**Claregalway GAA Secretary’s Report 2018**

In 2018 we marked the 50th anniversary of the Club. Football was played in Claregalway before 1968 but this was the year that the club formally registered with the GAA. It was important to mark such a milestone and recognise the people that made a contribution over the last 50 years. On November 17th we enjoyed a wonderful evening of nostalgia, storytelling, music and craic in the Claregalway Hotel.

On the playing front we enjoyed plenty of underage success, our playing and coaching numbers continued to grow and our players made an impression on county teams. Maybe not as much silverware at adult levels as other years but if you were to measure success and progress on medals won, then most years would be a disappointment. This was not the case for Claregalway GAA during 2018.

In many aspects our club made great progress during 2018. As we reflect on the year, we can be satisfied with a job well done and look forward with confidence to 2019 and the years ahead. We should be secure in the knowledge that the club foundations are strong and will support the club for whatever comes over our next 50 years.

**Teams & Results**

In 2018, we fielded teams at all age groups and multiple teams at a number of age groups. Each section of the Club can look back positively on the year.

**Juvenile**

Our underage teams, girls and boys enjoyed success at all ages. Our playing numbers are increasing and putting arrangements in place to meet this demand is a significant task. The efforts of the managers, coaches and all those involved with managing the various age groups is tremendous and a credit to the club. These people are developing future adult footballers and I would like to encourage them to continue to focus on equal participation for all, skills development, enjoyment & fun, loyalty to the club, respect for opposition and officials and playing the game in a manner that reflects well on them and the club.

I would like to wish Barry O Loughlin all the best for 2019 as he takes over the Chairman’s role from Liam Higgins. A big thanks to Liam Higgins for his contribution over the last few years.

**Ladies**

Our adult ladies continued to be competitive at senior & junior level, exiting the senior championship at the semi-final stage. Adult playing numbers are increasing and the ambition to win a senior county title is getting closer to being realised. The senior manager Darragh Leonard stepped down at the end of this year. His efforts and input over the last few years has been tremendous and he has developed the players and team into a competitive group. There might be a hint of disappointment in not securing a county title but he can be proud of the fact that he brought the team to senior status and has left the team well positioned for success in the future.

To Elaine Goldrick and the ladies committee, well done on your first year in the role. Ladies football and Claregalway Ladies football in particular is going from strength to strength. Keep up the good work.

Thanks to Elaine for pulling together the ‘Light-up Knockdoe’ event. The Tree and Lights really brighten up the place and received many compliments from visiting clubs at the Div 2 Men’s league final on Friday December 14th.

Well done to Eugene Kearney who managed the Galway u16 girls to All-Ireland success. Claregalway had 7 players on the winning panel.

**Men**

After promotion in 2017, our adult men senior team consolidated their senior status by finishing mid table in Championship. We were competitive at Junior level and won a North Board title at Minor level.

In the men’s senior championship this year, we had a difficult group with Corofin, St James, Cortoon and An Cheathru Rua in our group. Despite reasonable performances, we lost our opening games against Corofin and St James which left us with 2 ‘must win’ games to avoid a relegation battle. At this point, I would like to recognise the achievements of Paul Kilgannon and Fergal McEvoy in leading our adult men’s team to senior status in 2017. Their decision to step-down mid-season this year was not taken lightly and was done with the best interest of the team and club at heart. The time and effort they put into the activity was considerable and they are to be applauded. Their efforts over the last few years have set the foundation on which we can build for success in the future. The reaction of the players to the team management change was positive and everyone pulled together to win our remaining games to retain senior status and finish in 4th position in Div 2 league. I would like to thank the players for their commitment & effort during a period when things could have gone wrong for the team.

Team results are detailed in the attached reports – Ladies, Men and Juvenile club reports.

**County Representation**

Senior Men ; Danny Cummins

Senior Ladies ; Fabienne Cooney, Deirdre Brennan, Charlotte Cooney, Emile Gavin

Congratulations to all our players who represented Galway at Masters and underage levels.

**Finance / Fundraising**

Club income held up well over the year. Thanks mainly to the continued support of our members to the pledge and development levy. We used on-line registration for the first time in 2018 and this proved to be a success. It is intended to go 100% on-line registration in 2019.

Again in 2018, the community and club got behind & supported Strictly Claregalway season 3. Led by Peadar Dolan, Amanda Sweeney, Eilish Griffin, Mike Gunning and their team of supporters, the event was a tremendous success again this year. A great night was enjoyed by all on Jan 26th.

The Disco continued to contribute significantly to club income. I would like to recognise and thank the new management team, Eilis McEvoy, Ciara O’Flynn and Sheila Gallagher who stepped-up this year to take over the running of the disco. Its important that the disco continues to be successful into the future. The energy, commitment and enthusiasm of the new team is tremendous. We can be satisfied that the disco is in safe hands and I would like to wish them all the best for the future.

Our sponsors continued to show their commitment to the Club including Monaghans, Claregalway Hotel, Flynns of Lackagh, St Jarlath’s Credit Union, Glynns Fruit Veg and the many others who put their money into jerseys, gear and a variety of other club initiatives.

Again, this year a number of grant applications were completed. We were successful with some and not so successful with others but you have to keep trying. This is no small task and the efforts of John Morrin, Tony Stephens, Tony Clarke and John Feeney are to be commended.

The club Lotto provides a steady income for the club but the responsibility for the running it is falling on one person. It requires new impetus and a new direction. The club needs to address this matter in 2019.

The efforts of all involved in the finance and fundraising activity is very significant and I would to thank them for their work. Fundraising events this year included Breakfast morning, Last Man Standing, GAA National Draw, Bucket Collection, Draw for Ed Sheeran tickets and many more. In particular, a big thanks to Tony Stephens our Club Treasurer & Lotto man, who has done a great job over many years. He keeps us all on track and ensures that club finances are kept in order.

**Coaching**

Brendan Morley continued to lead the Coaching Committee with great energy and enthusiasm. We continue to make progress in the development of our coaching structures. Specialist coaching sessions were organised and different experts were brought to the club to give us their views on best practice. I understand the running technique course was very well received. An end-of-season review was completed in December, with coaches sharing their experiences and providing feedback on the year.

Brendan is also working closely with Colaiste Bhaile Chlair to develop a strong football focus in the school. It is hoped that the school will develop into a top GAA college and will challenge for Hogan cup success in due course. There are challenges around facilities and coaching time but the ambition is there to deliver on the player potential within the school population. There is good co-operation between the school and the Ladies and Juvenile club. We need to continue to work together to develop football in the school.

An important objective for the next few years is to develop juvenile coaches into adult coaching roles. Our adult playing numbers will increase over the next few years and we will require coaches to support these players. We need coaches with the same drive and ambition as our players.

I would like to thank Brendan, Derek Treacy and the other members of the coaching committee for their work.

**Permission to Play**

In January 2018, we reached agreement with the County Board on the PTP issue. This is a positive development for the club and reflected the good work we are doing with juvenile players. Removing this distraction allows the club to focus on developing players and raising the profile of football in our area.

**IT Committee**

The progress during 2018 in all things IT related has been tremendous. The work of JP Kilbane and his committee is considerable. The new GDPR legislation governing personal data management puts significant responsibility on the club. JP and his team have responded to this challenge by putting in place procedures and protocols to ensure compliance to the legislation. They have modernised the club IT infrastructure and set a good foundation for future developments. They have encouraged club members, team managers, coaches and officers to provide the content required to keep the website and FB page interesting and attractive for people. Much of their work is in the background but their efforts should not be undervalued. It’s a very important area for the club and vital for the promotion of the club in the community. Well done to JP, John Noone, Joe O’Connell and the IT team’

Listed below is a summary of the progress made over the last 18 months;

* New Club website, On-Line membership registration, On-Line Lotto, On-Line shop, Active Facebook page, Twitter for match reports, Club YouTube channel

**Plantathon**

In March this year, we took a major step forward in the development of Knockdoe park with the planting of trees around the park. This was in the original plans for the park and through a cross-community initiative we completed the task this year. While it will be years before we see the full fruits of our labour with fully grown trees around the park, the shorter term benefits in community relationships and bringing the community closer together are real and tangible. Thanks to Tony Clark who had the vision for the project, to the team that rallied around him, Eilish McEvoy, Mary McCormack, Elaine Goldrick, Sheila Gallagher, Tony Stephens, Mike Laffey, Martin Cunniffe, Joe McCullough and Kevin Keane and to the other clubs and volunteers that sold and planted trees. Well done to all.

**Pitches & Facilities**

During the year, we received many compliments about our facilities in Knockdoe and the condition of our pitches. New ball catchers were fitted, the carpark extended, trees planted and a new generator & oil tank commissioned. The pitches were in great order all year and thanks must go to Tony Stephens and CE Scheme workers including Michele Rohan and Marian Scully and grounds committee.

Also, thanks to Margaret Kearney for managing our pitch booking system. It’s no easy task trying to balance the demands of so many different teams.

**50th Celebration**

2018 marked the 50th year of our club. The occasion was marked with a wonderful night on November 17th in the Claregalway Hotel. The team that pulled this together did a marvellous job and the night will be remembered for many years. Thanks to Paul Concannon who drove the project and to the people that rowed in behind him – Hector Ó hEochagáin, Roddy Grealish, John Feeney, Elaine Goldrick, Barry O Loughlin. Well done.

**Sympathies**

I would like to extend my deepest sympathy and condolences to our members and families who suffered bereavements during the year.

To conclude, I would like to wish all involved with Claregalway GAA all the best for 2018.

Alan Moran