory.

The season concluded for the squad with a lunch at the Wellington Park where, alongside discovering that ice cream and juice really don't mix, they also heard from Sonny Doyle (u15 boys football) and Colin McGuckian (Snr Reserve coach) on their own teams success this year, this was fantastic for these young players to hear.

The mentor group of Dwyer Magee, Barry McMahon, Nicky Murphy, Paul Turley, Barney Conway & Peter Ferris is now in place for next season as we look forward to the squad continuing to progress in the move up to the next age bracket.

Finally, a thank you for all the parental support we received during the year and for ensuring we have a strong and robust squad of players with a terrific attitude.

HURLING

Senior Hurling



In 2021 the club reestablished a senior hurling team – the first time since 2009 a senior hurling team has participated in the Antrim Leagues.

With the on-going COVID lockdown the early part of the season entailed several Zoom sessions and individual training sessions

designed to focus on both core fitness and individual hurling skills.



The season properly got underway when the squad were able to run pitch sessions in mid-April. Training sessions were held on a Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday – however with a number of dual players attendance was often impacted by the football schedule.

The squad's first competitive game was held against East Belfast on Wednesday 5th May – it turned out to be a wonderful evening for hurling with Naomh Brid managing to secure victory – unfortunately this would prove to be the squad's sole victory for the year.

Naomh Brid v East Belfast 5th May 2021



Cumann Luthchleas Gael Naomh Brid Béal Feirste

st. BRÍGÍD'S gac BELFAST

Founded 1998



The squad competed in the All-County League, Division 4. The first league game took place on Saturday 8th May with an away trip to Dungannon. This was a highly competitive game and while Naomh Brid lost the encounter by 5 points, it did show plenty of room for optimism. Unfortunately, as the club's senior football management had arranged a challenge game for the same time on the Saturday evening several dual players did not travel to Dungannon. This lack of flexibility proved to be an ongoing theme throughout the year.

The league fixtures continued throughout May and June, with games on a Wednesday and Sunday – alternating with the football leagues. The squad had a number of very close and high scoring games losing by 2 points away to Ardoyne and home to Ballymena and St Agnes. However, the elusive league victory escaped the team.



Bryan Hallihan – man of match award v St Agnes

The Junior B championship commenced on Saturday 3rd July. The initial phase involved a 3-team group section (Naomh Brid, Ardoyne & Ballymena) with the top two teams progressing to a semi-final stage. Again, direct clashes with the senior football resulted in some dual players not being made available for the hurling championship.

In the opening game against All Saints Ballymena the game was level with 5 minutes remaining, however 3 quick fire points and a goal with the final puck of the game saw Ballymena emerge as 6-point victors.

"In their first season in the Antrim league, St. Brigid's have performed well and are sure to be a force in the future and they pushed the home side most of the way with the sides locked at 1-12 to 0-15 with five minutes of normal time remaining."

Report headline from Saffron Gael on championship game v Ballymena



Senior Hurling Captain 2021 – Fearghal Leyden

In the second group game against Ardoyne, it was a similar affair – the teams were level at the second water break, however Ardoyne pulled away in the last 10 minutes to secure a 10-point victory.

As a result of these two defeats Naomh Brid failed to qualify for the knockout stages and effectively ended our season by the end of July. A subsequent Junior B Plate competition was organized for mid-August – however momentum had disappeared from our season by this stage with low numbers at training – we were well beaten by Larne in the first knock-out game.

Milestones achieved

We fielded in every game, we competed in every game, we lost every game but what a great learning experience for all the players and management.

Antrim Hurling league Division 4 had eight teams: Naomh Bríd, Lough Mor, Larne, Lamh Dearg, All Saints, Ard Eoin, Eoin Ruadh, St Agnes. Games played on Wed 7.30pm and Sunday 2pm. We played seven league games, commencing 8th May and completing 27th June, with three of the games resulting in a 2-point defeat.

Junior B Championship we met All Saint Ballymena. The score was even with 5 minutes

remaining, they went on to win the game and lost to Lamh Dearg in the final.

Junior Plate Championship we met Larne who went on to win the plate against Ard Eoin.

Challenges

Two weeks of training leading into season start due to Covid meant the team had a very limited lead in time to prepare prior to the first competitive game at the beginning of May.

Repeated clashes with the senior football schedule – including our first hurling league game with a direct conflict with the football challenge game and some dual players not being released for both championship games. Assistance from the relevant heads of coaching had been sought to resolve these issues. If senior hurling is to develop in Naomh Brid these direct clashes with senior football need to be resolved by the club and not left in the hands of the senior football manager.

Looking forward

While it was a disappointing year on the field in terms of winning games, great strides have been made and the mere fact we managed to field a team in every game was in itself an achievement. We have 5 players coming out of minor in 2021 and they will certainly strengthen the squad as we look forward to the 2022 season.

Training for the 2022 season commenced in Nov 2021 with a 6-week block of indoor sessions at Rathmore school.

Thanks

Many thanks to all players and supporters who participated and assisted in getting senior hurling back up and running in the club in 2021. While we had limited success on the pitch, with a young squad, the majority who have hurled underage with the club there is



plenty of optimism for the 2022 season and beyond.

Thanks to the coaching team of Gerard Mulholland, Mel Carson, Oliver Lennon, Paddy Kinney and team medic Sean McHenry for their work throughout the year.

And a special word of thanks to our senior team sponsors **McCrudden & Trainor Solicitors** who kindly sponsored the team's playing jersey for 2021.



Senior Hurling Chair, Gerard Mulholland and senior player Oisín McDonnell receive playing jerseys from sponsors Tim McCrudden & Damien Trainor, McCrudden & Trainor Solicitors.

Juvenile Hurling

Once again in 2020 our young hurlers continued to play in amalgamated teams playing under the name of Brid Og at U13 involving Naomh Brid, Ard Eoin and Eire Og. At U15 and U17 we also joined with Naomh Gall under the name Ard na Ri.

Further Hurling reports are included in the Fun Sunday section.

Under 17 Hurling

Following the progress made at u16 during 2019 and 2020 it was agreed that we continue with the amalgamation involving Naomh Brid,

Naomh Gall, Ard Eoin and Eire Og and continue to play as Ard na Ri.

Preparation for the 2021 season was on hold until after the lockdown so we finally got started on 17th April at Musgrave. Additional training sessions were arranged for Monday evening at Cliftonville. Training session attendances and player's attitudes were good, reflecting the appetite among the lads to get back to training, even if it was limited by no contact being allowed.

The u17 lads finally got their first competitive game on 9th May against Corpus Christi Gaels at Milltown. In a competitive game the lads battled hard but couldn't get the scores on the board and went down to a 2 point defeat. In the next game against Rossa, played on 28th May, the lads played the game they were capable of and came away with a 21 point win.

The lads travelled to Ballymena on 20th June for the third league game. The two teams were evenly matched in the first quarter with some very skillful hurling and good score taking. However, an injury to Owen McCarney in the second quarter led to him leaving the field and the defence struggled without his presence. In the third quarter, Ballymena dominated and raced to a 12 point lead. The lads upped their efforts in the final quarter, pulling back a goal and 3 points and only the frantic defending by the Ballymena team kept our goal attempts out and the result was a 6 point defeat.

The league games against Lamh Dearg and Glenravel fell victim to Covid problems with their numbers depleted and management requesting postponements. In the end neither game was played.

The u17 B Championship was next up with the first game away to Glenravel on 29th August. The lads dominated from the start in this game and took their scoring opportunities very well. It was an all-round team performance with some great defending contributing to a final score of 4-18 to 0-8. This win set up a



semi-final match with Ballymena at Dunsilly on 9th September. A slow start in this game let All Saints gain a 10 point lead by half time. However, the lads showed tremendous determination in the second half to score 2 goals and pull back the deficit but once again, the Ballymena defending in the last few minutes kept them ahead to claim victory. In 2021 there have been many positives to be taken from the season. Despite the limited number of league and Championship games, every player in the squad had the opportunity to play competitive games at u17 level as a stepping stone to senior level.

Thank you to John Martin, Conor Barnes, Gary McDonnell (Ard Eoin), Jackie Webb, Kevin Fanning (Naomh Gall) and Darren Hamill (Eire Og) for their coaching expertise, enthusiasm, support and communication skills with this squad of lads throughout the year. In addition, we have a dedicated group of parents who have taxied and supported the lads to every training session and game. Thank you to Oliver Lennon and for ensuring Musgrave was available, Jackie Webb for facilitating the games and training at Milltown and John Martin and Conor Barnes for coordinating the Cricky pitch

U13 Hurling

The U13 2021 hurling season got underway a little later than previous years due to Corona Virus, with training starting in the middle of April. With an abrupt end to 2020 the championship Nipper Quinn finals had been postponed until May 2021. With a fantastic 2020 year, winning every match, this was a championship we were certainly looking forward to. It lived up to all expectations with us playing Davitts B's in the semi-finals at Musgrave on 10th May 2021 (Having got a bye through the quarter-final for doing so well in the league). It was a fantastic return and performance by all the team and an ultimately a brilliant semi-final win to see us through to the Final against St Pauls B on 16th May at

Rossa Park. The final was a fantastic display of hurling, and Brid Og proved the stronger on the day with a great win in a very competitive match. While initially disappointed not to get to play the championship in 2020, we certainly enjoyed an excellent start to 2021 with this championship win – A great way to begin and start our promotion to division 1A!



We knew the move to division 1A was going to be a big step up and the teams we played in the first round of the league demonstrated this with comfortable wins. As the year progressed, the team improved during every match. Our first match in division 1A was home against St Johns, who proved to be the stronger team on the day and won by double



figures. The away fixture was a completely different performance. We demonstrated our improvement by leading for 95% of the game, although ultimately losing by a single point due to injury to some older experienced players. Our final league match was against Lamh Dhearg on 27th September, demonstrating how much we had improved over the year with a convincing win in Division 1A!



All the U13 coaches are very proud of the team, their progress and how they have stayed together throughout a difficult 2021 with all the challenges throughout the year. They have all remained very positive, and we have been very impressed with the improvement. During the last match of the year, we fielded 25 players and look forward to an improving team for 2022.



Thank you to PJ Taylor, Mickey Maquire, Gerry Mulholland and Tony McEwan for helping and mentoring the team throughout the year. Once again, a big thank you to our players, parents and families for their continued support throughout 2021.





U15 Hurling

The 2021 U15 hurling season started with the completion of the 2020 U14 Championship. Unfortunately, Brid Og lost out in the semi-final against St Paul's.

It was evident from this game that the long lay-off due to Covid restrictions had meant some players did not return to the squad. This left a very small squad and as it was obvious that Brid Og would struggle to fulfil their upcoming All-County league fixtures the decision was made to extend the Ard Na Ri amalgamation with St Gall's to U15, which had already been in place at u17.

The newly amalgamated squad were entered in Division 1 of the league. They only trained the night before their first league match, which resulted in a narrow loss to St Paul's. Challenge matches were organised against Bredagh and Carryduff and as the boys played and trained together more, and got to know each other, the team began to gel much better. All the league matches were competitive, with the highlight being a superb victory over Ballycastle. At the end of the league, Ard Na Ri had finished in a respectable mid-table position.

As the league was running, Ard Na Ri also entered the Tain Og league. This is a competition for clubs throughout Ulster, so was an opportunity to play different teams and get games for all the members of the squad. Unfortunately, due to logistics a couple of our opponents could not field in the group games, but Ard Na Ri won the 3 group games which they played and topped their group. This meant the team qualified for the final against St Eunan's, Letterkenny. The match was played at Owenbeg on a wet and windy Saturday morning, and a strong display by Ard Na Ri saw them run out winners by 3-8 to 0-4.

This year's Feile was played in August. St Paul's and Corpus Christi Gaels withdrew on

the eve of the competition, so there were two groups of three teams in the 'A' competition. The group stage was played at Ballycastle. Ard Na Ri faced the hosts and Cushendall and lost by a single point in both games. The two matches could have been won, but failure to take scores when on top meant a Division 3A final against Dunloy was the outcome when a Division 1A final was achievable. The finals were held in Loughgeil. A great first half saw Ard Na Ri lead Dunloy at half-time in the final. However, Dunloy came out very strongly in the second half and ran out winners.

In the championship, Ard Na Ri played Ballycastle. With one win each from the two previous games, this was always going to be too close to call. Again, a strong first half saw Ard Na Ri going at half time with a good lead. However, once more our opponents upped their game in the second half. The turning point was, while seven points ahead, Ard Na Ri hit the post with a goal chance. The ball was cleared and when it went down the other end of the pitch Ballycastle got a goal of their own. They grew in confidence and with another couple of goals they took the lead and went on to win the game.

Considering this was the first year of the Ard Na Ri amalgamation at U15, the coaches were very pleased with how the squad performed. There was a feeling of 'what could have been', but we competed very well at the top level this year. The boys who are moving up to U17 have already started training with the current U17s who are remaining in that age group. Due to Covid restrictions there was no opportunity to get the team together before going straight into matches. By starting earlier, the intention is that the boys will know each other well as we move in to challenge and competitive games in 2022.

We thank all the boys who played for Ard Na Ri U15s this year. Good luck to the boys moving on to U17 – there is great potential for



this squad in 2022. Many will stay at U15 and with the players who are moving up from U13 there is also a bright outlook for this squad next season. Thanks also to their parents and others for their great support throughout the year.

Also, thanks to St Brigid's coaches – Frank MacElhatton and Ciaran Grant - and to the other coaches, Gareth Bellew and David Sheehan (both St Gall's) and Darren Hamill (Eire Og). Thanks to to PJ Taylor (Eire Og) and Joe McGurk (St Gall's) with their help with the squad.



running programmes and various physical challenges.

The Senior ladies had a fantastic year, winning the Antrim Intermediate title and progressing to the Ulster semi-final. The most successful Senior Ulster title challenge in the history of the Club.

Despite the challenges COVID presented, our ladies have had an incredible year. Naomh Brid was well represented on Antrim panels in U14, U16, Minors and Senior.

We had 6 Naomh Brid ladies on the Antrim senior team who made it to the Junior final in Croke Park in September against Wicklow, Maeve Blaney, Ciara Austin, Emma Ferron, Theresa Mellon, Julie Curran, Mary Mitchell

LADIES FOOTBALL

Overview

2021 had a late start, but a global pandemic didn't stop our ladies across all groups from keeping active through classes via zoom,



Our 6 girls with the Ulster Junior trophy

Well supported by fans on the day!



Our U14s won the Antrim league



U15 ladies brought back silver from Feile.



Hannah Donaghy captained the Antrim U14 team

Aileen McDonnell captained the Antrim U16 team

Theresa Mellon captained the Antrim Minors.



Aine McCann (from the Minor squad) became a referee. We had 5 young ladies participate in the GAA Youth Leaders Programme with other Gaels from all over Ulster. The action-packed programme ran over the summer and



presented an opportunity for these young ladies to develop their skills, knowledge and experience of the GAA. Through the programme they achieved their Foundation Coaching Award, Safeguarding Award, Gaisce/Duke of Edinburgh and Volunteer Now Youth Impact Award. Well done Cara, Caitlin, Eimear, Rianna and Connie.



Antrim Squad before the Junior All Ireland Final

Big thanks to all of our Fun Sunday helpers, giving something back and being great ambassadors for our youngsters coming through.

The Club hosted the launch of Sports Inspire in November. An initiative that recognises young volunteers across GAA, Football and Rugby. Several of our ladies were recognised on the day.



Our Minors reached the Antrim final, and Teresa Mellon was voted onto Sports Daz 2021 team.

The Senior ladies had a great year, winning the Antrim Intermediate title and playing in the Ulster semi-final.

They are delighted to be shortlisted for this year's Aisling Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Sport. Best of luck to the ladies and management team for the awards in December.





Huge thanks to our Sponsors for the 2021 training top that was released in April– Flynn Vets, McGrady Accountants, Ward & Co Deli, and Used Cars NI.

Wow! What a year!

Senior Ladies





As with all teams within our club the 2021 season started in what could be described as unconventional fashion. This year saw Anthony Carleton step into the lead coach role taking over from Niall Mitchell who had guided the girls through the difficult 2020 year. Anthony had the tricky task of meeting and coordinating the team via remote means as face to face meetings and collective gatherings were not permitted. From the outset the players engaged enthusiastically and followed an extensive 12 week running and exercise programme expertly drawn up and supervised by Brendan Mulgrew.

In April the players were back out on the grass to get ready for the start of the league campaigns. At the start of the year we had entered 2 adult teams in Div. 1 and Div. 2 based upon the number of players we had at preseason running and training. Although we completed our league programmes it was evident that with having 6 players on the county senior panel and league games being played on Sundays and Mondays alongside a number of injuries etc. the pressure on some players to play on consecutive days was just too much. Many games had to be rescheduled to accommodate and this is something that the Senior Management Team will wish to consider for the 2022 season.

Having completed the league campaigns the girls were looking forward to the forthcoming championships. The management team looked at possibilities of us fielding 2 championships – Intermediate and Junior and reluctantly concluded that this would not be possible. Consequently we decided we had no other realistic option but to withdraw from the Junior.

In the Intermediate Championship we were drawn against the championship favourites St Galls in the semi-final. This game was played in De La Salle Park on 25 September and what a game it turned out to be. With both teams fully committed, the flowing football was end to end. With the score level after the 60 minutes the game went to extra time. For the neutral spectator they were looking forward to the additional play, for our fans it was nerve racking and for our players and management there was just determination to secure the win and that is just what happened. By the end of this pulsating game the pitch was 'littered' with girls suffering from cramp and fatigue however the joy of achieving on first ever adult championship win over St Galls made it all worthwhile.

Then it was on to the County Final against a young and talented Con Magees team. This game was played at the excellent County facilities at Dunsilly on 2 October.

After a nervous and cautious start our girls got to grips with the pace of the game after the 1st water break and continued to pressure before finishing by successfully claiming the County Intermediate title with a 6.17 to 2.4 scoreline.

Following this County success the team prepared for their Ulster Championship ¼ final against Killeavy. The game was played at the Armagh venue on 30 October and the team travelled in the hope that they would be the first team for our club to progress beyond the first game in an Ulster Championship. With captain Abi Carleton and just 3 other players still active since we travelled to Killeavy in the Ulster Championship this was a completely new experience for the vast majority of the team. Once again, our girls held steady for the



first 15 minutes before stepping up a gear and ended up taking this game with an impressive 5.12 to 0.9 scoreline.

The victory meant that we would face Derry Senior Champions – Steelstown at Musgrave Park the following week. Although this going to be the first Ulster semi final for any team within our club, the players were showing no signs of undue nerves.

On the day, although our girls gave their all and can hold their heads up high this game was just one too far however they are to be congratulated in delivering a magnificent championship run throughout this season.

My thanks to Anthony, Steve, Jim, Jim and Noreen.

Minor Ladies

2021 was another year of development for our U18s with five girls being selected to the U18 county squad that made it to the Ulster U18A final against Monaghan. In addition three girls were selected to the Antrim ladies senior panel that made it to the All Ireland Junior final at the start of September in Croke Park.



As is normal at this age group a number of our U16 team from two years ago have stepped

away from football, but their places were more than ably filled by a very strong group of players from our U16 squad.

2021 U18 league

With the progress made over the last number of years our girls are now deemed one of the top teams in the county and have now rightly secured themselves in the A league. The challenge wasn't made any easier with a later than normal start to the season due to Covid resulting in the loss of a number of girls focussing on their A level exams. As a result we had a mixed campaign before the summer break with victories over St Enda's and St John's but defeats against St Paul's, Gort na Mona and Moneyglass. The league never resumed after the summer break due to the U18 championship and a number of our minor girls were heavily involved in the senior championship campaigns for club and county.



2021 U18 championship

Victories over Naomh Gall and Naomh Eanna ensured a semi final spot against local rivals Naomh Pól and this time our girls secured an emphatic victory to book a place in our first ever U18A championship final against Moneyglass on the 21 Nov 21.



Unfortunately, even though the game was within grasp moving into the final quarter the girls weren't able to overcome a strong and skilful Moneyglass side, that has been successful in recent years in securing the best players from the neighbouring clubs, and as a result has dominated underage football in Antrim.



This has been a memorable journey for many of these girls are leaving underage football this year; from the U12 Winter leagues up at the Waterworks, challenge matches up and down the country, the Feile in Cavan, the Kilmacud 7's in Dublin, an U16A county final right up to today and over this time they have all made many friends (and some football skills) that will hopefully remain with them for many years to come – none of this would have been possible without the wonderful support of all the parents and the continued work on the sidelines from Noreen, Stephen, Eamonn, Ciaran and Niall – many thanks!!

This year's U18 squad: Aileen McDonnell, Aine McCann, Aoife O'Hagan, Beth Courtney, Caitlin Courtney, Caoimhe Hefferon, Ciara Austin, Cliodhna Logan, Connie McMurry, Cora Leonard, Eimear Logan, Eve Finnegan, Evie

O'Sullivan, Hanna Donaghy, Katherine Ward, Laura Agnew, Mary Mitchell, Molly McCartan, Niamh Turkington, Orla McKernan, Rhianna Duffy, Sarah Higgins and Theresa Mellon

U16 Ladies



The U16s started the year amidst COVID but the ladies kept up their fitness levels with Zoom classes led by Shauneen from Peak Physic. They then participated in a 6-week running programme orchestrated by Brendan Mulgrew. The coaches were impressed with some of the determination and dedication displayed by the girls. Big thank you to Brendan

Outdoor training started mid-April and it was great to see the girls back on the pitch. They were delighted to be back and showed great enthusiasm and energy at training.

Our 'A' league challenge started mid-May against a strong Gort team who won this match and the return match. We then went on to win against St Enda's and then Moneyglass. The girls continued to develop and improve with every match. Whilst we didn't take home any silver, the team's performance was of a standard well worthy of 'A' status.

Thanks to Carryduff for the challenge matches. The girls played on a really hot day in May without subs and secured wins on both matches.



Our Championship challenge was brought to a close when a strong St Paul's team won at Musgrave. During this match the girls came back from a 10 point deficit at half time to lead by 2 points, only for St Paul's to clench the lead in the closing minutes of the match. Great performance.

Well done Caitlin and Rianna who both participated in the GAA Young Leaders Programme over the summer.

Some of the girls participated in the U15 Feile B Championship and well done for coming out as Champions.

Big thanks to the girls from the U16 panel who have given up their time to assist at Fun Sunday. The younger girls are enjoying these ambassadors. Well done.

Some of our U16s have represented the Club on the senior panel. This team won the Antrim Intermediate Championship and got as far as the semi-final in the Ulster Championship. Fantastic achievement.



The Minors championship challenge continues, and the team is well bolstered by the U16 ladies playing up to this level. This bodes well for the calibre coming through in future years.

We finished off the season with a social event at Colin Glen Skytrek. A special well done to those who are afraid of heights but still participated!



Noreen and Oliver would like to thank all the U16 ladies of 2021. They have been absolute pleasure to coach. The girls have continued to develop and improve during the year, and the training sessions have been filled with chatter and craic!

Huge thanks to the parents who took on the COVID responsibility during the year, and to all parents for their continued support and encouragement to the girls and to the coaches.

U14 Ladies

The year began stuck in lockdown and with the coaches wanting to encourage the girls to keep their fitness levels up so that when restrictions eased, we could hit the ground running.

Our u14 ladies got stuck straight into monthly fitness challenges. These started with the usual Planks, Lunges Squats and Burpees which then progressed into a 5k run a few times a week. The girls were broken into 2 groups and weekly challenges set. Some of the girls also participated in weekly online fitness session with Peak Physique and the Naomh Brid Ladies.



Morning run



Distance	4.00 km	Avg Pace	6:47 /km
Moving Time	27:11	Elevation Gain	24 m
Max Elevation	47 m		



Our U14 girls opened their 2021 league campaign on May 16th up the road against Moneyglass. This was a closely contested match right to the very end with Naomh Bríd hitting the net with almost the last kick of the game to secure the points. Final score Moneyglass (4-9) v Naomh Bríd (5-11)

June 3rd our girls travelled across town and up the hill to play GortNaMona in our second match of the league. Both teams put on a great display of skill, pace and commitment with our girls coming out on top at the end. Our girls lined up in Musgrave Park on June 10th against a very strong Naomh Gall. Both teams fought to the end but again it was our girls who secured the win.



April 12th we saw the return to outdoor training at Musgrave. First night back we had 18 girls show up eager to get stuck back into training.

May 8th The girls first run out of the season was a friendly match against Gorts The awful Belfast weather did not hold the girls back, with a squad of 23 turning up and putting on an excellent display of football making the wet conditions worth it.



We gave the girls a break from training on June 14th and invited the Davitt girls over for a challenge match. In true challenge match style, the winner had to be decided by a tug of war after the final whistle.





On June 19th Moneyglass, the recognised kingpins of Antrim ladies' underage football, came to challenge our division 1 lead and they didn't disappoint as the lead ebbed and flowed for the entire 60 minutes, with our u14 girls coming from behind again in the final quarter to secure the victory. The skill level displayed by both teams was truly exceptional.



Our girls made the short trip up to St Pauls on June 24th It was a wet ole day, but the damp weather certainly didn't dampen the girls spirits with a fantastic score in the opening minutes that set the pace and mood for the rest of the game. This proved to be a fast-paced game of football and our girls secured yet another win.

June 28th was an other successful sun-baked evening of U14 ladies football as we hosted Clann Éireann at Musgrave Park. As expected the Lurgan girls were very skilful and athletic, but they were matched point for point by our girls for the entire sixty minutes with nothing between the teams at the final whistle. As was now the u14 tradition, the night ended with a mixed tug of war

We hosted Gort na Mona in the return leg of the league on July 5th. The game was played at championship pace from start to finish with our girls coming out on top at the final whistle.



This was also a special night for our girls as we learnt that five of our girls had made it onto the Antrim County panel of 30. Congratulations to Caoimhe, Eavan, Hanna, Issie and Lara.



Caoimhe Hejferon

Eavan McAnarney

Hanna Donaghy

Issie McAnarney

Lara McNicholl



After the July break our girls got back into the swing of things with a challenge match against Carrickmacross, one of the strongest clubs in Monaghan on July 31st.

From the throw in the game was played at full pace and as expected from any team coached by Michael Henry the Monaghan girls fought hard for every ball right to the final whistle. As is now tradition the session finished with a best of three tug of war, before our visitors went on to enjoy the rest of the day around Belfast.

St Pauls Holywood came across town on August 23rd for a challenge match. Both teams put on an impressive display of skills played at pace with all the girls pushing hard right to the end.



Given that Feile was missed last year due to COVID the organisers decided to change this year's age group to U15. This allowed our older group of girls to sync back up with last year's teammates for numerous training sessions prior to the Feile in Woodlands on August 28th. The girls then proceeded to win the Feile B. Well done to all the girls and the Feile coaches (Charlie Pat and David Heffron)

The team also received great news after the break that Hanna Donaghy had been appointed captain of the Antrim LGFA u14 Squad. Hanna joined the other Naomh Brid ladies captaining their teams at u16 & u18. Such a great achievement for our Naomh Brid Ladies.



Our championship kicked off with an away match against Cargin on September 13th. Unfortunately for our girls' things didn't go our way as Cargin stole the win in a hard-fought match. The unlucky streak continued the following week when Moneyglass came down the road to play at Musgrave and went home with the win.

August 19 Our girls invited Lamb Dhearg over for a challenge match With both teams having girls away on "County duty" this was a great opportunity for the other girls to gain much needed match fitness ahead of the championship in September.

The last championship match was up in the Gorts – our girls had recovered from their unlucky streak and finished off with a win. Unfortunately, this was not enough to progress, and their 2021 Championship campaign was over.



Instead of the usual Saturday morning training on October 2nd our u14 girls went to Sky Trek in Colin Glen. The girls had a great morning completing the activities then finished with a spot of lunch.



We would like to thank all the parents for encouraging their daughters to come to training every week and making the trips to support the team at matches, for washing jerseys and helping out with COVID duties. We thank the girls for turning up every week working hard and playing to the best of their ability and finally we thank the u14 coaches Conor, Brian, Jim, Gerard, Niall and Liz for all the work they put in with the girls week on week encouraging and motivating them.



2021 Antrim LGFA u14A League winners!
Our girls finished the season winners of the Antrim LGFA u14A league.
To celebrate they will be traveling out to Lisburn for a game of bowls and a bite to eat.



The craic has been mighty with this year's u14 squad, and we look forward to another successful year in 2022.



U14 girls having Ice cream while chatting to the Antrim Ladies who brought along the Ulster Championship Cup



U14 girls and parents take the trip to Croke Park to support Antrim Senior Ladies in the All-Ireland Junior Championship Final.

Naomh Brid U14 panel 2021

Aisling Gilleece, Alesha Healy, Aoife Mitchell, Aoife Kavanagh, Caoimhe Hefferon, Cara McCann, Catherine O'Connor, Ciara Turkington, Clíodhna Conlon, Eavan McAreavey, Erin Boyle, Florence O'Brien, Gabriella Duffy, Grace O'Neill, Hanna Donaghy, Hannah McAteer, Isabella Ward, Issie McAreavey, Johanna Lagan, Kate Rafferty, Lara McNicholl, Lauren Prior, Lila O'Neill, Luighseach Murnaghan Martha Reynolds, Mary-Angela Nic Carthaigh, Megan Magee, Mia Molloy, Olivia Morgan, Una Reece

Coaching Panel

Brian Kavanagh, Conor O'Neill, Gerard Rafferty, Jim Molloy, Liz McAree & Niall Mitchell

U12 ladies

Numbers

- Numbers remained consistent throughout the year. Typically training had between 20 and 30 girls, with an average in the region of 25 per night. Training took place each



Monday evening at 7.30 directly after the camogie training with about 10 girls joining us from that session each evening. Within the cohort of girls there was an even split of older girls in their last year, some girls who move up to under U-12's and also a number of girls who were playing for the first time.

- A positive was that the girls enjoyed coming to training and are still at this point keen to keep coming (Nov 21). The exercise and social aspect both play their part in this, and the routine built into a weekly diary are important to try and keep as many involved as is possible during the teenage years, when numbers have a tendency to drop.
- We initially trained between Musgrave and HQ and ended up at HQ each Monday, which worked better and saved any confusion. Parents took a couple of weeks to get into the habit of completing the COVID questionnaires but this too became routine. Thank you to Helen for looking after this and for chasing parents when necessary.



Training

- As first time coaches we focussed on similar formats during training. Each session opened up with the same

routine exercise practicing all the key skills – hand pass, solo, picking the ball off the ground and kicking. During the broader sessions we used fun exercises which introduced competition, matches, shooting exercises and tackling. Our approach changed as we moved through the year – and we tried to ensure the kids were having fun firstly, that the environment was welcoming and friendly and that they improved.

- The Heja app was used throughout as was as our WhatsApp groups to communicate with parents. Both worked well, were easy to use and had a regular flow of comms from parents and coaches. Thank you to Claire for looking the Heja communications throughout the year.

Skill levels

- Within the group there are varying levels of ability. This can broadly be considered on age – the older girls are bigger and stronger and that additional year of experience clearly stands to them. It was easier to see the progression in the younger girls over the course of a year – as their confidence and familiarity with the game, training and ball improves. A broad observation is that ball handling skills are stronger in the group than kicking skills and the ability to solo and move with a ball. This is something that was evident when compared to other teams at this age.
- On reflection we also felt a couple of sessions in rooms with the girls to talk through the basis of the game, perhaps run game clips on TV would be useful for the girls at this age. We understand this with our own girls



well – they have an interest in football but don't necessarily watch games on a regular basis. That basic understanding of the objective of the game and matches are potentially something to introduce in a different way at U-12, in particular for girls who may not have parents from GAA/sporting backgrounds.



Matches

- Matches were well attended by both girls, with good support from parents also. Numbers for the most part were fine to manage, with a couple of games trickier in trying to ensure everyone had a game. We played a mix of 13 and 15 a side and over 2 round early summer with a round of single fixtures late summer. The girl's effort was excellent during the matches, which was just brilliant to see and they were contesting games with teams who were stronger for the most part. Within the group Gort Na Mona, St John's and St Galls were clearly ahead of ourselves St Pauls' and St Enda's. We tried to ensure we reinforced the positives throughout, as their effort and competitiveness was fantastic. Many of the older girls

did find the regular defeats harder to take (which is also no bad thing). We won a couple of games against St Enda's, competed well with the better teams and ran them quite close in the first round of games - and we also were at the end of some heavy defeats. Numbers never dropped off and the girls enjoyed the games.

- In the matches played a number of teams were certainly more physical and robust than our girls. The interpretation of the rule to dispossess when in clear possession varied from referee to referee. This was raised by a couple of parents also, as was the physical approach adopted during some games. We did unfortunately have a player who picked up a serious injury as a result of a poorly timed challenge in one of our latter games.
- It did feel that we may have been playing in a division above our abilities - and it may have made more sense if we were placed within a group of teams where we competed equally. Next year we lose many of our older and stronger players and that ability to take on stronger teams may be evident again.



U12 coaches – November 2021 (Patricia, Mark, Claire and Haresh)



Gaelic for Mothers and Others

In my report of 2020 I stated that 2020 had been a 'difficult year' and unfortunately 2021 was only marginally better. It seemed that for G4MOs the COVID relaxations took longer than most other groups to be implemented.

The ladies finally got out onto the grass in late April and although for some it was difficult to readjust their Monday night schedule, it wasn't long before the numbers started to grow again. The restrictions meant that the ladies were not able to participate in any blitzes or games in early summer and so it was just a matter of making the best of the regular Monday night training sessions.

It was great to see that Noreen was able to step in and lead sessions while Anthony was away with the senior girls and by all accounts the G4MOs really enjoyed Noreen's 'relaxed and causal' approach!!

Again as with 2020 we were unable to organise our Annual Invitational Blitz at Musgrave and there were no national or provincial blitzes, so very few opportunities arose for our ladies to play against other clubs.

The ladies did manage to get out 'across the river' to accept an invitation to play at Cherryvale in a blitz organised by our good neighbours 'Bredagh'. This event was a great outing for our ladies and one that we all hope we will see more of as we look with some optimism toward 2022.

As usual I wish to thank Una McGurk, Emma Gorman and Mary Turkington who have continued to coordinate and lead the development of the G4MOs and of course Anthony Carleton who continues to support this fantastic bunch.



Camogie

Camogie continues to grow steadily in Naomh Brid and there are over 50 girls playing camogie on Monday nights from U8-13 upwards during 2021. Once we returned from lockdown the club participated in lots of games at u8, u10, u12 and u13, securing silverware again at U12 and rounded off the year hosting our first Ulster camogie blitz and a visit from some of the all-Ireland winning Antrim senior camógs. We look forward to fielding an u14 squad for the first time in 2022, with sponsorship for our new jersey already secured. The bedrock for camogie in the club remains the early engagement with hurls and sliotars for our girls at the P1-3 age grades at Fun Sunday, after which they enter our U8 squad.

U8 (Coaches: Barry Delargy, Connell MacAleenan and Tony McEwan)

Our U8's Camogie team continues to grow from strength to strength. This year we had no fewer than 18 girls in this age group. For this group training has been the top priority with games few and far between.

Our training & development program focuses the girls on 4 key areas:

1. **Player Enjoyment:** Our number one objective has always been to ensure the girls continue enjoying the game. Focus on making the training and games as much fun as possible.



2. **Player Safety & Protection:** Teaching core skills such as safety and how to protect yourself while playing.
3. **Fundamental Camogie Skills:** Teaching key skills including ground striking, ball control, roll lift, jab lift and the introduction of air strikes. Our approach is rational repetition and changing drills while maintaining the core fundamental skills
4. **Position Awareness:** As part of the ongoing development – we are also focusing the girls on positional awareness through rotation between goals, defence, midfield and forwards.

As coaches, we have been syncing with U10 Coaches to ensure that we are laying the right foundational building blocks to allow girls to progress to U10. We regularly combined U8 and U10 in training games. This allows our U8 to have critical game time, see older girls display skills that they are practicing in training, and build a sense of competitiveness. One notable success is the progression of girls coming from at P3 Fun Sunday to our dedicated Monday night training. Coaches Barry, Tony & Conall has been nothing short of phenomenal. The lead through example, endless patience and inspiring to greatness.



U10 Camogie

(Coaches: Daniel Burke and Todd Engman)

This year's group of U10 camogie have exceeded expectations. Ultimately, the goal was to promote camogie, encourage our girls to want to get better, and to have fun. But we found the majority of the girls wanted to get better, and to compete. Our focus was about drilling the basics in order to translate success on the pitch. There were heavy doses of hand passing, ground striking, air striking, and the introduction of physical contact. Player safety and learning how to protect yourself was emphasized throughout training, and we as coaches were so happy with how serious the girls took protecting themselves and embracing the physical nature of the sport.

Our training sessions were divided into working sessions where we drilled in repetition to emphasize the skill, and then tried to incorporate the skill into fun games matching up the girls in small groups for competitive matches. We also introduced the concept of training captains – trying to ensure the girls provided motivation for each other.





For matches, we struggled a bit with numbers – but typically had 8-10 girls available. We also benefited from having a few of our girls playing up with the U12 team. Having that experience and leadership really helped calm the other girls and settle into the matches. The highlight of the season had to have been our last match at Sarsfields. Our 8 girls played 3 matches versus 3 different teams of 8 from Sarsfield. Our girls dominated all 3 matches, only giving up an own-goal in one of them. What was most impressive was how physical our girls were versus a team that earlier in the year pushed us all over the pitch. These girls are tough, and seem to really enjoy themselves and playing camogie. The future is bright for the Naomh Brid camogie program. Coach Daniel and I can't thank the girls enough for their efforts. Also, big thanks to all the parents for their help and support.



U13 (Coaches: Ciaran Grant, Frank MacElhatton, Catriona McKavanagh and Muiris MacCarthaigh)

After an historic 2020 in which the club played its first camogie league game and won its first camogie silverware at u12s, we started 2021 with another first as we assembled a new U13 squad. And as in 2020, we had to rely on online video challenges and voucher prizes early on in the year to make sure the team were engaged in skills development while they were at home.



When training resumed in May, the girls eligible to play competed again in the Belfast u12 B league. They won every match home and away against Loch Mór/Glenavy, St Galls, Davitts and Sarsfields, securing silverware again.



The year came to a conclusion with a first-ever entry at the O'Connor Gillan Memorial Cup U13s camogie tournament hosted by McQuillans GAC in Ballycastle. In very tough conditions and playing full pitch and 15-a-side for the first time, the girls played their hearts out and won recognition from some of the best camogie clubs in Ulster, many of whom noted they did not know St Brigid's now played camogie as well. Several invites to challenge games in 2022 have been extended.



We were delighted to host our first ever Ulster camogie blitz at U12 in the Autumn, playing Rossa, Davitts, Ballycran & Liatroim Fontenoy's in Musgrave. Our parents laid on a great spread for all the players and parents visiting us. And we participated in another blitz hosted by Rossa and as well as challenge games against Bredagh & St Endas.

To round off another step forward for the club's camogie profile, we will be visited by some of the all-Ireland intermediate camogie winning players at our last training session of the year. And we look to field an u14 team for the first time in 2022. The growing number of camogie players and squads will continue to put pressure on club facilities and careful coordination will be needed to make sure the club continues to accommodate all codes.





We would like to thank all the girls for their commitment to the team this year. Their performances in matches and the improvement in their skills from training have been great to see. There were some U10s who stepped up to play in U12 and U13 matches and played fantastically.



We would also like to say thank you to the parents and u12 and U13 sponsor Ladybrook

Dental Surgery. We continue to need the support of parents to grow and develop. Finally, thanks to the U13 camogie coaches - Catriona, Muiris, Frank and Ciaran. Also, thanks to Fintan Cleary and Niall Murtagh for their help at training and refereeing. And to lead Covid Officer Helen Wall for always making sure those on the pitch had done their Foireann submission!

Fun Sunday

2021 finally saw the return of Fun Sunday and the high turn out of kids showed just how much they had all missed Fun Sunday during the COVID19 lockdown. Everyone returned in or around March 2021 with the exception of P1 children who started in September.

We had a lot of new members and as a result we needed a lot of new coaches for each age group and many parents volunteered to help. Back to play under the new COVID19 restrictions carried with it a number of obstacles and hurdles and the club relied heavily on Clare Flanagan for her communications to parents and managing weekly attendance registration.

In addition, we required a large number of COVID officers to help and assist and we would like to thank Ailbhe Hickey, Ciara Rafferty, Laura Brennan, Una Kelly, Imelda McKenna, Liz McAree, Roisin McAree, Therese Johnston, Clare Graham, Claire Riddell, John and Mary Turkington, Julie McCrory, Maureen Piggot and Tony Kelly without whom we would have had difficulty managing to train and play matches in line with the new regulations.

Due to the pandemic there was no Club Day this year but Cúl Camp returned at Harlequins in July to everyone's delight. There was also a welcome return to Go Games, we had some great games for all age groups and there were even some blitz competitions.



Numbers attending Fun Sunday remains strong with large numbers attending all age groups. The profile of our games for younger ages within the parish is also growing with children attending Stranmillis and Inchmarlo primary schools now also joining those from our main feeder school St. Brides.

P1/P2 football (Chris Owers/Sean Carter)

It has been great to see the Primary 2s development with Fun Sunday and of course to welcome the new P1s. Numbers are around 50 P2s most weeks and 40 P1s.

Our primary focus is on fundamental movement - running, jumping, crawling, catching, passing, balance and basic agility. As the kids progress, we have been building these into small Fun Games and more recently small sided matches.

We welcomed East Belfast GAC (pictured) in September and played St Endas GAC in November.

Of course, we are very fortunate to have a large number of awesome Parent Coaches how have helped this year. Thanks to Susan Crosse, Leona McVeigh, Martina Kelly, Paul Brennen, Paul McCrudden, Paul O'Hara, Kilan Toal for their tireless work and enthusiasm working alongside Sean Carter and myself.



P3 football

A large number of new children started in this age group with almost 25 girls and 30 boys attending almost every Sunday. In addition we have Go Games on a Saturday morning every fortnight and we usually had in or around 20 children turning up to the matches which allowed us to have 3 or 4 small sided games against the opposition. They are progressing really well playing the small sided matches as each player gets plenty of the ball. They have proven to be an equal match if not better than most of the teams they have played within the Go Games.

Given the high numbers we have had to ask for more parents and coaches to become involved and I would like to thank John O'Connor, Colin McGuckin, Barry John Kelly, Damien Judge, Dean Anderson, James McNamee, Jimmy King, Paul Finnegan, Sarah McCaffrey and Stephen Gilmour for their help and commitment throughout the year.





P4/U8 football

The boys have done so well this year, participating in all the games and drills on Sundays and taking what they have learned into the Go Games. The highlight of the year must be the winning of the Carryduff Blitz in October, despite the wet start. Special thanks to Daniel and Caolan who came up to help out from the P3 team who we ended up playing in the final.



Thanks to the three Eamon, Pauls, Hugh, Gavin, Luke, Nicola, Simon and Steven who have helped to make this such an enjoyable year. We are very lucky to have such a large group of coaches so that we can split into smaller groups and keep all the boys engaged at Fun Sunday.



P5/U9 boys football

2021 has been another very positive year for this group with good progress made on basic skills. Numbers within this group have also continued to grow this year with in the region of 30 attendees at training on Friday and Sunday each week. There remains a large core group of regular attendees. Antrim Go Games have provided the vast majority of competitive games and the boys have continued to equip themselves very well at both U8 and U9 level. A recent challenge match against Bredagh P5's (October) also provided a useful test and demonstrated that this group is at an equivalent skill level and has similar numbers to our neighbours. Unfortunately there have been no tournaments for the boys to enter this year however we hope that these can recommence in 2022. Many thanks to coaches Kevin Gallagher, Ger Carr, Dean Anderson, Paul O'Hare, John Hunter and Bertie Fulton for their help throughout this year.





Dromintee U9.5 tournament, only losing out narrowly to the winning team, Castledawson. This year we have had more coaching involvement from parents which has been greatly appreciated. Many thanks to all the coaches who help make it all possible, especially George, Jeremy, Shane, Paddy, Conor, Jim, Niall, Rory and John.



P6/u10 boys football

2021 has been another fantastic year of development for the P6 boys' football group. Numbers are continuing to grow and there is a growing sense of unity within this group of lads. Following all of the challenges during the Covid lockdown, training was extended to 2 sessions per week with an extra Friday evening session. The boys all seem to have enjoyed training and have been working extremely hard on the skills of the game. This year we introduced our own Railway cup competition every fortnight or so with a cup for the winning province. These games were keenly contested and brought out the very best of the boys in a competitive environment. We had multiple go games throughout the year at both under 9 and on the 10 level and again competed well in all competitions. Blitzes were once again limited this year. We did have a team travel to





U8 Girls

For many of the girls this was the first year where they were separated from the boys. Throw in some new girls and we ended having a very healthy number of girls (on average 25) attending every Sunday.

They are progressing really well with their skills and are now playing some small sided matches. Hopefully we will be able to get them forming a team in the near future to participate in the Go Games next year.

I would like to thank coaches Leighton Bradgate, Maureen Morgan, Gareth Loye and Peter Rice for all their help and commitment throughout the year.

U10 Girls

2021 has been a great year of development for the U10 girls football group. Good progress has been made on fundamentals, with continued participation the girls technique

and skills will improve and become second nature to them.

Numbers continue to grow, along with a large core group of regular attendees. Within the group there is a real sense of teamwork, the girls engage really well with the coaches and respond well in training with great determination and focus, particularly when any drills with a fun element can be introduced!

The girls have certainly missed out on match practise. Trying to achieve our training numbers at games has proven difficult and definitely an area for parents and coaches to come together and prioritise moving forward. The girls can and will excel given the opportunity of regular game time.

Many thanks to coaches; Michelle Napier, Clíodhna Mc Areavey, Brian Bourke, Niall O' Hare, Barry Delarghy, Ciara McCann and Sean Doyle for their help throughout this year. A very special thank you to Daniel Burke for always providing much anticipated treats at the end of every game.

We will continue to strive to achieve a welcoming, supportive and friendly sporting environment for the girls to develop and grow.

Thanks finally to the parents for helping and encouraging this extremely promising group of players.





Fun Sunday Hurling

2021 was an historic year for hurling at St Brigid's as we fielded teams across all age categories, including the men's senior team. The bedrock is the dual training for boys and girls at P1-3 at Fun Sunday and then hurling and camogie training for those aged 7+ on Monday nights in Harlequins. Huge thanks to all our Covid officers for helping us through the last few months, including Clare Flanagan, Liz McAree and Helen Wall.



P1/2 (Coaches: Declan Lawn, Muiris MacCarthaigh, Chris Owers) and P3 (Coaches: Daniel Burke, Conall McAleenan, Paul McCrudden)

With particularly large numbers of P1s starting in May, hurling coaches were under pressure to secure enough helmets and hurls – a good problem to have! We were better prepared

for the new P1s who started in September and we had a guest visit from GAA Hurling development coach and Down senior player Oisín MacManus in October who worked with the boys and girls. We continued to use the system of alternating between P1s and P2s so that the children get at least half an hour of each code on Sundays. We continued to play dual hurling and football for P3s during 2021, to make sure that children are developing their skills before they make the move to U8s.



U8/9 (Coaches: Paul McCrudden, Paul McKenna, Gerry Monaghan, Conor Keown, Doug Mudie)

Breaking out of lockdown with a bang, the Under 8/9 boys arrived on the scene with the passion, zeal and commitment required to succeed in this most skilful game. The hurling flame has certainly been lit in this pocket of South Belfast!

Within around 18 regular attendees there is a core group of approx. 10 boys born before Dec 2013 and approx. 8 boys born post Jan 2014 who have persisted throughout.

Attendance at training on Monday evenings from 1830-1930 has been consistent with the boys upping their skill levels and learning throughout. The availability of equipment including helmets has facilitated the recruitment of players with no previous hurling experience.



After beginning solely with ground striking, some of the boys were determined to move to air striking, jab/roll lifting, catching, and tackling/blocking. Despite the evident gap between the total beginners and some of the older boys who have been honing their skills for a couple of years, all players give 100% effort at training and have been a pleasure to train this year.

Games against other clubs have been few, but will hopefully become more regular next year. On occasion, other clubs have been unable to field however any games which have been played, have displayed impressive ability and signs for a very positive future for the team. It was a joy to witness the recent battling display against local rivals, Naomh Pól in October and with the recent introduction of the 'Player of the week' award, *intensity* at training has moved up several levels!



CJ Keown Winner of Inaugural U 8/9 Player of the Week Award

With the year coming to an end we are hopeful Santa will bring a camán agus sliotar for every young fella' in the parish as the burning flame becomes a roaring inferno!

U11 (Coaches: Declan Lawn, Shane McCusker, Gerry Gallagher, Muiris MacCarthaigh, Peter Rice, Stephen Couser, Gerry Mulholland, Conall McAleenan)

U11 hurlers had an excellent year in training and competition. The improvement in their essential skills was very noticeable in the six months between April and November - striking, catching, and lifting all went to a new level. We spent the year in a succession of Go Games against St Teresas, St Ends, Davitts, St Pauls, St Johns, and Rossa.



We also played several mixed games during training, combining with our u13 camógs to make sure that there are good competitive skills being developed across both squads.

The other pleasing thing is that this current batch of U11s are still a very young team, and have spent this year playing against boys in other teams who were one or sometimes two years older. The bulk of the team will be staying together this year, since we have only four players moving up to U13. This means we will be expecting great things from our team next year!



Whilst at this level we don't record match results, we do keep an eye on general standards compared to other teams, and we are very pleased that on their day, Brid Og U11s are now a match for any team in their division. It has been a real pleasure to see such individual improvement over this year also, with so many players coming to terms with the nature of the game, and bringing their skills up.



Cul Camp 2021

With the cancellation of the 2020 camps, there was a huge interest in this year's camp. But as with all things this year, Covid hung over the event from the planning stages right through to the running of the camp. After a couple of great years at the helm, Abi Carleton passed on the role of camp lead coach, and this was picked up by very well by Thomas McCarney and towards the end of the



week by Oisín McDonnell when Thomas was unavailable.

Thomas was kept very busy from the start as trying to line up enough coaches, with the now more rigorous constraints imposed by both GAA HQ and Antrim seemingly putting people off from signing up, this is something which needs addressed as the demands placed on volunteer clubs were overwhelming.

That said, with Thomas sorting out the coaching side and the likes of Clare Flanagan, Helen Wall, Maureen Morgan, Betty Sproule and many others sorting out the registration and daily admin we were very much on top of all the requirements but getting to Day 1 of the camp and seeing kids playing on the pitches felt like a victory of sorts. As has been the case for the last few years, every player participated in both codes of football and hurling/camogie.

There was no shortage of numbers, we had 150 and could have taken more undoubtedly but for the restrictions placed by Covid and ensuring all registrations were covered well in advance. If Covid has done one positive thing, it has well and truly ended the practice of "Walk ins" on day 1. For too long we had turned a blind eye to around 20-30 nonregistered attendees, but with so much emphasis now on proper compliance, we can never go back to those days.

On the pitch, we probably had our best collection of coaches. Perhaps the added complexity of registration meant that the smaller group of coaches that went through the process, were the really dedicated ones that made each day memorable for the kids and came with daily plans and drills prepared. It was notable that many of this year's coaches had themselves been through many years of Naomh Brid camps and are now featuring as our minor and senior players across the club codes. It was great that for the first time we were able to call on coaches with real life experience at first team hurling for the club.



From our 2012 camp – great to see that 9 years on, a number of those pictured were coaching this year. Lots of others still feature regularly from U13 to senior across the codes. Feedback from parents was very positive and we really feel that each player left at the end of the week better skilled and prepared for games than they had been at the start. Thanks must also go out to coaches and parents across the club who offered to help and do a day or half day in the responsible adult, "just in case" role. It is unfortunate to have to add that it felt harder getting these roles filled than in previous years and while we appreciate that so many people volunteer for so much, but the Cul Camps are one of our set piece events and simply don't happen without enough people on the ground.



It has always been our policy as a club to over coach the camps, so if Antrim part subsidise to a ratio of 12 to 1, we generally go with 10 or even 8 to 1. Luckily for us that was the case again this year and it was just as well as Covid did strike the coaching group halfway through the week. Although we lost a few coaches at that stage, we were able to just about get through to the end. That experience and an acute awareness of how much harder it had been to recruit coaches this year (quite a few



also dropped out in the week running up to the camp) combined with a rise in cases meant that we took the tough decision to cancel the second camp that usually takes place in late August.

Although the second camp was more of a wait and see rather than being definitely pencilled in, faced with the prospect of another bout of cases meaning we would be short of coaches and that from a safeguarding perspective was a risk we couldn't take. In summary, it was great to have the camp back. The kids really enjoyed it and we look forward to getting back to our normal 2 camps in 2022.

However, a word of warning is that without enough trained and accredited coaches and adult volunteers, something that has been a mainstay of the club and perhaps a little taken for granted of late, may be under threat.



MEMBERSHIP

The Club plan for 2021 was to continue the growth in membership numbers and revenue, building on the previous successes of 2019 and 2020, while remaining sympathetic to the ongoing effects on the membership as a result of the Covid19 pandemic. The Club and County rose to the challenge of ensuring members enjoyed as full as season as possible in 2021 and the membership responded positively by registering in great numbers. The 1130 registered members were further added to in September 2021 with more registrations taking place at Fun Sunday level. This meant Naomh Bríd remained one of the

largest clubs in the county. The club continues to receive more than 70% membership income from family members, which is indicative of the growth in club coming from the youngest age groups and youth squads.

Club membership for 2021 saw the GAA/LGFA/Camogie Association introduce a single, integrated membership system; and, for the first time, all membership registrations (for playing and other rule-based eligibility requirements) were completed on the system called Foireann. Mostly members found the Foireann system user friendly as allowed members to take control of their own data, including inputting all relevant medical information, choosing to opt in or out of receipt of communications, and managing their personal or family Covid questionnaires. The Foireann system streamlined the fees collection for 2021 and it is hoped the proposed updates to the system will enhance the system in 2022.

The membership of over 1130 members comprised of 964 fully registered GAA members; 172 LGFA members; and, 42 Camogie Association members. Of those registered there were 751 playing members, 165 of whom were adult players, including G4M&O members.

As membership fees are now collected through Foireann there are no longer members paying by annual direct debit. Since the introduction of the direct debit facility our esteemed member, Kieran Dillon, has assisted with that annual collection. The Club thanks Kieran for this long-standing commitment. Thanks must also go to all the club coaches and team assistants who helped with the collection of club of fees through the various playing squads. Special thanks is due to Clare Flanagan who oversaw the running of Fun Sunday on an administrative level, ensuring the younger members and their families were



both welcomed into the Club and fully registered as per rule.

Schools

Gaelic games in St Bride's for the 2020/21 calendar year were severely affected by the Coved - 19 pandemic. After school Gaelic games did not take from September 20 through to June 21 .

Gaelfast introduced a Key Stage 1 coach for the PE lessons to coach fundamentals in term 3 (May/June).

Mid September saw boy's and girl's after school sport commence with large numbers in attendance for girl's football (Monday), hurling and camogie (Tuesday) and boy's football (Thursday)

Inter school sport is now permitted but we await conformation on the start dates for the league and cup completions. Our thanks go to club stalwart Frank McGurk for leading our schools activities again this year.

Particular thanks to our club members Thomas McCarney (boy's football) Declan Lawn and Mark Sidebottom (hurling/camogie) for giving up their time to help with the school coaching. Unfortunately to date we have not been able to find a coach to help with the girl's football on Monday afternoons. Hopefully 2022 sees a busy and successful year for Gaelic games in St Bride's

St Brigid's Culture & Irish Language

1 Summary

During 2020/21 all cultural events and classes moved on-line using Zoom. All classes were maintained and additional events took place during the year.

2 Classes

Seven classes were run during the past year on a weekly basis – three classes for adults and two classes for children.

- **Adult classes** continued to be run in partnership with St Brigid's Parish Community Association. These were as follows – Tin Whistle; Irish Bun rang and Irish Mean Rang. All the classes are self - financing and member retention rates are high. Both Irish classes have 10 members in each class.
- **Children's classes** - two children's tin whistle classes were scheduled – a Beginners and a Continuation class. Membership of classes remained low and costs continued to be subsidized by the club. This is one area that needs greater marketing in the year ahead.

A 'Whats App' group was established to keep contact with those from the face to face Irish Class 2020 who did not wish to move to on line classes.

3 Additional events – talks, workshop, music sessions

Additional events in the form of talks, workshop session and traditional music sessions were hosted using the Zoom platform, celebrating the feast day of St Brigid, St Patrick's Day and the Celtic festival of Bealtaine. These were as follows:

- Talks – Irish Place Names (17 March 2021); the role of Fire in the Celtic festival of Bealtaine (1 May 2021);
- Workshop – Making St Brigid's Crosses (1 February 2021);
- Music and storytelling – Two Pipers, Two Story Tellers (31 January 2021);
- Music Session – Kitchen seisuin from the Leydon Family Home (17 March 2021).

These attracted over 20 households per event with over 50 households attending the talk on Irish Place Names by Des O' Reilly and the



largest audience of over 80 households attending the Kitchen seisuin from the Leydon Family Home, marking St Patrick's Day.

4 Use of Irish

A proposal to encourage the use of Irish was accepted and a list of 10 words has been agreed. This initiative will be implemented in the coming year.

5 St Brigid's Crosses

A number of St Brigid's crosses were made and given to players who participated in the first challenge game of Hurling against East Belfast.

Our thanks go to Cultural Officer Anne Marie Duffy for her excellent work on Cultural Development within the club this year.

TREASURERS REPORT

As outlined comprehensively by our Chairman and Club Secretary, 2020/2021 has been a very successful year on the pitch, with more team's representing the club than ever before, including the formation of our senior hurling team.

I will look at the Clubs financial position in three categories:

- Capital Account (banks loans and development funds)
- Annual Operating Income and Expenditure
- Current Operational bank accounts

Capital Account

The capital account balance at the end of October is £12,144. This has remained static for four years as these funds are held in reserve specifically for large capital projects.

Annual Operating Income and Expenditure

The Clubs operational Income and Expenditure account shows an overall operational surplus of £10,093 for the year. This is an extremely pleasing result, where we have built on the financial success of previous years. The improvement in financial prudence and streamlined processes throughout the club have enabled this strong performance.

As with last year, the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the ability of the club to hold large fundraising events. For the first six months of FY2021, all club activities ceased, therefore was essentially dormant, with only fixed costs as outgoings.

The introduction of the Foireann system by the GAA has streamlined the collection of membership revenue. This software tied together player registration and membership payment, minimising the risk of registrations slipping through the cracks, in terms of collecting revenue. This has led to our strongest year ever in membership income.

We also saw normality resume during the summer, where we were able to hold our Cul Camp, which generated a modest profit, and also the St Brigid's golf day returned after a two year hiatus.

In 2021, the club committed to better supporting it's senior teams with new management in both the men's and ladies teams, and the aforementioned senior hurling team. With this support, came a significant increase in cost, however I am very pleased to report that the fundraising efforts from a group of senior men covered this increase in cost. This effort should remain in FY2022.

Income:

In 2020/21, 52% of our income was generated from membership income. As with clubs throughout Ireland, membership is our main source of income. I reported last year that membership accounted for over 70% of our



income, so while it is positive that we are generating revenue from other areas, the goal for FY2022 and beyond is to drive up revenue in other areas.

I would like to thank Una McGurk for her great work in ensuring that all membership was collected in a timely fashion. If this was not the case, the review of this past year might not be so positive.

There has been an increase in membership income of 33% from prior year, however the more relevant comparison is to the year previous, where we increased collections by 22%. Membership is now a solid income generator for the club and this will continue to increase as our membership grows.

Our fundraising has risen from a negligible amount in previous year to £19k. As mentioned previously, this was mainly raised by the senior men's team. A word of thanks to the finance committee – Sean, Jack, Finn, Cathal & Rory for their efforts. A particular mention to Sean McKernan, who organised the Golf day, which raised over £6k.

Our Cul Camp was again a success this year, with a fully subscribed roster, raising £2k (net of costs of £3k). Hopefully next year we will be able to get back to previous years and run an additional summer camp at the back end of the summer.

In terms of other income, we took in some small sponsorship income, mainly from individual junior teams sourcing new kits. Also, our Musgrave maintenance income increased to £3.8k in the year.

Expenditure

The major items of expenditure are facilities and affiliation fees (including Ladies Football) which account for 19% of our expenditure during the year.

Our rent and maintenance costs were reduced in the year as we agreed with Belfast Harlequins for rent relief during the period that the pitches were closed. In total, this covered 6 months of 2021, representing a saving of £7,000. We have continued to pay the monthly maintenance fees, and given the level of usage by the club this year, represents significant value for money when set against the rental of external pitches.

It has been extremely encouraging to note the number of teams using HQ, which I strongly encouraged in my address last year, so I hope this will continue in the coming year.

As I noted previously, our senior training and physio costs increased in FY2021, to 12% of the total expenditure. All costs incurred this year were covered by the fundraising efforts, which is extremely positive and a trend I expect to continue in the coming year.

Other major items of expenditure include equipment, which was purchased in bulk at the beginning of the year. We asked all coaches and teams to conduct an audit of their available equipment and to submit their requests, which was then sourced at a better price. This was an effective cost control mechanism and we will implement this process again in FY2022.

Current Account

As a result of the operational surplus achieved over the last four years, club bank funds have increased to c.£60,000 at the year end. With no further fundraising planned, this cash balance is required to sustain club operations through to the next membership collection cycle.

Looking forward to the incoming year, the core financial objective as always is to raise sufficient funds to meet our annual running costs. I would encourage the incoming committee to focus on generating new



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sustainable sources of income from sources other than membership. Fundraising should be a key aspect to next year, with it not only bringing in much needed resources, but are also occasions to bring the club together.

Particular emphasis should be placed on implementing a co-ordinated sponsorship protocol so that every team can bring in revenue. We should also look at recurring fundraising items, such as a club lotto, which has been so successful for other clubs throughout the country.

I am grateful to our treasurer Marc Murphy for his help in vouching this year's financial statements and I would again, like to thank everyone all committee members for their help throughout the year in ensuring we start 2022 on a strong financial footing.

Is Mise

Peter Lundy

An Leas Cisteoir