

2023 AGM

(21ú Eanáir/21st January 2024)



Secretary's Report 2023

As set out in last year's report it is simply impossible to record in great detail the entire workings of any GAA club over a period of 12 months. This is particularly the case in our own club which has grown at a tremendous rate over the last few years with membership almost doubling ensuring that at 1011 members we are the first club in Tyrone to break the 1000 barrier and are now one of, if not the biggest rural GAA club in Ireland. Our club accounts will also show that our annual turnover has also virtually doubled in that time to almost half a million pounds. That requires an unbelievable amount of diligent work from our members entrusted with that role on a volunteer basis, virtually all of which goes on unseen by all but a few.

The greatest asset any club has is our youth members as they represent the future for all of us. It is these young girls and boys who will provide the enjoyment, the excitement, the joy of victory and the pain of defeat for all of us in the coming years. It is many of them who will go on, with other people who will move into this area to live and work, and in time become the administrators of the club. It is them who will benefit from the wonderful facilities already put in place by previous committees and it is they who desperately need the major new facilities planned for by this outgoing committee. Thankfully, our youth numbers are growing every year and visitors to Páirc an Phiarsaigh on many summer evenings are often taken aback by the swarm of youngsters in club colours benefiting from the unselfish input of some many of our volunteer coaches.

Our club Motto "*I gCroílár an Pbhobail – At the Heart of the Community*" is particularly fitting given the central role that the club plays in this area. Just recently we received a very touching letter from one family from outside the area thanking us for remembering their husband and father who had played for the club for a short while. The simple gesture of presenting the family with a club jersey as a token of our thanks for his time with us clearly meant a lot to that family at a very difficult time in their lives. Time and again closer to home we are afforded the privilege of honouring the memory of so many great Gaels who have served the club on and off the field with distinction. Sadly, we have said farewell to a number of great former players and members this year and I take this opportunity to again offer their families and friend the club's ongoing sympathy.

Our thoughts and prayers are also with all those members who are experiencing ill health, whether at home, in hospital or in various care homes. The club has always tried to stand shoulder to shoulder with those who are dealing with many difficult situations in whatever way we can and extend very best wishes to our highly valued playing member Sean Wylie at this time.

Off the field tremendous work continues to be done promoting our language and culture. Even stronger links have been forged with St Joseph's Primary School through the club contributing to the teaching of an Gaeilge to every child in the school. Various other efforts continue to be made with Irish Classes being held, all signage around the grounds are bilingual, and a very successful social event, Nollaig na mBán, was a great success. Our Lá Fhéile Pádraig agus Bricfeasta Mór celebrations continue to go from strength to strength and are the envy of many other clubs. The club are also delighted that Galbally CCE has reformed, assure them of our full support and look forward to many successful events and competitions in the years ahead.

Our Health & Wellbeing Sub-Committee under Louise Donaghy's leadership has really shone this year delivering a number of very important meetings, talks, exercise opportunities and vital health screening provision. Again, most people simply do not realise how much time, effort and diligent preparation goes into this work. Similarly with the absolutely essential work that goes into Child Protection with our club being ahead of the curve given the attention to detail provided by Kevin McVeigh over many years.

Perhaps the hardest effort is required in ensuring that our ladies' youth and senior teams continue to play and develop. It has always been more difficult to attract people to become involved in coaching and assisting with the girls' teams despite various committees' absolute determination to promote equality in every aspect within the club. This is something that needs to be seriously addressed as soon as possible. The work done by Michelle MccCaul in particular is simply outstanding, as she attends to so many roles from administration, coaching, County Board duties, helping out on virtually every match day and fundraising.

On the football field itself this was always going to be an unusual year for the club with very little of a turnaround time from the heady days of January culminating in our historic appearance in the

All-Ireland Intermediate Final in Páirc an Chrocaigh, Bodies were tired with aching limbs and very little recovery time for either old nigging injuries or more recent ones. Yet, last year's main goal had been achieved, that being a return to senior football and a huge effort needed to be made to ensure that this status was retained.

As always most of the supporters' attention is focussed on our senior team who got off to a wonderful start beating Eglisli at home on 19th May on a tight scoreline of 0 -17 to 2 -10. Narrow defeats followed away to Killyclogher, home to Dromore and away to Carrickmore, with the last one very difficult to take as we were on the attack for an equaliser when the match was blown up far too early. A draw at home to Dungannon in another very tight match saw the lads keep up a very competitive run followed by great victories away to Edendork and at home to Coalisland. This however came at a high price as we lost Fergal McGarrity to a very serious knee injury at a time when he was probably playing the best football of his life. Thankfully, Fergal is on the way to recovery and we wish him well on that journey.

The next game away to Errigal Ciaran saw the team put in a massive performance coming away from Dunmoyle with a one-point victory. Unfortunately, this again came at a high price as our Captain Aiden Carberry sustained an injury which would limit his involvement for some time. Added to the fact that two of our players were away to the USA for the summer not only meant that we were very short of regular starters for the senior team but also was having a knock-on effect for our reserve team whose stronger players were required to step up earlier than expected onto the seniors.

Tough defeats followed to Moortown, Ardboe and Greencastle where a late goal ensured that the visitors left with both points. Credit to the management and entire squad who raised themselves to prevail over Donaghmore in the local derby before losing out to Omagh and away to eventual county champions, Trillick in a high scoring game which ended 3 -15 to 0 -18. The final game at home ended in a draw with Loughmacrory ensuring our safety in Division one. The seniors final game of the year was the 1st round championship clash with Dromore in monsoon conditions in Carrickmore, Despite playing into a gale-force wind and driving rain Galbally went in at half-time very much in touch with Dromore. Conditions if anything deteriorated and despite their best efforts Dromore kept their noses in front although virtually everyone present and those watching

on TV were astounded that Galbally were denied a clearcut penalty in the dying moments of the game.

On a very positive note a couple of younger players have seized the opportunity to make the most of the game time they got this year and have laid down a strong claim for a starting jersey for the future. With the return of a few others from injury, a proper rest for all the players over the winter, and the development of the players from the successful minor teams the future looks bright and there is every reason that the club can solidify its position in senior football and go on to compete for silver in league and championship.

The reserve team this year had to deal with a big turnover of players with some just making their way up from the youth ranks. There were some very difficult outings given that many players had to be held back for the senior team but all of the squad gave their best for Colm Rafferty and Peter O'Neill in both the league and championship. Paddy Crozier and Joe McMahon made it absolutely clear throughout their two years in Galbally that nothing could be achieved by the senior team without the exceptionally important input of the reserve squad challenging them and driving competitive training at every session.

Gavin McVeigh in his first year as Youth Officer has put in a serious effort with both girls' and boys' teams building on what has gone before. It is heartening to see so many former players now giving back their time as their own coaches did before and it is great to see senior players taking more and more individual sessions with various age groups. The younger players benefit from this in many ways as these are their role models within the club.

Páirc an Phiarsaigh has now cemented its position as one of the premier venues in the county with various teams making it clear that they want to play their games here. This year the club not only hosted the Ardboe v Omagh 1st round championship match but were also chosen to host both Intermediate Semi-Finals. On Saturday 14th October a huge crowd attended the games between Pomeroy v Derrylaughan and Moy v Clonoe with the grounds particularly the pitch in pristine condition. In the County Board report for the year they commented that "*the semi-final double header was superbly hosted by Galbally.*" Those few words accurately sum up that day but it would take an

awful lot more words and time to thank everyone who worked so hard to ensure its success. You know who you are, and the club wants you to know just how valued you are.

The club have been very happy to hoist many other important youth and schools fixtures as well as providing training facilities as often as possible for those secondary schools with Galbally children attending. St Joseph's Donaghmore made their victorious competitive McCrory Cup debut here and have progressed to derby semi-final with St Patrick's Academy who eventually prevailed against Patrician Carrickmacross, again on Páirc an Phiarsaigh. It was wonderful to have five lads, Leo Quinn, James Rafferty, Darragh Donaghy, Joseph Corrigan and Eoin O'Neill involved in St Joseph's All-Ireland victory earlier in the year and now we have seven players in total involved in the McCrory Cup with Sean Hughes and Enda Cush with the Academy. This surely augers well for the club whilst at the other end of the scale Martin Brannigan is congratulated on winning an All-Ireland Meda with the Tyrone Masters team. Maith Thú.

I want to finish off by thanking every single member of the outgoing committee for their help and assistance over the past year. Members simply can have no idea of the number of phone calls, emails, texts and various other messages that come through a club secretary's account. It would simply be impossible to deal with these were it not for the continuous help and assistance of others such as the PRO, the assistant secretary, the treasurer, the chairs of the various sub-committees but above all the club chairperson Noel McKeown whose loyalty, dedication and commitment to that role is exceptional and inspiring.

If I have omitted anyone or anything from this report it is entirely my fault and I apologise if that is the case. As we continue into 2024 marking 75 of the club being officially registered in August 1949, I would urge every member to consider what more they can do for the club particularly through the sterling work undertaken by our sub-committees. Working together we can solidify our position as one of the leading clubs in Tyrone and deliver a legacy of top-class facilities which are necessary for all our teams into the future. Go raibh maith again go leir arís.

Phuincéad Ó Nuiseann (Rúnaí)

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