

A Bright Future

THESE are exciting times for camogie, not just in Kildare but throughout Ireland. Centenary Year has proved a great opportunity to more widely promote camogie.

In Kildare, on the field of play the winning of the Leinster 'B' championship double by the Kildare under14 and under 16 sides in 2003 stands out as an outstanding achievement of recent times.

In 2004 the junior county team's success in winning the national league after a gap of fourteen years and during the camogie Centenary Year ensures Kildare's place in future camogie history. This team also outstandingly reached the Leinster junior final in the same season, which stands out as a second achievement of Centenary Year.

These victories reflect the attention paid in clubs to ensuring that players learn the skills, enjoy the game and the camaraderie of playing sport with other girls and reach a standard whereby they represent their county with pride, ability, talent and commitment. It also reflects the contributions of parents, club mentors, club and county administrators and officials who all combine to make it possible to field Lilywhite teams at under age and adult level to represent Kildare.

Such victories motivate players and clubs to even greater achievements for the Lilywhites. Hopefully in the future this can be further supported through more coaching and development. It should now be our ambition in Kildare to win again Leinster titles at 'B' level and then move on to compete regularly at the 'A' level in Leinster in these competitions.

At national level our ambition should be to progress through Leinster and on to All Ireland glory and then seek to compete consistently at the highest possible standards. For the junior county team, regular national success is a cherished ambition.

In 2004 Kildare was designated by the Camogie Association National Coaching Committee as one of the counties to benefit from a Development

Squad, sponsored by Coillte. This is a welcome initiative that allows for some specialised and intensive coaching for future underage county players. As well as benefiting the county team it will also benefit and improve the playing standards within the players' clubs. Four to eight coaches in Kildare will work with a designated Development Coach to oversee up to 30 selected players who will then form the county underage in 2005.

Planning and Development

Every sports body is concerned to compete with counter attractions of other sports and non-sporting activities. Regular games that are well administered and enjoy community interest are the least that players and mentors can expect for the hours of voluntary effort put in at local level to train and organise teams. As always, there are a number of issues and challenges to be addressed for camogie in Kildare to be strengthened and further encouraged as a vibrant and attractive sport.

As part of the County Board's efforts to put together a four year camogie development plan for Kildare from 2004-08 clubs were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the Board. The strengths were identified as:

- ★ Improved in recent years
- ★ Working well
- ★ Have initiated new competition formats
- ★ Organises fixtures
- ★ Hardworking and dedicated
- ★ Presents great image of camogie
- ★ Supportive of county teams.

The weaknesses suggest areas for improvement. They included:

- ★ Not many young people understand what

goes on at County Board

- ★ Is dominated by traditionally strong clubs
- ★ Board is out of touch with club needs
- ★ Too lenient with fixture changes
- ★ Jobs on Board are perceived as boring.

The positive aspects of camogie in Kildare in 2004 included:

Underage

- ★ Strong underage participation
- ★ Good underage competition structure
- ★ Emergence of new underage clubs
- ★ Popularity of blitz formats for underage.

County team

- ★ Great junior team management
- ★ Good preparation
- ★ Achievement of winning National League
- ★ Good pool of players available for county selection due to clubs hard work at under age levels
- ★ County success increases standard of camogie in Kildare.

County Board

- ★ Some strong County Board officers in place
- ★ Sufficient funds due to club efforts in fund-raising
- ★ Good relationships between clubs and County Board
- ★ Positive approach to coaching and development of game.

When asked on areas that needed further attention clubs highlighted:

- ★ Need for well structured competitions with regular competitive games
- ★ Need to run competitions to schedule

- ★ Need to increase numbers and standard of refereeing
- ★ Need to increase schools participation – currently no secondary schools competition that Kildare schools compete in though some participate and do very well in Dublin colleges competitions
- ★ Provide coaching for younger players who are interested in training underage teams
- ★ Continuously improve finances
- ★ Ally with Ladies Football and GAA
- ★ Attract ex-camogie players to be involved
- ★ Increase participation and standard of playing
- ★ Consider Games Development Committee
- ★ Improve relationships between clubs and County Board
- ★ Consider full-time or part-time camogie/hurling coach, in association with Kildare Hurling Board
- ★ Consider full-time or part-time County Board administrator
- ★ Consider introducing annual awards scheme for camogie referees, clubs and PROs
- ★ Improve public communications and consider Communications Committee.

All of these ideas provide an agenda for improving camogie in Kildare and will be reflected in the Kildare County Camogie Development Plan which is currently in preparation. This will dovetail with the National Camogie Strategic Plan agreed at 2004 Congress.

Integration with other gaelic sports

At national level, there is a pilot scheme in place to establish the best framework for the integration of the Camogie Association and Ladies Football with the GAA. All three Associations have expressed the desire to go forward as a united entity in the promotion of shared ideals around gaelic sports.

De-facto, integration already takes place in many clubs around the country. The potential of all three Associations and their effectiveness in promoting gaelic games can best be achieved through a concerted effort. At the launch of the natural pilot scheme the benefits of this integration were put forward as:

- ★ Increase in membership
- ★ Increase in the numbers of voluntary workers
- ★ Additional skills and expertise
- ★ Additional experience
- ★ Encouraging family ethos
- ★ Good PR (all inclusive Association).

In Kildare, integration is an aspect of the three Associations that, to date, is expressed in working relations. At club level there are many examples in the county of camogie being fully or partially integrated into the local GAA club.

The Kildare County Camogie Board has good liaison and relations with both the GAA and the Ladies Football. Eventually all three Associations in Kildare will be expected to put this on a more formal footing as the integration process rolls out from the pilot scheme currently in action. This includes co-operation in relation to access to GAA pitches, including St. Conleth's Park, co-operation in relation to ladies football fixtures and county dual players, support of hurling referees for camogie refereeing tasks and so on. For the future this co-operation needs to be built on and expanded and incorporate an increased profile for intercounty camogie players; an audit of GAA facilities for incorporation of women's sports; address availability of training and playing facilities and representation of camogie and women's football in GAA decision-making structures. These are recommendations made previously at national level.

Games promotion, coaching both development squads, underage and coaching the club coaches, implementing ethics codes for working with young people, improving expertise on nutrition for sports,

fundraising and public relations are all shared concerns and are other areas where there is much potential for enhanced co-operation and mutual benefit.

There is more potential in the three Associations working to make Gaelic Games the first preference of Kildare's young people.

Looking forward to the second century

This record of Kildare camogie, *Soaring Sliothar*, illustrates the depth of tradition and breadth of camogie throughout Kildare over the last 100 years. It is a proud record. It is a record that can motivate and inspire us to a camogie future of high playing, refereeing and coaching standards, fair play, a strong membership base, and fun, joy and success on local, provincial and national playing fields. The future is bright as we look forward to the first decade of camogie's second century.

Ensuring Kildare has a strong development plan and works in accordance with the efforts at national level to improve integration can complement the solid foundation that the club structure in Kildare provides. Eighteen clubs in 2004 is a good basis to move forward. There is potential to expand this number to over 25 clubs if we can promote camogie into areas of the county where there is currently no camogie and to expand it to traditional hurling areas without camogie team.

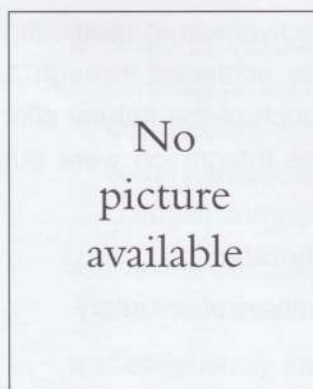
USEFUL WEBSITES

Cumann Camógaíochta na nGael	www.camogie.ie
Cumann na mBunscol	www.scoilsport.org
Cul4Kidz	www.cul4kidz.com
GAA	www.gaa.ie
Kildare GAA	www.gaa.ie/kildare
Ladies Football	www.ladiesgaelic.ie

Winning Captains Parade



**1961
Gloria Lee**



**1966
Peggy Magee**

**1967
Tessie Behan**



**1969 & 1981
Nuala Malone**



**1986
Miriam
Malone**



**1987
Geraldine
Dwyer**



**1988
Antoinette Merriman**

Winning Captains Parade



**1989
Bernie
Farrelly**



**1990
Miriam
Malone**

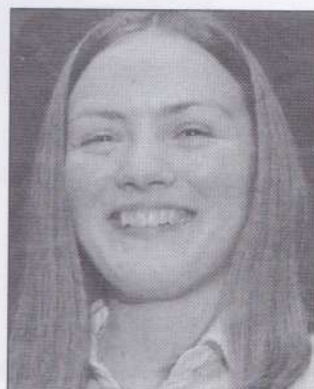
**1996
Deirdre
Feeney**



**1997
Pauline
O'Callaghan**



**2003
Siobhán
Hurley**

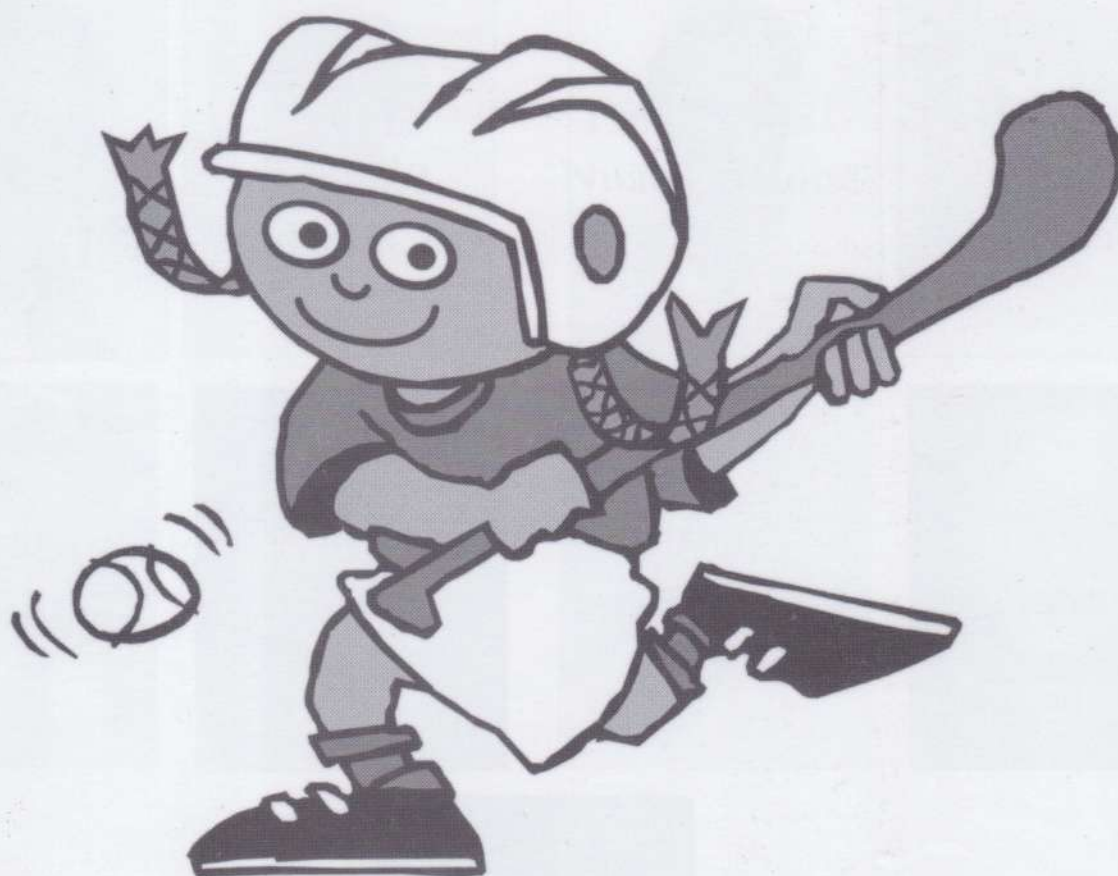


**2003
Carol Nolan**



**2004
Ciara Tallon**

Camogie le Céidín



www.camogie.ie