**Claregalway GAA Secretary’s Report 2021**

As was 2020, 2021 was dominated by all things Covid. However the GAA, Galway GAA and our Club had the experience of working through the issues during 2020 and all were in a much better position to deliver a program of meaningful games and training sessions for our players in 2021. Virtually all competitions were played to completion which is a credit to all the coaches and volunteers at every level of our club and the wider GAA family.

Claregalway GAA continued to grow, develop and progress during 2021. All our subcommittees were very active – Ladies, Juveniles, Men, Coaching, Development and our Club Executive had a busy year. Our players performed admirably with many representing Galway (both ladies and men’s teams ) at all levels. We had great performances and successes on the field at all levels in Juvenile, Ladies and men’s teams – the highlight being the success of both our U17 teams winning County Titles at A and B levels, a unique achievement. Each of the committees have completed their year-end reviews and minutes & reports have been submitted to the Club Executive for record purposes.

The year was also dominated by the Lakeview Astro project. Our Development Committee and Club Executive particularly Brendan Morley, John Morrin, Tony Stephens and Padraic Fitzmaurice have put countless hours into progressing this project. It was very disappointing that a small group, peripheral to our Club involved themselves in undermining this project. They have agitated against the Club and have endeavoured to undermine funding and community support for the project. Their activities before the Christmas (now nicknamed ‘Poisoned Elf Campaign) involved letters to the grant funding body and government representatives, undermining Club efforts to progress this much needed facility. They are very small in number and do not represent any grouping in our community but their actions are slowing progress on this project. In the short term, we may need to ‘change tack’ but I have no doubt that the Club will get the facilities it requires and a 5G Astro is still the top priority on our Club Development Plan.

**Finance / Fundraising**

Again in 2021, the finances of the club were severely impacted by Covid restrictions. Regular sources of income such as disco, lotto and various fundraisers were not possible. However our members came through in great style, membership fees were paid promptly and membership numbers grew again in 2021.

We also ran a new Lotto Fundraiser which proved to be a great success. A big thanks to Seamus McDonnell, & JP Kilbane for initiating the plan and to all the coaches and members who rowed in to support. Thanks to Shane Moylan for his work on the Lotto Fundraiser and in sorting the Golf Outing. There were other smaller fundraisers & contributions which were essential to the smooth operation of the club. Thanks to all involved.

Despite challenging times in 2020 and 2021, the Club has continued to manage its finances admirably over the last 2 years. Our mortgage, loans and bills continue to be paid without issue. Great credit must go to Tony Stephens, Padraic Fitzmaurice and the treasurers on each committee.

While 2021 was again a very difficult year for many of our sponsors, they continued to show their commitment to the Club particularly Glynns Fruit Veg, Revive & Treat Cafe. Thanks to all our sponsors, large and small, your contributions are important for the operation of our club.

**Juvenile**

Sincere thanks to all involved in the Juvenile club. The playing numbers continue to grow , presenting new challenges for the club. The scale of operations, the number of players, coaches, teams, helpers, etc in our underage ranks is impressive. Under the leadership of Barry O’Loughlin and Aisling Ainsworth they managed to meet the needs of players, cater for the growing numbers and ensure that families and players had a meaningful and enjoyable year.

Again this year the Juvenile Tops supported by Revive Active proved a big hit. The youth are the future of our Club and I can say with confidence, that the future looks bright. Under the guidance of our coaches and club structures these boys will develop into impressive young men.

**Ladies**

Our ladies club continue to drive & set standards in our club, reaching another senior A final. A big crowd turned out in Cregg for the County Final but it was not to be our day. The team is improving each year and the dedication of players and coaches is to be commended. The Intermediate team performed admirably in their second year at this level and they maintained their intermediate status for 2022. While the Juniors, the 3rd adult team won both league and championship and are promoted to Junior C for 2022. The underage girls teams are going from strength to strength. Our club is providing the pathway and positive environment for girls to continue to play sport and be active through their teenage years. The Gaelic for Mothers and Others is also proving very popular. It is an enjoyable sporting and social outlet for the participants. Well done on a good year to Elaine Goldrick, Lorna McNicholas, the ladies committee, the coaches and managers in the Ladies club. Claregalway Ladies are going from strength to strength.

**Men**

In 2022, we fielded 4 adults teams - Senior, Junior, Junior B and Junior C, an u19 team and 2 X U17 teams. We are beginning to see the larger numbers in the Juvenile club starting their transition to adult football. This will only accelerate over the coming year and is the biggest challenge facing the Men’s club. We need teams, coaches and club structures to support this influx of players. While the challenge is significant, the opportunities are tremendous. Claregalway GAA will challenge for and win Senior County titles if we are successful in creating a vibrant, challenging and enjoyable environment for these players in the Men’s club.

A big thanks to Seamus McDonnell, John Noone and the other coaches working with the Junior B & C teams. These teams played more games than 2020 and were very competitive reaching a Junior B North Final and Junior C Shield Semi Final. They integrated younger players with more experienced guys and provided a competitive, enjoyable and challenging experience for all involved.

The Junior team, led by Alan Daly had a good year, reaching a County Final. Moycullen were the better team on the day and it was probably a step too far for this group. As is always the case with the Junior team, they lost a few players to the senior team as the season progressed. However despite these setbacks, the team improved and were playing their best football towards the end of the season. They had a never say die attitude, a fighting quality that would make you proud to be associated with this team. The win in Athenry in monsoon conditions and the win in Ballinasloe under lights against Moylough/ Mountbellew will live long in the memory. The future is bright for our Junior team. As we integrate the younger players into the senior club, our Junior team will be pushing hard for promotion to intermediate.

John Fitzmaurice, Brian Moran and the management team involved with the Senior team had a busy year. The team is improving and continues to progress. We have had significant drop out of senior players over the last few years, yet despite losing our most experienced and accomplished players the team continues to be very competitive at senior level. We are beginning to see some strength in depth coming into the group and the quality of coaching is second to none. While we are all ambitious for this team and hungry for success, patience is required. The age profile is very young and the team needs a few years allow these young lads develop into adult footballers. I’m confident that we are heading in the right direction and we will be challenging for titles in the near future. Thanks to all the players, coaches and managers in the senior club. To a person, you give of your time freely and are committed to building our club for the future, it’s a pleasure to work with you.

Our team Captain, Mark Rohan suffered serious injury during the Annaghdown game in Tuam Stadium. The out-pouring of support for him in the weeks after the incident was tremendous and reflects the esteem in which he is held by players and club members. It was great to see Mark back with the team at the S&C sessions over the last few weeks and we wish him well in his ongoing recovery.

We made good progress on support elements for adult players and senior teams including S&C, Video and Stats Analysis. The S&C program is the responsibility of the Men’s Club Committee and is being co-ordinated by Padraic Fitzmaurice. We are breaking the dependency and link with senior team management so that the S&C program remains in place regardless of who is managing the senior team. Younger players are being integrated into the program as they move out of the Juvenile club.

Also in 2021, we enhanced our capability relating to Video and Stats Analysis. A big thanks to Barry O’Loughlin and Sean Cloonan, who are continuing to drive improvements. We have learned much from Donie Buckley in this area and hope to apply the lessons learnt into the future.

Thanks to Gabriel Kearney and Padraic Fitzmaurice for all your work during the year. It was a pleasure working with you. The Mes’s club under Gabriel’s leadership has made good progress. He has kept us focused on the players and reminded us that we are not only developing players but also young men.

**County Representation**

Our players are involved at all levels of Galway GAA and LGFA. Congratulations to all who wore the maroon jersey in 2021. In particular, I would like to highlight our senior representatives;

Galway Ladies; Megan Glynn, Charlotte Cooney, Andrea Trill, Kate Slevin, Alanah Griffin

Galway Men; Jack Glynn, Conor Campbell, Conor Flaherty

**Coaching Committee**

As referenced above, we have a large number of players & teams in our Club and thankfully, we have a large number of coaches, managers and volunteers assisting with these teams. It is the job of the Coaching Committee to organise, educate, assist and support all our coaches across the club. The work of Brendan Morley, Kevin Keane and the wider committee must be recognised. They ensure that all teams have the required coaching resources at each age group, that the coaches are given direction and an understanding of what the club is trying to achieve with that particular group and they are monitoring progress through skill tests and year-end reviews. We should appreciate the quality of coaching in our club, it’s the envy of many clubs. This committee have improved our coaching structures and coaching quality over the last few years and this work must continue into the future.

**Development Committee**

This committee was very active in 2021. The year was dominated by the Lakeview Astro project but other things were happening in the background including ;

* Progress on fencing and stands in Knockdoe
* Grant for tractor & mover secured – Thanks to Tony Clarke
* Opening of Streat in Knockdoe
* Walkway in Knockdoe is now included in the Irish trails listing

Led by John Morrin, Tony Clarke, Tony Stephens, Brendan Morley and a team of helpers, much time was spent on progressing the Lakeview Astro project in 2021. There were countless hours, meetings, phone calls, presentations by all involved. As outlined at the top of this report, the interference by objectors to the project is disappointing. The way they have undermined funding channels, denying the club access to public funds is contemptible. They do not put themselves forward for leadership roles in our club or community, but operate in the shadows to undermine the genuine efforts of others to deliver for our club and community. Club requirements have not changed and the Astro project remains the top priority on our 10 year Development Plan. While we may need to take a different approach in 2022, the objectives remain the same.

**IT, PR & Registration**

Each year our reliance on all things IT and social media increases. All aspects of our club are affected including club registration, membership, PR activity, communication to members and players, etc. To have someone as knowledgeable and as committed as JP Kilbane in our club cannot be underestimated. He is the main point of contact for all communications to the wider club and he continues to develop and improve our IT infrastructure. He also gets involved in registration, fundraisers and helping others whenever asked. It was a busy year for JP and we are very grateful for his efforts. We need more people like him to get involved in the non-core football activities within the club. The club would not function without these aspects of our club running well. Well done JP.

Thanks to Martin Kelly as Club registrar for all his work during the year. Martin work closely with JP and ensure that all our players are compliant with GAA regulations.

**Pitches & Facilities**

The maintenance and upkeep of our 4 pitches and training area is a significant activity. A big thanks to Tony Stephens, the grounds committee, CE Scheme workers including Michele Rohan. Also, thanks to Sheila Gallagher for coordinating and managing the pitch schedule. Activity levels and demand for pitches is increasing each year. The complexity of Covid fluctuations did not help the situation but Sheila took it all in her stride and ensured everything ran smoothly.

**Child Welfare / Protection / Injury**

Thanks to Edel Noone (Ladies Child Protection officer) and Tony Goldrick (Juvenile Child Welfare Officer) for their work during the year. Their work happens in the background and under the radar. Their contribution to the smooth operation of the club, compliance with GAA, LGFA and legal requirements is significant. Their inputs cannot be underestimated and we would be lost without them. Keep up the good work.

The work that Paul McGuinness does on the managing player injury claims is very important. It’s not a high profile role within the Club but comes into sharp focus when we are dealing with costs associated with an injury. A big thanks to Paul for his efforts during the year.

**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 2022.

Alan Moran

Secretary