

2020

Secretary's  
Report 2020

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## *2020 – A Year Like No Other*

A Chairde;

There has been quite a bit of communication from Páirc an Chrocaigh recently advising all units of the Association on how to conduct meetings and disseminate information to members at all levels. One constant theme runs through all of that advice; keep it brief. I am more than happy to comply with that direction. I am particularly grateful for all of the reports provided by fellow committee members which are attached. This has been a truly unprecedented year and there is absolutely no necessity for all the events of the past months to be rehearsed again. Our social media output especially through lockdown has been phenomenal with Virtual Scór, Weekly Quizzes and interviews with past and current players being to the fore. Hopefully a lot of members will have learned a little about our past and have realised just what talent exists within the area. Thank you to every single person who contributed in any way.

On taking over as an Rúnai at the club's last AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2020 I pledged to try and streamline the work undertaken by that office holder. I had not anticipated that so much of that work this year would have to be undertaken remotely or in smaller repetitive meetings. If ever it needed reinforcing, then this year has absolutely highlighted the importance of properly functioning sub-committees getting on with their individual areas of work. We are blessed to have so many volunteers who put in countless hours of work every week, much of it unseen, to ensure that we remain at the top table of all aspects of our wonderful Association.

There have been so many examples of that this year. Tremendous work goes in ensuring that membership fees are collected and that all our members are properly registered with Páirc an Chrocaigh. Players Injury Insurance claims have to be dealt with on an ongoing basis and there is also a constant flow of information from senior management back to the Executive Committee and vice versa. Thanks to Marie and Gareth Rafferty for all the work on those fronts and with all the effort that goes into running the Club Shop as well.

In March we all enjoyed a wonderful Celebration Banquet in the Hillgrove Hotel to rightfully celebrate our first adult men's championship victory in 61 years which was graced by

Cathaoirelach Coiste Contae Thír Eoghain, Michael Kerr, well known manager Malachy O'Rourke and their respective wives. Again, the hard work over many months by that sub-committee ensured a seamless flow of tasks being fully addressed resulting in an unforgettable night to savour. Thank you for all your endeavours.

Within days complete lockdown; pitches and facilities closed to public access. Nonetheless, every setback provides new opportunities and a small determined group of volunteers applied themselves over several weeks to essential maintenance on the pitches, walking track and their surrounds. Dinny Kerr, Brian Donaghy, Kieran Brannigan, under Paul Kerr's stewardship, all put in a tremendous effort in terms of man hours and machinery, with a few others lending a helping hand from time to time. This vital effort meant that the entire grounds were in tip top shape saving the club thousands of pounds, ready to welcome everyone back to Páirc an Phiarsaigh when circumstances allowed providing a safe space for everyone in our community.

Throughout the current Pandemic our members have surpassed even the very highest standards of assistance provided in previous years assisting those who needed help. Confidentiality was a key component of almost all the unseen efforts which ensured the collection and distribution of absolutely essential food, medicine and medical equipment, sewing masks and gowns and so much more. Each of you knows who you are and on behalf of the club a hearty thank you. These efforts were led on behalf of the club by Pauline Bowman and Michelle McCaul and for obvious reasons of privacy the relevant report does not truly reflect the scale of the fantastic work undertaken by so many virtually every night and day.

No one will ever forget this year as so many things were so different. The club was truly humbled in being asked to assist several local families in their time of grief and were glad to have been able to assist in relaying Requiem Masses from Galbally and Altmore via our Facebook page. Of course the restrictions meant that we could not pay our respects in the way which we had become accustomed to but everything in life changes sometime. There was perhaps much to be said for the "*new normal*;" in people lining the roads to pay our respects where the family could see us rather than being in a vehicle hundreds of yards behind. As a club we trust that we have suitably said our farewells to all those connected with us and assure all those who have lost loved ones of our ongoing thoughts and prayers. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha dílse.

One of the key lessons to learn from the year now ending is just how important being able to play or watch our National games is in binding us all together. There was much talk from various commentators and academics around mental health and the need for social cohesion. This is something the GAA has excelled in since our inception in November 1884 in the Billiards Room upstairs in Hayes Hotel, Thurles. It is what places every GAA club *“I gcroílár an phobail – At the heart of the community,”* a place we are proud to occupy and determined to continue to occupy. Thankfully, most of our teams got back to playing and again we are grateful for the various reports on various senior and youth teams, and on the club’s behalf thank all of the coaches, stewards, linesmen, umpires and tea ladies for their ongoing work which is so much appreciated. The feedback from County Board Officials after the various men and women’s championship games this year was exceptional praising not only our wonderful facilities but also the outstanding hospitality extended to every patron and official who visits Páirc an Phiarsaigh.

Attached to this report is a short Draft Five-Year Plan featuring a specially designed crest for the re-launch of Club an Phiarsaigh leading us up to our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. *“Gan Eagla agus Gan Chos?”* translates as *“Fearless and Unfettered”* and is taken from *“The Dying Soldier,”* a poem by Rev P Mac Thomais in memory of our Patron P.H. Pearse. It also sets out fifteen different sub-committees that will all be developing their own plans for the short, medium and long term. I urge every member to seriously consider getting involved in at least one of them. You do not have to wait to be asked, make it known to the chair of whatever area interests you or simply contact any committee member who will assist.

One of the most pleasing aspects of this year has been the willingness of *“new”* people to readily step forward to volunteer for different roles. Gavin McVeigh and Brian Carberry immediately took on the role of organising for the Feile competition which has now be postponed until next year and in a few short weeks had recruited many others completing an amazing workload. Justina Mulgrew has stepped up to the role of our first ever Health & Well Being Officer and within weeks led us all through a packed programme on World Mental Health Day. Her brother Dwayne has taken on the role of Assistant Treasurer and has done marvellous work helping to get our Club LOTTO online. Michelle McCaul has stepped up to the role of Assistant Secretary looking after all the administration relating to Ladies Football.

As the year draws to a close we are delighted to learn that Sean Hurson has been appointed as Stand-by Referee for the upcoming All-Ireland Final between Áth Cliath agus Maigh Eo. This is another tremendous honour for Sean, his family, the club and county and no doubt will be another stepping stone towards the big one. We also congratulate and say thank you to every club member who has represented the us on school, university or county panels.

The club intends to launch its Concept Plans on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December for the next vital stage in “*Completing the Re-Development of Páirc an Phiarsaigh.*” Members will be well aware that there have been certain difficulties which have to be carefully navigated that have meant a greatly increased workload for club officers. Hopefully, matters are moving towards a resolution that will ensure everyone is able to develop their own facilities to the maximum. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Noel McKeown, an Cathaoirleach and Dominic Rafferty, an Cisteoir, for their loyalty, steadfastness and outstanding leadership throughout the year.

We congratulate our P.R.O. Carla McAuley and her assistant (and husband) Liam Óg on the arrival in January of baby Ailbhe, almost certainly the first time in club history that a sitting committee member has given birth. In the modern world communication is everything and the club owe a particular debt to Carla and Liam Óg for the wonderful way they have managed all our social platforms this year and for their continual patience with those of us in need of ongoing I.T. assistance. The feedback we have received from not only our own members but also from Gaels far and wide has been absolutely amazing. Iontach maith sibh.

If I have omitted anyone from this report please accept my sincere apology. Communication is rapidly changing and it is now more of an ongoing process rather than a lengthy annual written report. Throughout the year we have tried our best to introduce more and more of our native tongue into that communication. I completely apologise to our Gaeilgeoirí for any mistakes but they more than most will understand “*Is fear Gaeilge bhriste, ná Béarla cliste – Broken Irish is better than clever English.*” On that note thank you again to everyone for all your help through an eventful year that saw the club rise to meet every challenge. Go raibh míle maith agaibh.

Is Mise,

*Pluincéad Ó'Nuiseann (an Rúnaí)*

