



Annual General Meeting

— 2017 —

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EASTERN HARPS GAA CLUB

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- Sligo GAA Body Warmer.

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Will be held in December

2017

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Chairman's Address

A dhaoine uaisle, fáilte romhaibh uilig go dtí an Cruinniú Cinn-Bliana. Bhi bliain mhath againn ar an bpáirc imeartha I 2017 agus tá forbairt ár dteach cluba ag fáil ar aréidh go maith.

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen. I wish to extend a warm welcome to you here this evening on this, the occasion of our Annual General Meeting.

Over the last couple of months our community has been really buzzing with the success that the club has achieved both on and off the field.

From a playing perspective we have just made a clean sweep of titles at Minor level as both our boys and girls swept the boards by winning their A grade competitions. Our U.16 team is busy preparing for their final as I write this, and our Senior Men despite putting in a mammoth performance in this year's Senior Championship just fell short at the final hurdle.

Away from the pitch, the impressive outline of our New Clubhouse dots the landscape where the former Áras Uí Riogáin building used to stand.

Progress like this does not just happen. The success of our club is testament to the scores of volunteers who give countless hours of their time to all aspects of club life in the shape of committees, sub committees, board members, mentoring, coaching and refereeing. In a recently conducted survey compiled by Croke Park, we discovered that volunteers give 6500 hours per year into the running of Eastern Harps on an annual basis.

After years of meticulous planning and with a proper focus on development, this year was finally the year that we commenced work on our new dressing rooms. Nostalgia and fond memories of the old club house had to be parked to one side, as the growth of Gaelic Games in the club catchment area dictated that new facilities were urgently required and this development is a clear statement of intent for our plans going forward. The new dressing rooms will serve our club for generations to come.

A project of this magnitude does not happen by accident and we are indebted to our Dev committee who worked in tandem with our architect Michael Rowley to get the project started. I wish to thank Michael for all his assistance from the planning phase, through the tender process right up to where we are today. Phase one of this exciting new Development is on target to be completed by the end of November. This Phase will cost circa 210,000 Euro and we are very appreciative of the 39k that our application for Grant Aid under the Sports Capital Development yielded.

We are also expecting to receive the promised €20k from Connacht Council before the end of this year.

All of the other money that has been spent so far, came from various fundraising initiatives over the past 5 years. Our most recent fundraiser was "Buy A Block" and we are indebted to all who helped out. All of the monthly prizes were kindly sponsored by East Bros in association with Garden-care Machinery. In early December this fundraiser will culminate with over €4k in prizes for our last draw. The list of sponsors for the last draw can be found elsewhere in this booklet and we are very thankful to them. A special mention to the underage boys and girls who gave their time to go door to door selling tickets, along with

attending Livestock Marts and football games. I don't think it's a coincidence that the unity they displayed in their efforts to raise money for their clubhouse was also to be seen on the pitch as both U.16 and Minor teams reached Co Finals.

In addition we are very fortunate to have in our club a number of people not on the executive, yet took an active interest in raising money for this venture.

People who are aware of the scale of this project have expressed an interest in giving substantial cash donations, which would be very welcome, and as the Development has approved status for tax relief it may be possible for the club to get a tax rebate on these donations.

Our priority heading forward is to get Phase 2 out to tender and commence work on it A.S.A.P. Obviously it's our intention to finish the Dressing rooms to the highest standard and we know that this will require a lot of money, and it is inevitable that we will be seeking a Loan from a lending institution. We have another application lodged with the Sports Capital Programme and we are currently hoping for a favourable outcome. Following on from that we shall seek Assistance from Sligo Leader.

However we still need money to ensure that this development stays on course and the proceeds from the following two fundraisers are ring fenced solely for the dressing room project.

Also thanks to the four presenters of the buy a block that was recorded and posted on facebook, Shaun Dorrian, Kevin Cryan, Lisa Casey and Kate O Neill. Also thanks to Edward East for organising each draw.

Bingo runs every Friday night at 8.30pm in Gurteen Hall. It recently celebrated its tenth birthday.

Over the years it has been proven to be a huge success and all of our development plans are reliant on this weekly fundraiser. It involves mammoth commitment from a very dedicated committee that work alongside Gurteen Hall with the proceeds being shared between the two organisations. A big Thank You to Damien Mc Govern, Deirdre Gillen, Ciaran Mc Govern, Eamonn Clarke, Pauline Gorman and Amy Mc Govern for their work. We encourage people to go along as you have a chance of winning some money and at the same time your safe in the knowledge that all proceeds are going to the dressing rooms.

Operation Transformation returned after a year's absence. The Committee did a few minor adjustments to the schedule, tweaked the classes a little to give greater variety for the Participants and the result was an overwhelming success for this Fundraiser once again. It's only early November yet but already people are beginning to ask the question "Is O.T going ahead this year". The demand that's out there is two-fold. There is the obvious one which is to lose weight and live a little more healthily for at least 7 weeks, but also there is the whole community involvement and participation which draws people from all walks of life, of every age group of which you cannot put a value on. Many thanks to this Committee of Shaun Dorrian, Aishling Stephenson, Damien Mc Govern and Ann Marie Healy.

Initiatives like what I have mentioned above plus our success with the Healthy Club, The Kerry Mc Keon Literary Award, Men on the Move and G4M&O were rewarded when we were honoured at a ceremony in the Radisson Hotel in March. Nominated by our Premium

Sponsors, Pdraig and Catherine O Dowd and with a detailed submission compiled by Deirdre Gillen we took the accolade in the Community Participation Initiative Award. It was good PR for the club and it was nice that all the work in the community that we are involved in was recognised.

However we must not forget that the driving force behind our Development is the progress that we make on the playing fields. In this regard we had a very rewarding year. I wish to thank all the players who wore the jersey in all age groups and represented the club with pride during the year.

In the last few years we hear a lot about player power ousting Management Teams across the country. This year in our club the reverse happened as the Senior players simply would not allow the outgoing Management Team to stand down. We were delighted that Shane King returned as Senior Manager aided by Paul Judge, Paul Duignan and Shane Gallagher as selectors. As we look forward to next year it is vitally important that the successful minor team is introduced into the ranks of Adult Football seamlessly.

Our Senior team put in an average League performance and their decision not to field a team in the last round of League Games, which incurred a fine was disappointing.

However the Championship brought out the best in them and after a sluggish start in earlier Championship games they found their rhythm which brought them all the way to the Co. Final. Despite giving it their best efforts, they came up short by 4 points on a scoreline of 1.14 to 1.10. Credit to all the players and management for the work they put in for the year. It was a case of youth getting its chance as no fewer than 9 players were starting a Co Final for the first time. It was also great to see the splash of colour aided by good luck banners dotting the landscape in the run up to all of the Co Finals that we were a part of. Special thanks to Jimmy Casey, Kieran Mc Gill for being first out of the traps and organising the bunting and banners and selling them with the assistance of Edward East and Thomas Taheny.

The Junior team while playing in Division 3 of the league, were never in the hunt for promotion but did enough to preserve their status for another year.

In the Championship they contrived to draw their first game against Tourlestrane, which was a travesty as they took the lead early in the game and only relinquished it with the last kick of the game deep in injury time. Another unfortunate loss against Owenmore Gaels left them in Relegation trouble but they beat St Johns with comparative ease in that crucial game.

Many thanks to the Management of this team consisting of Aiden Ward, Tom O'Connor, and Paddy Henry. It would be remiss of me, if I didn't once again mention the contribution of Des Horan who attended all Senior and Junior training/matches, along with the Minor games all year in his role as First Aid Officer. We congratulate Ross for his continued involvement with the Sligo Senior Team and to Paul Taylor for the progress that was made with the Sligo U.21 Team of which Michael Clarke was a member. After 4 years as selector with the Sligo Senior Football Team under 2 different managements Keith Carty stepped away from his role after Sligo's run in their qualifiers came to an end. The experience he gained will be put to good use in this club.

Our Senior ladies team are a young but talented team. While they lost the Intermediate Final and failed to make the knockout stages in the Senior Championship the gap is getting narrower as these girls get acquainted with Senior Football. The success of the Minor team will bring more optimism to the team. Getting a management team together proved very difficult but after much coaxing Morgan Mc Cormack, Claudia Mc Govern and Gabriel Gallagher answered the call and the club are very appreciative of this. It was a great year for Lisa Casey as she succeeded in winning her second Connacht Intermediate medal which was a great achievement. The club wish to thank Go Direct, Ballaghaderreen, for their very generous sponsorship for the Senior Ladies.

We continue to supply a conveyor belt of players (too numerous to mention) to Co Teams and Development Squads. This year a few familiar men's faces showed up playing for Sligo in the Masters competition. At present they are in the All- Ireland Final against Mayo, and hopefully by the time you are reading this the decider will have been played and it will be Sligo's name on the trophy.

The U.13 Feile boys team were in an extremely difficult group. Finishing runner up in the group stages pitted them against Castleconnor in the quarter Final, where they were subsequently beaten. Thanks to the management of Ronan Higgins, Ciaran Mc Govern and George Garvey.

It must be the longest ever season in underage football. We are into November and we have 4 teams still actively involved in football. We have 2 minor teams who will represent their Parish, Club and County in the Connacht Club A Championship and an U.16 team preparing for a County A final. Our U.21 team are in the Final of the B Championship.

We are certainly not complaining as it was fantastic to see our Minor Boys bridge a 13 year gap when winning the Minor A Final against Curry in Tourlestrane recently. The week previously the girls achieved the same honour when they edged out Tourlestrane by a point in a thrilling game. It was the first win for this age group since 2013.

Both of these teams have been hugely successful up through the ranks and we hope that this success can be carefully nurtured and reproduced again in Senior Ranks.

To the Management of both panels Michael Hannon, Paul Dwyer, Paul Mc Govern for the lads and Morgan mc Cormack, Patricia Mc Donagh and Martina Clohessy for the girls, we thank you most sincerely. Also to the 5 lads Alan Davey, Evan Lavin, Jake Stephenson, James O Hara and Johnny East who were on the Sligo Panel that contested the Connacht Minor Final, we applaud you. We congratulate Aideen Coyle and Rachel Hogge who both won All-Ireland Minor C Medals with Sligo.

In the inaugural U.17 boys competition we had Marcus Meehan, Kyle Cosgrove, Shawn o Hara, Bryan O Hanlon, Bryan Molloy, Ciaran Dorrian, Sean O Connor along with the aforementioned Alan Davey and Jake Stephenson representing the club. They had disappointing Championship debuts in Castlebar in dreadful weather conditions. It's disappointing that from next year the Minor competition is dis-continued, the year that all these lads would be eligible to play. However I have no doubt that they will feature strongly for their county in the U.20 and Senior competitions in the years to come. It is imperative that the county retain the Minor grade for club players or there will be a huge loss of players at this crucial stage of their life.

Our U.16 boys team battled against all the odds throughout the year and its testament to the resilience of the management team of Damien Mc Govern, Mikey Grady and Paddy Henry that they are in the final of the U.16 A Championship final. They already secured the U.16 A Shield earlier in the summer.

Operating from a threadbare panel all year, but aided by some U.14 lads they were forced to concede the first game due to lack of players as 3 players are very competent in other sports which clashed with all Monday night games. Apart from that, the team defied logic. Beating teams with numerical disadvantages like 12 players v 13 for a whole game, playing 13 v 15 as keeper (aged 13) got injured followed by fullback for most of second half in a Championship game seemed to spur the team on.

The team played with scant respect for their bodies and rarely a game finished without at least 2 player withdrawn due to injuries. At present Robin Richardson, Donnacha Byrne and Eoin Connolly are in a race against time to be fit for the final. We wish the lads a speedy recovery and the team every success. A special mention to Kyle Cosgrove and Eoin Higgins for their inclusion in the Manning Cup team for Sligo. We certainly appreciated the sponsorship from Michael Keville under the guise of M.K. Financial.

Deirdre Gillen, Eamonn Clarke and Neil Molloy were the bainisteoirí for the Girls U.16 team and they were not without their moments either. They were at the receiving end of a calamitous refereeing decision when the referee abandoned their league game claiming that the girls were unmannerly and the management unruly. This was despite the official showing no cards to any player or mentor.

Also it must be noted that when the game was abandoned 18 minutes into the first half, Harps were leading by 9 points and the opposition had yet to score.

The disciplinary hearing held by Sligo L.G.F.A. fined the club €100, a month's suspension for one mentor and the game awarded to the opposition. The club immediately backed the Management and team. An appeal which required a €300 cheque went to Connacht Council. At the Appeals Hearing the club were successful and all sanctions imposed were rescinded. Connacht Council also ordered Sligo Ladies Co Board to refix the match, which incidentally they never did. The club never had a doubt that the initial abandonment of the game was outrageous as the mentors on the side-line have a wealth of experience in coaching, particularly at underage level. Conduct that the referee claims to have happened would never be condoned by the Management or the Club Exec.

This incident interrupted their League but they put in a tremendous effort in the Championship reaching the B Final. In that game against Shamrock Gaels despite playing the best football for most of the game they spurned a host of scoring chances and eventually lost out. The management and girls put in an excellent years work and there are some very fine Footballers in that group. Also Roisin Molloy and Lisa Powell picked up All-Ireland C Medals with Sligo and we congratulate them both.

Our U.14 management of John Bruen, Peter Walsh and Thomas Murphy could not be faulted for their efforts and commitment but on several occasions during the year they had to contend with the loss of players to other sports. The players in question are in no way to blame for this, rather the other organisations that put undue pressure on these young kids. Players of that age just want to play football. Our girls at the same age group were very competitive

without winning any silverware. The club are most grateful to Declan Wynne and Gaeltec for the sponsorship of a set of jerseys for these girls. The coaches of these girls were Fintan Mc Gowan, Aoife Gallagher, Barry Convey, and Patricia Mc Donagh and we thank them very much.

At U.12 level the club encourages participation and fun. With this in mind the club made a bold step to enter 3 teams in the boy's grade. It proved to be the correct decision as all players got loads of football. Of course it also meant a huge amount of planning to have 3 teams on the field on Tuesday evenings in a variety of venues and it would never have worked out only for the help of the parents and the Trojan work of the coaches. We are indebted to Ronan Higgins, Paul Taylor, Keith Carty, Fintan Mc Gowan and Brendan Mc Hugh. Josh Mc Hugh was the youngest Harps Captain this year when the lads won the Division 2 Shield. The girls of the same age group had a very good year but lost their League Final in Markievicz Park to a stronger St Molaise Gaels team. John O Neill along with Dawn Mc Gowan were the coaches and we say a sincere thanks to them. It is worth noting that neither the Minor boys or Girls that won their A Championship this year had any success at this level proving once again that U.12 Football should be about developing the skills of the game, and enjoyment.

The Wednesday evening training of U.6/8 and 10 are hugely popular but it is the age group that demands the most coaches. This is where the child makes the first connection with football and where they hopefully fall in love with it and retain their interest in it for a long time. All coaches need to be Garda Vetted, complete a Code of Conduct Course and have at least a foundation Course done in Coaching. For a Newbie coach this can appear quite daunting but the reality is that the sense of being part of a coaching team, watch kids develop, and help your club far outweighs the few hours that participation of these courses take. The club pays for the courses and it is an area that I believe Croke Park should loosen their purse strings and give financial assistance to clubs. We thank our Coaching Officer Martin Doherty and his mini army of coaches at this level but the reality is that we need so much more help for these budding footballers. We also had our biggest ever Cúl Camp where we had in excess of 175 kids congregate in Gurteen Pitch for a week in the month of July. We thank Fintan Mc Gowan the chief organiser for this week of fun for the young players of tomorrow. It is my opinion that many more parents can play a greater role in this club.

I wish to thank The Gurteen Hall Committee for making their premises available to us for hosting our monthly meetings and indeed this evenings A.G.M. We are also grateful to both Gurteen Games Company and Aughanagh Parish for allowing us the use of their pitches.

This was a necessity this year due to Development Works at our main pitch which required Fr. Kevin Brehony Pitch to be closed for a period during demolition of Clubhouse and construction of foundations. While we have alternative Changing Rooms and toilets in Keash we will continue to need the facilities for a least the first half of 2018. Thanks to our Pitch Committee led by John Cryan and Eamonn Clarke for their diligence in ensuring that the pitch was cut, marked and very presentable for all games. Pitch maintenance was a nightmare this year due to the damage caused by storms in February leaving us without goal posts and ball stop nets.

The goals were repaired immediately and the ball stop nets are ready for erection since July but Mother Nature produced incessant rain from then right up to the present day and as a result the pitch was a no go area. There were several occasions in the latter half of the year

that games/training had to be moved or cancelled due to an unplayable surface. The lights continue to give a lot of trouble and the committee are currently investigating a new lightening system. With all money at present tied up with the dressing rooms this project may have to be put on the long finger. The club are very fortunate to have Bryan Mc Crann on a part time basis working at the pitch.

Our list of Premium Sponsors can be found elsewhere in this booklet and I wish to thank them most sincerely for their generosity. Many of these Premium Sponsors have backed the club since we first introduced this idea and it was great to welcome on board new businesses this year. I would also hope that people support them whenever they can as it is vital that in a rural area we support local businesses.

I wish to thank each and everyone who partakes in our club draw. This is the main fundraiser that the club has and its popularity thankfully shows no sign of abating. These are the funds that are necessary to keep the club operating on a yearly basis. Since the draw was introduced the club have given out over a quarter of a million euro in prize money, mainly to the people in the club area. In our Grand Prize Draw this year held in The Travellers Rest, the winner was Thomas Kerins from Castlebar who incidentally has been in the draw since its inception. Thomas's reward was a cheque for €10,000. Thomas J. Murphy from Gurteen got the second prize of €5k with Mary Healy from The Picnic Basket in Ballymote winning third prize of €3k. A full list of all our winners can be found by visiting our website.

With the greater role that Social media is playing in our lives it is only natural to expect that the internet will play a much bigger role in the club in the years ahead. This is the club's window to the world which is open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. We have to embrace these opportunities and the potential to be realised from this. At present we have a very busy Facebook page, website, Twitter Account which we try to maximise for publicity. Brendan Mc Hugh set up our first online shop where we have a link to the O'Neill's webpage. Our friends in other countries have availed of our progression on the web by purchasing tickets for our Fundraisers. We expect this trend to continue and our very competent Registrar Deirdre has her sights set for online membership for next year. Deirdre along with Damien was responsible for three successful Registration nights last year.

However, all this new technology while it's to be admired does not appeal to all members. There are still a lot of people who enjoy reading our club notes, reports from our matches in the Sports Section of The Sligo Champion and the Roscommon Herald. Our thanks to our P.R.O Kevin Cryan for his wonderful work on all of the above and people like Shaun Dorrian, Aisling Stephenson and Brendan Mc Hugh for their contributions sometimes daily on these sites. A special word of gratitude to our youngest member of this P.R team Orla Dorrian who is an enormous help. Aisling Stephenson continues to do photographs at all events and spends considerable time editing and uploading them on to the various Social Media outlets.

Congratulations to Carmel Taheny for her work with The Healthy Club which saw us achieving Official Healthy Club Status from Croke Park. We are only one of two clubs in this county to have this status, and take our place alongside 58 other clubs dotted around Ireland. This was the first time for this Award to be presented nationally and it was an honour to receive the recognition. Earlier this year at the GAA Connacht Centre of

Excellence in Began our club was frequently referred to as one of the success stories of this initiative.

We also put up an excellent performance in the Ocean F.M quiz competition called Pole Position where our team of John O'Neill, Brendan Mc Hugh and Nicholas Murray finished runners up to Coolaney/Mullinabreena in the final.

Congrats to Meabh Mc Cormack for winning the Kerry Mc Keon Literary Award and to the runner up in each of the schools, Emma Hannon, Ella Coleman, Eabha Lawlor and Riona Hannon. Thanks to the Bord na nÓg committee for running this hugely popular event and in particular to Edel Mc Nulty, Ronan Higgins and Martina Clohessy for the time and effort in collecting all 68 entries, getting an adjudicator and presenting the prizes. It is always nice to see the Mc Keon family turn up each year for the presentation of prizes and this year it was Kerry's godchild and niece Robyn Mc Keon that did the honours. Edel Mc Nulty has the hugely important job of Childrens Officer, a role she performs effortlessly and with the utmost discretion.

Sligo's Centre of Excellence was officially opened this year and great credit to all involved for this wonderful facility. The club has always supported this venture and our Co Board rep Louis Carty has done Trojan work in this regard. He ensured that we always sold our quota of tickets for whatever fundraiser was in the pipeline and on occasions we sold more than our allocation which entitled the club to a free set of Kukri gear. There are rumours abound that Louis may step away from this role this year and if he does, he can go in the knowledge that he more than played his part in the Scarden success story.

We have a Scór committee of Annette Henry and Mai Mitchell and while we partake strongly at Scór na nÓg we still have to achieve any success. Senior Scór remains weak and as it falls in the middle of OT it is difficult to get participants. Paul Dwyer continued in his role as coach of the Gaelic for Mothers and Others (GFM&O). It continues to grow steadily in its popularity and the women respond to Paul's encouragement. Weekly training on a Tuesday evening, numerous blitzes, which culminates in the All Ireland National Blitz held each October in Portmarnock in Dublin. Before they embarked on their journey to Dublin this year Gerry Mc Govern from The Hill Hotel presented the ladies with a lovely set of jerseys. We thank him for his generosity.

I wish to thank the entire exec for their work, mostly unseen that goes on each week of the year to benefit the club. Tom Murray has kept a vigilant on all injury claims to ensure that the claimant gets the best advice on making the claim so that the club gets the maximum return from all insurance claims. It is very much behind the scenes work but if neglected it would be an enormous cost to the club. It is disappointing that after a particular poor 2016 on injuries where maximum pay out under claims did not near meet the total cost of the injury (the club paid the balance) the insurance company levied us with an additional €1,500 on top of the annual premium.

Padraic Duffy's contribution to this club has been immense and following on from his decision to retire, Shaun Dorrian accepted the mantle of Secretary. He has stepped seamlessly into the role and added his own style to the meetings and is immersed in several other activities within the club. Aside from the normal duties associated with being Secretary

of one of the most progressive clubs in Connacht, he has totally transformed the way we are running our A.G.M.

This yearly meeting was always ran very well but the demands of the club seeking money from Connacht Council, a bank loan, dealing with Government bodies re Sports Capital Grants necessitated the change to have meetings ran in accordance with the rule book. Shaun has done a huge amount of work in this capacity and while seeking nominations, motions etc in writing within a certain time frame is alien to most of us and we were all slow on the uptake, you can take it that this is the way our meetings will be held in the future.

GAA rules also stipulate that our Treasurer's report must also conform with the deadline of October 31st as the end of the financial year. We are extremely fortunate to have Thomas Cryan in charge of all monetary matters. Aside from the day to day expenditure he has to deal with, he must also oversee all finance relating to this development, do a Cash flow projection for the loan application and also play Senior football. Thank you Thomas.

The Development Committee chaired by Sean Scott, with members including Lisa Casey, Tom Murray, Shaun Dorrian, Damien Mc Govern, and Thomas Cryan met several times, often at short notice to meticulously plan our big development. They frequently travelled within a fifty mile radius of the area looking at other developments and speaking to other clubs to gain that little bit of extra knowledge to use for our new facilities. When Phase 1 went out to tender it was surprising that there was no interest by any contractor within the club area to tender a price.

Tony Gormley was awarded the contract and I wish to thank him for the quality of work that he has completed. A special word of gratitude to Sean Scott who liaised with both the builder, and the engineer to bring this job to fruition.

As we approach the end of a very successful year we have much to look forward to in 2018. We will endeavour to continue with the good work at coaching underage, try to attract more volunteers particularly at the younger age groups, hope to push on and build on the promise that our Seniors showed and our final wish is that the clubhouse will be operational and teams togging out in them in mid-2018.

Once again I wish to thank you all for affording me the opportunity to be the chairman of Eastern Harps GAA Club. I would like to think that's it's a club that everyone should be proud to be associated with. We are merely custodians of the club for the next generation.

Padraig Henry

Cathaoirleach

Secretary's Report on the activities of Eastern Harps G.A.A. Club 2017

A dhaoine uaisle, tá fáilte romhaibh uilig go dtí an Cruinniú Ginearálta Bliantúil anocht.

Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you all to our AGM this evening. I'm delighted to present the Secretary's Report on the activities of Eastern Harps GAA Club in 2017. It was a daunting task taking on the role of secretary following the retirement of Padraic Duffy, our previous secretary of 44 years, a record which I can safely say will never be surpassed. I would like to thank Padraic for the many years of dedicated service to the club, and indeed to the county and province. A task equally as daunting was writing this report and I apologise in advance if I have left anything or anyone out. I can assure you it is not intentional.

This year past was a relatively successful year on the playing field with our minor boys and girls both winning their respective 'A' Championships. Our 16 boys won the U16 B League and, at time of writing, they are awaiting the U16 'A' Championship Final fixture. Also, our U12 Division 2 team went on to win the Shield.

Also, our senior mens team provided great excitement in the Senior Championship by reaching the final for the first time since 2010. Unfortunately, despite leading Tourlestrane by 4 points at half-time, the greater experience of our opponents told in the second half and they ran out winners by 3 points. Paul Judge has provided an excellent report on the activities of the senior panel for 2017 so I don't intend to go over the same ground in detail.

In general, the seniors form in the league was disappointing, amassing only 6 points from 8 games. For the 9th game we failed to field a team against St. Mary's, the same team we would face in the first round of the Championship two weeks later on 13th August. This game came at the end of the league and it was of no importance for either team, or for the positioning of other teams in the league. However, the Senior League is the second most important competition in Sligo senior football and we should always endeavour to field a team if at all possible. The only way, barring a force majeure, in which our club should fail to field a team, at any level, is if there are physically not enough eligible players available for the match.

With the league programme of matches completed, our seniors really got focused for the Championship. While losing to St. Mary's and Tubbercurry in the group stages, sandwiched in between those two losses was a win over Curry which left us looking forward to the knockout stages of the Championship, while Curry were left facing the relegation play-offs. Qualifying in third place in the group, there was still cause for encouragement in that we were very close to winning the games against St. Mary's and Tubbercurry, had a couple of things gone our way. Shane King and his backroom team of Shane Gallagher, Paul Judge, Paul Duignan knew that with a few minor tweaks and a greater level of concentration and discipline, that they could look forward to the knockout stages with optimism.

Coolera / Strandhill awaited in the quarter-final in Bunninadden and a very encouraging display led to us winning by 4 points and a date with our first-round opponents, St. Mary's, awaited us in the semi-final on 1st October in Markievicz Park. A super display, showing great character and determination, resulted in a one-point win and a place in the final against Tourlestrane on 22nd October. As stated earlier, a place in the senior final generated huge positivity and excitement around the club and the management and panel deserve huge credit for this.

Great credit is also due to Kieran McGill, Jimmy Casey (with some help from Edward East and Thomas Taheny in Ballinafad) for ensuring that the area was fully decked out in flags, car flags, caps bunting etc, the like of which hadn't been seen for a number of years.

Unfortunately, the final result didn't go our way but there is growing cause for optimism when one looks at the performances of our senior team in the latter stage of the Championship and those of our underage teams in the past few years. However, underage success is no guarantee of future success and we must make every effort to ensure that these younger players are brought through to the senior ranks with the appropriate guidance of their coaches and indeed the established senior players. That being said, the younger lads coming through must earn their positions on the senior panel and be prepared to work hard to improve their game. I expect that the senior players, while helping to integrate the younger lads into the panel, will be doing everything they can to hold on to their own place on the team and that is exactly the way it should be. I want to sincerely thank Shane King, Shane Gallagher, Paul Judge and Paul Duignan for their work with our seniors throughout 2017. One cannot overestimate the valued contribution of Des Horan, who attended to first aid with our seniors, juniors and minors all year.

Our junior mens team had a mixed league campaign saw us have wins at the start and end of the round stages but this was sandwiched in the middle by a run of defeats which left us 6th in the table. The Championship was a story of what might have been after snatching a draw from the jaws of victory by allowing Tourlestrane in for a 'soft' point to level the game in injury time. This was followed by a defeat to Owenmore Gaels. This resulted in a relegation play-off against St. Johns which we won thankfully. With an influx of eligible minors becoming available for 2018, competition for places should be more in evidence which can only be a good thing for the club. Thanks to Aiden Ward, Patrick Henry and Tom O'Connor for looking after our junior team during 2017.

On the Ladies side, unfortunately there was a delay in getting a senior management team in place. When eventually a senior management team was put in place, it was the very experienced trio of Gabriel Gallagher, Morgan McCormack and Claudia McGovern who took charge. We thank all three for taking on the job and ensuring that at the end of the season the 'graph is on an upward curve' for the ladies.

After an understandably slow start in the warm-up competition, our senior ladies team competed well in reaching the Intermediate League final, eventually losing narrowly to Tourlestrane in the final. The Championship proved a difficult task for our team, winning just one of the four matches played. However, the experience gained by a lot of our younger players will stand them in good stead for next year. The emergence of our minor Championship winning girls, many of whom are already playing senior, also augurs well for the future. However, as rightly pointed out by Gabriel in his report, getting these players through to senior ranks is a major challenge for our club. Indeed, it seems to be a major challenge for all clubs within the county at least, if not nationally. I'd like to congratulate Lisa Casey who won her second Connacht Intermediate medal with Sligo during the year.

Another major disappointment was that the position of Ladies Chairperson remained unfilled during 2017. It is vital to co-ordinate the many activities on the ladies side, just as it is on the mens side. I am encouraged to see that Claudia McGovern has been nominated as Ladies Chairperson for 2018 and, if and when she is confirmed in the position, I have no doubt that

she will bring the same drive and determination to the role as what marked her out as a fantastic player for the club over the years. I hope that this will see a resurgence of efforts on the ladies side to ensure that, as a club, we are providing the best possible environment for our female participants to develop and improve.

Off the field of play, the year got off to a mighty start as our club won the "Community Participation Initiative Award" in The Sligo Champion's inaugural SLIGO SPORTS AWARDS. The awards were presented in the Radisson by former Irish soccer international, Paul McGrath, and accepted by our Chairman on behalf of all our volunteers and the entire community who have made our events such a success over the last number of years. I'd like to thank Deirdre Gillen for her work in putting the application together. Pdraig and Deirdre were on hand again to accept a Volunteer award presented to the club on County Final day. Pdraig and Deirdre accepted the award on behalf of all the volunteers who have given great service to the club over the years.

By far the most exciting development, pardon the pun, this year was obviously the beginning of our new clubhouse project. Phase One is nearing completion at this stage with only the external stonework remaining to be done. It is fair to say that the new building looks truly magnificent.

However, there remains a huge amount of work to be done to see the development through to completion. At time of writing, we are awaiting the announcement of the Sports Capital funding by Minister Brendan Griffin. I'd like to acknowledge the support we have received from political representatives, both local and national, of all political parties and none and we are hopeful that our application will be successful. We have also applied for a bank loan of €120k which is required to complete the development and a decision on this application from Bank of Ireland is also awaited.

I'd like to thank my fellow members on our Development Committee, Sean Scott (Chair), Tom Murray, Damien McGovern, Lisa Casey, Thomas Cryan and Pdraig Henry for their tireless work on this project. I'd also like to thank our engineer who designed and is overseeing the building of the clubhouse, Michael Rowley and Associates. Also, I'd like to thank our contractors, T & S Gormley Ltd. for their excellent work on the project to date, overseen by the Site Foreman, Paul McGovern.

Huge work has gone into raising funds to make this project a reality. The weekly bingo in Gurteen Hall, held in conjunction with Gurteen Hall Committee, is central to the success of this project. Gurteen bingo celebrated 10 years in operation this year and many of the original committee members are still present. Great credit is due to the current and previous members of Harps Bingo Committee, who unselfishly give up their Friday evenings for the good of the club. If we all could make a greater effort to attend the bingo more regularly, it would help the club greatly and perhaps a few euro could be won by some of us in the process.

Our main fundraiser held this year was the Buy-a-Block ticket sales. A huge effort was put in across the club area selling the tickets from door-to-door. A target of €20k was set for this fundraiser and we are nearing the target as the end date is in sight. It has been decided to postpone the final draw until December to make a final push on sales. I'd ask those who still have an unsold allocation of tickets to make use of this extended time to make a final effort to

sell their allocation. Those who received a direct allocation of tickets are those whom, it is fair to say, should benefit directly from these excellent new facilities.

Great credit is due to all those who sold tickets, especially the minor boys and the minor/u16 girls. It is truly great to see some of the younger members of the club prepared to put their shoulder to the wheel to help with the fundraising. These young lads and ladies have experienced some great days as a result of being involved in our club, as indeed have we watching them play, and I know this will give them a better understanding of how difficult it is to raise funds and that progress in any club takes hard work. I'd like to thank my fellow Buy-a-Block Committee members, Aisling Stephenson, Damien McGovern, Edward East (aka Steven Spielberg with his Buy-a-Block videos), Pdraig Henry and Anne Marie Healy for their work on this fundraiser.

In what has become an (almost) annual event in the past few years, Operation Transformation was held from January to March again this year. After a break of one year, there was even more interest than ever with over 180 participants signing up to take part. As a result of the additional participants, for the first time we also had fitness classes in Keash Hall as well as Gurteen Hall, in addition to bootcamps on the training pitch and walks around the locality on Sundays. We also teamed up with the excellently run event Parkrun in Lough Key each Saturday morning, swelling the numbers taking part there each Saturday to over 300 people. The Parkrun goes on each and every Saturday in Lough Key at 9:30pm and is totally free to take part. I'd strongly encourage everyone to go along and give it a try, you will not regret it. We also had a very enjoyable walk around the Killaspugbrone Loop in Strandhill and the participants enjoyed the free coffee (and ice cream for the kids) afterwards in Mammy Johnston's. As per usual, after seven weeks of exercising and watching the calories, a great party was held in Drury's Lounge, Monasteraden to mark the closing of the event. A great band, Backwater Jack, played brilliant music into the early hours and it was a fitting end to a great seven weeks. I'd like to thank my fellow OT Committee members, Aisling Stephenson (whom has written a full report on OT later in the booklet), Damien McGovern and our new member for 2017, Anne Marie Healy. Anne Marie was brilliant and gave the other committee members great assistance throughout, especially looking after the refreshments after each and every Sunday walk. I'd also like to thank our fitness instructors, Aiden Ward, Gavin Horan and Ann Wynne.

As I said earlier, a loan of 120k has been applied for our clubhouse development and, when approved and drawn down, this will require us to repay the loan over the next 10 years. This will necessitate the club running one large fundraiser per annum over each of those years to service the loan. We also hope to avail of a tax incentive scheme whereby those paying PAYE can make a donation to the club of €250 or more and have the tax which they would have paid on the amount of the donation also paid by Revenue to the club. The finer details of this fundraiser still have to be ironed out but the details will be published as soon as possible.

Underage Football

While we have had notable success at underage level this year, as already mentioned at the beginning of my report, we cannot be complacent in thinking that this will continue without massive effort being put in at all levels of coaching. Undoubtedly, in my opinion, the most important years of coaching are those prior to and including u10s. This is where the children

learn the basic skills of the game and, equally importantly, it is where a love of the game develops. Children at this age learn best in a fun, non-competitive environment where the emphasis is on participation for all. I want to thank all the coaches involved from u6 to u10 for their efforts during the year. I'm sure they will join with me in saying that we need more coaches at these levels. At the younger age groups, the coach to player ratio should be much higher than at older age groups. I'd like to wish the best of luck to Martin Doherty and Thomas Murphy, who have both taken up teaching positions in the east of the country. We hope that they will make their way back closer to home and take up the coaching mantle for the club once again in the future.

It is disappointing to see such a low turnout of girls at u10 level. This may have been due to their season starting later than it should have done. Once again, this was due to a lack of coaches being available. This highlights the importance of getting in to our local schools to make sure that we are not missing out on any child who may be interested in playing but, for whatever reason, 'fall through the net'. I wish to thank Eleanor McMahan and Joanne O'Grady for taking on the job of coaching the girls this year. It is noted that equipment needs to be invested in this group of players and I am happy to report that through the Supervalu 'Get Behind the Ball' campaign run during the year, the club has secured several footballs which will be very useful next year.

I encourage anyone interested in coaching, particularly parents, to help us ensure that our young players receive the best possible opportunity to improve. Please give your name to any committee member and the necessary steps will be put in place to get you up-and-running as a coach. This involves taking a foundation level coaching course, a code of ethics course and being Garda vetted. As the safety and welfare of our children are paramount, these are the absolutely right and proper steps which need to be taken to become a GAA coach in 2018. So please get your name in early (as in right away) to get the ball rolling in time for next year. Seeing the young players develop their skills and grow in confidence is very rewarding.

While all the progress is documented by the various team managements, I think special mention has to be made regarding our U16 boys. Damien McGovern details their year to date (as they are awaiting their 'A' Championship Final) in his report but, as usual, he downplays the huge role he played getting this team up and running and ensuring that games were changed to ensure that the maximum number of players on this small panel were available. It is a minor miracle, or should I say due to Damien's organisational skills, that we managed to fulfil all but one of the fixtures (the first of the season) for this team this year. When it appeared that all avenues were exhausted in our efforts to put a coaching team in place, Damien added this role to his already demanding schedule and refused to let this talented panel of players be left without coaches for the year. Thanks also to Mark Cosgrove, Patrick Henry and Mikey O'Grady for coming on board also. The achievement of the management and the players to win the Division 1 League Shield and qualify for the 'A' Championship final is outstanding, given the very small pool of players available. I'm heartened to see that 3 players whom had sought a transfer out of the club at the beginning of the season are playing their full part in this team's success following their decision to return to play with the club. I'd also like to thank Michael Keville for his generous sponsorship of training tops for the panel.

Our minor boys had a disappointing end to the league by being well beaten by our local rivals, Shamrock Gaels in the semi-final in Gurteen. However, despite this setback, they showed their true character by bouncing back to claim the club's first Minor Championship title since 2004, with a resounding victory by 1-15 to 1-05 over Curry in the final under lights in Tourlestrane on 28th October. For the first time at minor level, this meant that we progressed to a Connacht semi-final against the Mayo champions, Balla. This game was held in the Connacht Centre of Excellence in Began. After a poor start and being down by 5 points in the first few minutes, the lads rallied to go in level at the break 2-04 to 1-07. Unfortunately, in the second half we were outscored by 3 points, a crucial second goal for our opponents which came towards the end of the half. Things may have been different had a goal-bound effort of our own not been cleared of the Balla line, but that's football. Having said that, Balla were deserving winners on the night. The experience of playing at this level can only stand to these lads in the future, especially as the majority of this panel are under 18 again in 2018. Many thanks to their coaching team of Michael Hannon, Paul Dwyer and Paul McGovern.

Our u14 boys competed well but had a disappointing year overall. Our coaches report poor attendance at training and unreasonable demands from other sports as being contributory factors in the team being less competitive than it could have been. In addition to this, many members of the panel and the coaches travelled to Coolera/Strandhill in the belief that we would have enough players to field a team, which turned out not to be the case. While I am not fully aware of the circumstances, I can only assume that our coaches and parents would not have travelled had they know in advance that there was not going to be enough players. I would appeal to parents and guardians of all our young players to communicate with their coaches so that they know before setting out exactly what the position is regarding player availability. It is only fair on the coaches who give of their time voluntarily and to the other parents who make the effort to travel. Thanks to their coaches John Bruen, Thomas Murphy and Peter Walsh.

Our U13 feile team endured a difficult competition as they appeared to be drawn in a group in which two of the other three teams were much stronger. This led to a play-off game away to Castleconnor which also ended in a heavy defeat. It is disappointing to see our players suffer heavy defeats and it is important that we keep an eye on the grading of this team for next year. Thanks to their coaches Ronan Higgins, George Garvey and Ciaran McGovern.

On a much brighter note, for the first time in our history, we fielded 3 teams at U12 boys level. It's fantastic to see these numbers at this age group and the fielding of 3 teams ensured that the boys got maximum playing time during the year. While success in terms of trophies is not hugely important at this age level, it is noteworthy that the Division 2 team won the Shield final. I have high hopes for this age group and I have no doubt that they will progress to become a talented bunch of players in the future. Thanks to their coaches Ronan Higgins, Paul Taylor, Brendan McHugh, Fintan McGowan and Eamonn Molloy.

Our minor girls team set the tone for our minor boys by being the first team to claim a minor title in the club this year. While it was a disjointed year by all accounts, the girls played out a thrilling final in Kent Park against Tourlestrane on 22nd October. The match was a very tense affair but our girls held on for a victory by the slimmest of margins on a scoreline of 1-10 to 2-06. I would like to express my congratulations to the girls and their management team of

Patricia McDonagh, Morgan McCormack and Martina Clohessy. Congratulations are also due to Rachel Hogge and Aideen Coyle who won All Ireland C medals with Sligo.

Our U16s girls had a successful year without gaining any silverware to show for it. They reached the 'B' Championship Final, which was a highly entertaining game, on Sunday 8th October in Collooney against Shamrock Gaels. The game was end-to-end with both sides enjoying periods of superiority. However, Shamrock Gaels proved the stronger team overall and won the final on a scoreline of 3-11 to 2-08. Congratulations to Róisín Molloy and Lisa Powell who also picked up All Ireland C medals with Sligo during the year.

Earlier in the year this team was on the receiving end of a very poor refereeing decision to abandon one of their games. Despite winning the game comfortably at the time, the referee determined that he had to abandon the game due to the alleged verbal abuse he was receiving from the Harps girls. Bizarrely, having been persuaded to restart the game, our opponents refused to do so and got on their bus and went home. I've spoken to many who were present on the evening and they said that there was absolutely nothing of note said to the referee. Despite this, this nonsensical decision was subsequently compounded by the Sligo Ladies Co. Board as they proceeded to award the points to the opposition and fined the club. Luckily, our team management were not prepared to let this lie and, following the approval of the club executive, set about appealing this awful decision by the Co. Board. The appeal was heard by Connacht LGFA and I'm pleased to say that our club was fully vindicated and our appeal was won. This was a very important action to take to protect the reputation of our girls and our club. I commend the team management of Eamonn Clarke, Neil Molloy and Deirdre Gillen for the efforts in this regard and indeed throughout the year.

The U14 girls started off their year with the feile competition where they competed well winning two of three games, however, Shamrock Gaels beat them and progressed in the competition. In the Group stage of the league they competed very well winning four of their 5 matches; however, they lost out to a strong St. Mary's team in the semi-final. Their group in the Championship was very difficult consisting of Drumcliffe/Rosses Point, Calry/St. Joseph's and St. Mary's. While the girls did not win any of their matches they showed true spirit and tried their best to the very end. Having watched a most of their matches this year I can see the progress they have made as players and especially as a team during the year, which is testament to their coaches Patricia McDonagh, Aoife Wynne, Barry Convey and Fintan McGowan. I'd like to acknowledge the sponsorship of a new set of jerseys for this team by Declan Wynne and Gaeltec Utilities.

Our U12 girls were very competitive in their competitions without managing to pick up any silverware. However, they did get to play in Markievicz Park which is always a memorable experience for our young players. Reaching the semi-final of the 'B' Championship, unfortunately they bowed out to a physically stronger St Farnan's team. These girls also improved during the year & Thanks to their coaches, John O'Neill and Dawn McGowan.

G4M&O

It is great to see our G4M&O team progressing year-on-year. Having played numerous matches and blitzes during the year, as usual, the final event of their year was the annual blitz in Portmarnock. This is a hugely successful blitz held annually where teams from all over the country take part. Our team, coached as usual by Paul Dwyer, returned from Portmarnock

undefeated AGAIN they tell us, even though the scores aren't supposed to be counted! The G4M&O provides a great outlet for ladies of all ages to enjoy some sporting activity without the pressures usually surrounding competitive sport. As they say, the emphasis is on the fun, craic and camaraderie, more so than competition (although I'm sure this isn't always the case in the heat of battle). I'd like to thank the Hill Hotel for sponsoring a lovely new set of jerseys (with pink trim included) for these ladies which was very much needed.

Our pitch

I'd like to thank our Pitch Committee, led by John Cryan and Eamonn Clarke, for the many hours work they put into ensuring our pitch is kept in good shape. Brian McCrann has once again done many hours of work on the scheme which is of enormous help to the Pitch Committee members. Coming towards the end of the season it is evident that the pitch needs to be sanded, seeded and spiked to ensure that it continues to remain in good shape. This will probably be done in the early part of next year and it is a costly but necessary exercise. It is noted this year that one part of the pitch was particularly susceptible to holding water this year and it remains to be seen whether this may have been caused by heavy machinery entering the pitch. All pitches have drains which can collapse if there is too much heavy traffic on them and this is something which must be borne in mind in the future.

Referees

We had three referees in the club this year, Ciarán McGovern, Ciarán Dorrian and Ciara Stephenson. Other referees in the club were not able to take up the role due to work and educational commitments. However, we are lucky to have three active referees and hopefully others will take it up next year too.

County Commitments

Keith Carty, who was involved as a selector with Niall Carew over the past number of years, has stepped away from inter-county duties for the time being at least. We'd like to thank Keith for the huge work put in with the county team during this time. Some of us can only imagine the work involved in preparing a county team and I know that no stone was left unturned by Keith and his colleagues hoping to bring success to the county. Alas, it was not to be in terms of silverware this year. However, Sligo's loss is hopefully our gain and we hope that Keith will bring his expertise, gained over the past few years, to bear with some of our own teams in 2018.

Ross Donovan once again represented the county with distinction in 2017. His assured performances in many positions for Sligo are what we have come to expect from such a consistent performer over the years. Only Ross knows at this stage what he intends to do in respect of the county in 2018 and we wish him well with his decision. Tony Taylor, who had also returned to the county panel this year, unfortunately had to leave the panel due to work commitments.

The success of our underage teams has seen a very welcome increase in the club's representation at county level. Most notable here is the performances of our minor club captain, Evan Lavin and Alan Davey, who both played a central part of the county's minor team. But for a long-range Sligo effort hitting the post and Derry subsequently going straight

up the field to score the winner, it could've been a very different year for Sligo minors. Derry, who went on to the All-Ireland final against Kerry, in what was a final which will be remembered by the individual performance of Kerry captain, David Clifford. He looks a special talent and I think we all look forward to seeing him play in the senior ranks with Kerry. Also on the Sligo minor panel were Jonathan East, James O'Hara and Jake Stephenson.

We also had numerous representatives on the Sligo U17 Championship team which was heavily defeated by Mayo in Castlebar. Despite the loss, it was a proud day for the club to have so many representatives from the club on the team and on the panel. These lads, Jake Stephenson, Ciaran Hannon, Ciaran Dorrian, Shawn O'Hara, Marcus Meehan, Sean O'Connor, Bryan O'Hanlon, Tomás Taheny and Bryan Molloy, are unlucky in that the Minor (U18) County Championship is being discontinued the very year they turn 18 but I've no doubt they can go on to represent Sligo at U20 and senior level in years to come. Our club was also represented by Kyle Cosgrove (Sligo U17 & U16) and Eoghan Higgins at Sligo U16 level.

Paul Taylor, as manager again, and Michael Clarke as a player represented the club at county U21 level and progressed to a Connacht Final where unfortunately they came up short against a strong Galway side.

While Sean Scott stepped down from his role as Coiste na nÓg Secretary in 2017, he was still very much involved in the work of the committee, particularly in relation to fixtures. We thank Sean very much for this work which is a huge undertaking on a voluntary basis.

I'd also like to thank Louis Carty, who is stepping down as our Co. Board delegate this year. Louis has represented our club with distinction over several years at Co. Board level. Louis' experience and know-how will be sorely missed and I think we'd all welcome if he would reconsider his decision to step down.

Sponsors

I'd like to thank our premium sponsors who have provided invaluable support to our club over the past year and previous years. I sincerely hope that your support will continue into the future. If any other organisation or individual would like to become a premium sponsor, please contact any member of our committee.

Speaking of the committee, I'd like to thank all of our Executive Committee members for their guidance of the club over the past year. It is invaluable to have a committee who have the interests of the club at heart and are prepared to do the work behind the scenes. I'd particularly like to thank my Assistant Secretary, Avril East, who is always eager to help out whenever called upon. I also thank my colleague as Secretary of the Ladies, Hannah Clohessy and Annette Henry and Mary Hannon who attended Ladies Co. Board meetings.

I'd also like to thank Carmel Taheny, as Healthy Club Chairperson, for her work during the year. The club has the distinction of being one of only two Sligo clubs which were recognised as being 'Healthy Clubs' at a special ceremony in Croke Park on November 4th last. This is fitting reward for the work Carmel and other members of the Healthy Club Committee have put in over the last number of years.

I'd like to congratulate all those who got married, engaged or had new additions to the family in 2017. I extend our sympathies to those whom have been bereaved during the year.

As all of our volunteers know, while it can be very rewarding, it also cuts down on the amount of family time available. I would like to especially thank my family, Anne, Ciarán, Aisling & Orla for their support during the year.

Even though this report is much longer than I intended it to be, I apologise again for any omissions or errors.

Here's to continued success and enjoyment for our club in 2018!!!

Seán Ó Dorraidhín

Rúnaí

Eastern Harps Senior Men 2017

Following the decision of the 2016 Senior Manager Shane King to step down after the championship semi final defeat and after weeks of searching for a successor, a number of senior players approached Shane to see if he would consider a return to the position for the 2017 season. The players' power of persuasion worked as Shane once again decided to take charge of the team for 2017. He was assisted by his backroom team of Shane Gallagher, Paul Duignan, Paul Judge and Des Horan.

The first training session under the 2017 management took place on Friday January 20th although the players themselves had returned to training 2 weeks earlier as they awaited the reappointment of the management team. Martin Doherty was appointed team captain for the year with Gavin Horan as vice captain.

The competitive season got underway on Friday March 17th as we made the long trip to Grange to take on the home side in round 1 of the Kiernan Cup. In difficult conditions and not at the same pace as our opponents we were beaten on a score line of 1-13 to 1-4. It was back to training again as all teams awaited the start of the senior league on April 9th. Our opposition once again would be St Maloise Gales (Grange) although this time we would have home advantage. Despite a good first half we would go on to lose the game 0-10 to 1-12. Rounds 2 and 3 of the league took place the following weekend. Firstly on Good Friday evening in Keash we played Curry and ran out winners 0-15 to 0-7. There wasn't much time to reflect on the win however as less than 48 hours later, on Easter Sunday we were out again against Tubbercurry. The effects of the previous game told on us in the end as we were beaten 1-9 to 0-6. A further defeat followed in round 4 the following week as league champions Tourlestrane made the trip to Keash. We controlled much of this game but in the end the visitors were deserved winners, 1-11 to 1-17. We travelled to play Calry St/Josephs in round 5. Our lads, knowing the importance of getting a win here did so after a fine performance, 1-11 to 2-15. Competitive action would take a break for a few weeks as Sligo made the trip to New York for the opening round of the Connacht Championship.

While there was no action on the field on the weekend of the 5th and 6th of May a very successful Players Golf Classic took place in Carrick on Shannon Golf Club. A large number of teams made up of players, past and present, club members, past and present, as well as people from surrounding areas took part. Thanks to all who sponsored prizes and tee boxes for the event. A special word of thanks to those who organised the Golf classic, in particular Michael Keville and Paul Duignan. They were assisted in the background by Kevin Cryan, Barry Cryan, Shane Gallagher Paul Judge and Fiachara Gorman.

Saturday 13th May saw us return to action in round 3 of the Kiernan Cup when Drumcliffe/Rosses Point came to Gurteen. Despite a somewhat nervy finish we were winners on the evening 1-14 to 1-10. There would be another break in the club action as Sligo, having overcome their tricky assignment in New York, took on Mayo in Castlebar on Sunday May 21st. The following Saturday evening old rivals Shamrock Gales were the visitors to Gurteen for round 6 of the league. This game saw us play our best football of the league so far and we ran out convincing winners on a scoreline of 2-16 to 0-13. In round 7 we travelled to Cloonacool to play Coolaney/Mullinabreena. We never recovered from a blistering start by the home side and although we played much better in the second half the performance overall was disappointing as we were defeated 3-18 to 2-10. It was back again to the Kiernan

Cup on June 14th as we played St Mary's in Kent Park in round 4. In an entertaining game we were disappointed to lose by a point in the end, 2-10 to 3-6. The following week we were due to play Calry/St Josephs in round 5 of the Kiernan Cup. It wasn't until the morning of the game, barely an hour before throw in, that we were informed Calry would not be fulfilling the fixture resulting in the 'win' being awarded to us. Despite this we failed to qualify for the semi finals of the Kiernan Cup. Round 8 of the league saw us take on Drumcliffe/Rosses Point in Gurteen. The visitors were still trying to fight off relegation in the league and were sharper than us on the day as they won 0-12 to 1-13.

Following a discussion between senior players and management it was agreed to concede our final league game against St Mary's. There were a number of factors in this decision and it should also be noted here that St Mary's had no interest in playing this game either. This game was meaningless to both teams as both were already safe in the league. Championship preparations were stepping up and as both teams would face each other in round 1 neither team were willing to give much away so close to the Championship opener. While not everyone was pleased with this decision, the management felt this was the best decision at the time and stand by it. The €100 fine incurred for not fulfilling this fixture was covered by the players. Overall the league will be looked back on as a very mixed campaign but the main objective of survival in Division 1 had been achieved.

As mentioned earlier, Championship preparations were well underway by now. We were drawn in a group of 4 with familiar rivals St Mary's, Curry and Tubbercurry. Round 1 took place on Sunday 13th of August against St Mary's in Markievicz Park. We were dealt a blow before throw in with the loss of Tony Taylor through injury and started slowly but recovered well to be right in contention at half time. However the concession of 2 goals within minutes of each other early in the second half left us with an uphill task. The lads battled right to the end but time ran out and we were beaten 2-10 to 0-13. The following Sunday in round 2 we travelled to Tubbercurry to play Curry in what both teams viewed as a must win game. In a game fraught with nerves and tension because of its importance our lads had to dig deep in the difficult weather conditions. A point down with under 10 minutes to go the 'never say die attitude' of the team came to the fore as we pushed on to earn a hard fought victory. Final score 0-9 to 0-7. We would have to wait 3 weeks until our next game. This was against Tubbercurry in Bunanadden on Sunday 10th September. We knew heading into this game that barring a strange series of results we would make the quarter finals because of our victory over Curry and their inferior score difference. This however did not take away from the importance of this game as a win would have been a huge boost before the next stage. We started well but were dealt a blow after 15 minutes when we were reduced to 14 men because of an off the ball incident. Tubbercurry took over from here and with them 12 points ahead at half time our supporters were nervously checking their phones and calculators. A much improved second half performance thanks to an early goal from Declan Hannon saw us reduce the deficit somewhat and had a goal chance gone under rather than come off the crossbar we might have been much closer in the end. However Tubbercurry finished strong and were winners, 1-17 to 1-10. With the fulltime score coming through between Curry and St Mary's we were assured a place in the quarter finals despite our defeat.

In the quarter finals we were drawn to play Coolera/Strandhill on September 24th in Bunanadden. This was always going to be a tight affair and so it proved to be. A goal from captain Martin Doherty after a great run from Ross Donovan would prove to be the crucial

score and after some resolute defending we were victorious on a score line of 1-12 to 0-11. In the semi final a week later we faced St Mary's in Markievicz Park. We started fast and despite some early wides were 3 points up when St Mary's levelled with a fortuitous goal after a loss of footing by goalkeeper Stephen Heraghty. The goal and the loss of our captain through injury rocked us and St Mary's finished the half stronger. The second half started as the first ended with St Mary's pushing on to a 5 point lead. It was from here on that the team showed great resilience and sparked by some great scores from Tony Taylor and Shane O'Grady they began to reduce the deficit. It was then the crucial score arrived. A high ball in was won by substitute James O'Hara who offloaded a pass to Declan Hannon who turned and put the ball in the Mary's net. We were now in the lead with time almost up but St Mary's weren't finished and it took 2 outstanding point blank saves from Stephen Heraghty, who more than made up for his earlier slip, to keep us ahead. When the final whistle sounded there were joyous scenes as we had won by a point 1-10 to 1-9 to qualify for our first final since 2010 where we would face old rivals and defending champions Tourlestrane.

As the day of the final approached there was a great buzz in the club and amongst the players and management there was a mood of confidence and relaxation in the build up. As for the game itself the lads started brilliantly and despite being underdogs in the minds of almost everyone were 4 points ahead at half time, 1-6 to 0-5 thanks to a goal from Martin Doherty. Chasing a 4 point deficit Tourlestrane came out strong in the second half and had levelled the game in no time. Despite the best efforts of our lads who worked hard throughout they couldn't stop Tourlestrane and a late goal pushed them on to a deserved victory with the score finishing 1-13 to 1-9.

And so our 2017 season had come to an end after the defeat in the Co. Final. Although coming up short in the final we must be proud of the entire panel who got back to a Co. Final against all the odds. The management would like to state once again their thanks and appreciation to all the lads for their effort, commitment and dedication throughout the year but in particular thank them for the extra effort they made in travelling to and from Dublin and other parts for training as the year went on. It was also great to see the introduction of a number of young players to the senior panel and indeed some of them broke into the team while others pushed hard to make it. With another batch of young players making the step up in 2018 to join the players from 2017 it certainly puts the club in a good place going forward.

Paul Judge

Junior Team

The Junior team had a mixed 2017. Playing in a very competitive Division 3 which boasted first team opposition from Ballymote, Cloonacool and eventual league winners Enniscrone/Kilglass, who also reached the Intermediate championship quarter final. A strong start to the league with two wins from our first three games was followed by a dip in form, but a good finish with two wins and a draw from our final five games left us finishing in 6th place. Wins came against Shamrock Gaels, St Marys, Easkey and Cloonnacool. In the Junior A Championship we were placed in a very tough group with Division 2 outfit and 2015 winners Owenmore Gaels, along with the very strong young team of Tourlestrane. A draw in

our first game, which we were well on top and should have won, against eventual finalists Tourlestrane followed by a four point defeat to Owenmore Gaels in yet another game where we were much the better side for long periods of the game, left us to take on St Johns in the relegation final. A score line of 1 – 22 to 1 – 03 in this final retained our status in Junior A football for 2018. Our year finished with a defeat in the Abbott Cup semi-final to Enniscrone/Kilglass.

One of the toughest obstacles to cross this year was to have enough players to field, particularly in the league due to emigration, work and college commitments. This made for the management team of Paddy Henry, Tom O'Connor and myself to take to the field on a couple of occasions and to put in some very strong performances too! We also seen the return to the field for Colm Gallagher, Morgan McCormack, Paul Taylor, Francis Candon and Mark Cosgrove.

On a positive note for the future senior outfit was the emergence of some very good young players like James McLoughlin, Jonathan East, and Tom Murray to name a few. With 10 or more of this year's minor team being eligible for senior men's football next year, this junior team will become an even more important part of the club to help develop the likes of these players for the senior team of the future.

On behalf of the management team of Tom, Paddy and myself I would like to thank all the lads, who togged out throughout the year, for their commitment and time. Here's to a very successful 2018 for this group of footballers.

Aiden Ward

Eastern Harps Underage Football 2017

Minor Boys

Our Minor team had a very successful year in 2017 winning our first minor championship since 2005 and reaching the minor league semi-final. The minor team also gave a great performance in the Connaught club competition, losing to the Mayo champions by three points.

In the league we won our first five games to qualify for the league semi-final. Injuries took their toll in the semi-final and we were beaten by a strong Shamrock Gaels team.

After a break for exams the panel returned to training to prepare for the Championship. We were in a four team group, beating Tubbercurry away in the 1st round, beating Easkey/Enniscrone at home in the 2nd game and drew with Owenmore Gaels in the 3rd game to qualify for the County semi-final. The team produced a great display in the semi-final against St Molaise Gaels to qualify for the final where Curry were our opponents. After a tight first half in the County final, the team turned it on in the second half to win on the score line of 1-15 to 0-05.

Great credit is due to the entire panel and the coaching team of Michael Hannon, Paul Dywer and Paul McGovern for the huge effort put in over the year. Great praise is also due to the entire club who powered in behind the effort of our minor team and supported the team all the way. To the supporters who came out in great numbers, we thank you most sincerely as it made for a wonderful night in Tourlestrane after winning the minor championship 2017.

Michael Hannon

U16 Boys

After an eight week delay during the U-16 championship, the competition is finally back on track and as I write this report we are waiting for our U-16 'A' final to be re-fixed. Who would have predicted that at the start of the year, when unlike the band name, this team could have been called "The Unwanted". Go back in time to early March 2017 - all coaching teams in the Club are in place, the U-16 League is about to commence and our U-16s still have no coaches. Unfortunately, no-one was available/willing to train this small panel of players.

That situation could not continue given the potential in this small group of players, so I set about recruiting some coaches. I knew Mark Cosgrove was a cert, but working away from home limited his availability. 'Who will I call?', the first two calls were to Mikey O'Grady and Patrick Henry (a current and recently retired senior player). Neither of them prepared to take on the highly paid managers role, but thankfully with very little persuasion I got a "yeah, sure I'll give a hand" from both, Phew!!!! Hence we have a coaching team with no manager. The U-16 lads are very fortunate to have lads of the calibre of Mikey, Paddy & Mark coaching them now and hopefully in the future also. What a great job they've done!!

Coaches in place - we arranged a players meeting and all 'thirteen' U-16s attended. Very quickly we realised it wasn't going to be easy owing to the small panel of players, some of whom were also committed to other sports at a very high level. The biggest headache being that U-16 games were scheduled for Mondays, which clashed with most of the lads other sporting activities.

Regrettably we had 4 players not in attendance, who for various reasons were seeking transfers to neighbouring Clubs. The meeting decided to 'give it a go' anyway.

The league didn't get off to a great start, conceding our first game to Curry because we couldn't field. But it was onwards and upwards from there, though there were a few hurdles along the way. With the help of the U-14 lads and the co-operation of most of the opposing teams, we managed to field in our remaining six league games, winning 2, drawing 1 and losing 3. The two victories were sweet, given that we won away to Shamrock Gaels having played the full game with only 12 players against their 13 and in our final group game we beat table toppers St Molaise Gaels. During the league campaign we were fortunate that one of the four lads referred to earlier returned to play with us.

With the two new coaches now firmly in the swing of things, we were in the U-16 'A' Shield semi-final and a home draw against neighbours & rivals Shamrock Gaels beckoned. Again with just the bare 15 players we acquitted ourselves well and reached the final against Coolera/Strandhill, who had earlier beaten us in the 2nd Rd. Coolera received a home game in the final, by virtue of changing the date to facilitate us, but the tone was set when Kacper announced he was going playing less than 10 days after having a pace-maker fitted, something that epitomised the determination within the group. We got off to a flying start and led 3-6 to 1-4 at half time, but Coolera rallied and closed the gap to just 3 points in the dying stages, only for our lads to score 2-1 without reply in the last two minutes. Afterwards Kyle Cosgrove raised the shield to cheers from the large travelling support.

The players not happy that they had "only won the shield", decided that nothing less than the 'Cup' would do in the Championship. Our Championship preparations were boosted with the return of two more very good players, thanks to Marks efforts. Trying to juggle everything to organise training wasn't easy and we often had a 2 to 1 player/coach ratio, but it didn't deter Mikey who took charge of most training sessions. There was always a bit of craic if Paddy was there, thanks to his silly jokes, as the lads did their best to stay out of his sights.

The 1st round of the Championship saw us play away to a new amalgamation of Geevagh/St Michaels. The game clashed with the Ballymote Debs and so once again we had just the bare 15, but as was becoming customary we got off to a great start and led 3-8 to 1-6 at half time. Then disaster struck, soon after half time we lost our goal keeper to injury and shortly afterwards had another man sidelined for a few minutes to deal with some jewellery issues, which necessitated a rush to get insulating tape. Playing most of the 2nd half with 14 versus 15 took its toll as the opposition clawed their way back into the game, but we managed to hold out under extreme pressure for a hard earned draw.

Then came the crunch game in the group, a home game to Curry. Nothing less than a win would do to guarantee us a place in the Cup semi-finals and our boys delivered. Ahead by a single point at half time, we were harshly reduced to 14 men in the second half and started to feel the pressure. However, two brilliant goals in the first and last minutes of the second half helped us to victory on a scoreline of 3-10 to 2-10.

After the win over Curry, Michael Keville of MK Financial approached the Club offering sponsorship of tops for the U-16 boys, a very generous offer, which was gratefully accepted. Thanks Michael.

On the playing field things came to a standstill as the competition was held up for over two months due to an appeal in one of the other groups. This was far from ideal but a training session on the beach followed by a trip to Mamma Johnsons eased the pain. Eventually for our semi-final we were drawn away to another new amalgamation of St Farnans/St Pats. Missing two of our starting team due to injury and not playing to our full potential, we prevailed in a very tight game in trying conditions on a scoreline of 3-10 to 0-12, thanks to two well taken goals in injury time. However we also added to the injury count when we lost Eoin Connolly with a knee injury in the second half.

So 52 training sessions 11 games later brings me back to where I started our U-16 'A' Cup final against St Molaise Gaels took place on Sunday 19th November in Markievicz Park. The Harps lads fought to the very end in what was a very entertaining match but Molaise Gaels had more strength in depth and were deserved winners on the day on a score of 1.08 v 1.12. Although the year did not end as the Harps Lads would have wanted they can be very proud of all they achieved this year.

Full credit to this small but talented bunch of players for their efforts to date and also to the Under-14 lads on whom we are totally dependent. I sincerely hope all these lads will continue to wear the green and white for years to come.

Thanks to all the parents, whose heads I have wrecked with texts about player availability, changing games, etc.

I wish to put on record my thanks to the other Clubs and in particular Coiste na nOg Contae Shligigh, who facilitated the changing of so many of our games during the year.

Finally, a sincere thanks to my fellow coaches - Mikey, Paddy & Mark for 'answering the call' in the first place and for the commitment, time and effort they've put into the development of these lads, in what has been a very long season for everyone.

Damien Mc Govern

Under 14 boys

Our season got under way on the 26th March in Carraroe where we were narrowly beaten by St. Johns. Home wins over Tubbercurry on 7th April and Shamrock Gaels on the 21st April followed, before we had a hard fought victory in Calry against the home side on 5th May.

On the 19th May we were second best to a strong Tourlestrane team in Gurteen. Then, on the 26th May we found ourselves in the embarrassing position of not being able to field against Coolera/Strandhill. Considering that we started the year with a panel of 24 it was very disappointing having to concede this fixture.

A narrow home win on the 8th June against Enniscrone/kilglass guaranteed us a semi-final spot on the 23rd June, when once again, Tourlestrane proved our undoing. We gave an improved performance but we still came up short against the home team.

Our B championship campaign started on 21st July when we had a comprehensive home win over Coolaney/Mullinabreena. A much tighter away win over Geevagh on the 10th August

earned us a semi-final spot. A seven point defeat in Connolly Park against Owenmore Gaels on the 1st September brought an end to what was a very disappointing year overall.

Poor attendances at training, coupled with unreasonable demands on some of our players with regard to their selection on soccer squads, denied us the chance to be more competitive this year. Better days ahead hopefully.

Thomas Murphy, John Bruen, Peter Walsh.

U13 Boys (Féile)

As in 2016, our U13 boys had the misfortune of been drawn into the 'Group of Death'. This year our opponents were Tubbercurry/Cloonacool, Ballymote/Bunninadden and St John's. The U13 competition had been scheduled to be ran off over 2 weeks. It seems that the Divisional groups were divided up by national lottery or some farfetched mathematical equation and no thought or prior results of these teams meeting at previous levels seem to be applied, which is a pity.

Our first game on the 19th of Sept was against the amalgamated teams of Ballymote and Bunninadden. It was a tough start and we suffered a large defeat. Two days later we played St. Johns away and managed to win by 3 points. It was an entertaining game with some fine scores on both sides. Both teams got enjoyment out of the game.

Our final game of the group was against Tubbercurry/Cloonacool in Keash and this game turned out to be a one-sided affair. It was very disheartening to see our team under siege for an hour. At the end of the game our patience got the better of us and some tempers flared up resulting in us letting ourselves down by getting involved in some silly scuffles.

Following our win over St Johns it set us up for an away playoff game against Castleconnor on Sunday the 1st of October. We ended our fortnight campaign by losing to a far superior team.

There is little appetite in entering a competition if there is no contest to be involved. This is the second year running that we and other teams have been misplaced in divisions. We can only hope the competition format gets changed next year. Also, with 52 weeks in the year it seems such a shame to run a competition off in two weeks. We are at risk of turning a lot of quality footballers away from the game at a time when these players make fundamental choices of the sports they play in the future.

Many thanks to fellow coaches George Garvey and Ciaran McGovern.

Ronan Higgins.

U12 Boys

At our first gathering for training in early March 2017 we realised that we had large number of players available. Initially the count started at approx. 30 children but within a week or two it had risen to over 42. It was our aim to give each child the maximum amount of game time. With this in mind and with so many players available, a decision was made by the coaches to seek the possibility of entering three teams into the campaign for 2017. With the blessing of our club executive, Coiste na nÓg granted our decision to enter the three teams.

We split the children by age with the 2005 boys allocated to Division 1 and divided out the 2006 boys into Division 2 and Division 3. Our Division 1 team were in a group with nine other teams. We struggled in the league this year and had a mixed campaign, with just one win and one draw. However, matches against teams on our par were very competitive. These games bring out the best in all players. We managed to qualify for a shield playoff game and were narrowly defeated by St Johns. This is the final year under 12 for these boys, and they will make the step up to U14s next year. We wish them every success at U14 level.

Our Division 2 team were the additional team that we managed to get into the league this year. We were placed in a group with teams from the west of the county. Parents are to be commended for travelling great distances for games that started at 6:30 on a Tuesday evening. We were also in a group that had players a year older than most of our lads. At the beginning this was a challenge for them, however by our third game we were firing on all cylinders. We had some great competitive games in Gurteen with great support. Throughout the year our players played great team football and it paid off by winning the shield final.

Our Division 3 team were in a highly competitive Division as well. With a campaign of seven wins, one draw and two losses, this team performed tremendously. Highly competitive football games against some of the big-name clubs in the county resulted in wins. These games displayed the talent that is there to be nurtured. This teams attitude to fight to the final whistle made their games nail biting but immensely enjoyable to watch. In the end we were defeated by St Molaise Gaels in the final.

I would like to thank Louis Carty for securing large amounts of training equipment for this group of players this year. Thank you, Dan and Aine McKeon, for sponsoring food and refreshments in the Picnic Basket after our finals this year. Also, we want to wish Marty Murray a speedy recovery for an injury which he received this year.

The behaviour of our teams and their attitude towards training and matches was exemplary, from their attention to team talks to their pre-match warm-up. One had a feeling from the first training session that these boys know what they were capable of. As years progress these teams will merge into one with great competition for places and this can only be on benefit to our club.

To conclude I would like to thank and acknowledge the help from fellow coaches this year, Brendan McHugh, Paul Taylor, Fintan McGowan, and Eamon Molloy.

Ronan Higgins.

Division 1 Team V St Johns in play off.



Division 2 Team V St Michael's in Final.



Division 3 Team V St Molaise Gaels in play off.



U10 Boys

The U10 boys began training in mid March. There was a large turnout with 20+ boys attending most sessions. There was plenty of football and the boy's first game was a blitz at home to a strong Ballymote team. The boys found the going tough, as we had not much training done at this stage but all battled well. We continued to train hard and our second outing was away to Tourlestrane. The boys were divided (as per usual) into a younger u9 group and older u10 group. Both teams performed well and we came away satisfied with our efforts. Many more games followed against other clubs including St. John's, St. Mary's, Shamrock Gaels, Geevagh and St. Farnan's.

In July we travelled to Ballaghadreen for the annual Brian Tansey Memorial Tournament. Other teams competing included Charlestown, Kilmovee, Western Gaels and Eire Óg. At this stage of the year with lots of training behind us the boys excelled and played some wonderful football. The U10's recorded wins over each team which included recovering from a heavy deficit at half time to pull a win out of the bag against Ballaghaderreen.

In August we pencilled in an away trip to Belmullet GAA club. Unfortunately the trip never materialized as Mayo's persistence in the All-Ireland Championship foiled numerous scheduled trips to the far west club. Not being able to make the journey to Belmullet is one major regret from an otherwise enjoyable year.

I would like to thank all parents and coaches for their support throughout the year of football including Martina Clohessy, and Shaun Dorrian. In particular I would like to thank Thomas Murphy for providing guidance to the boys during the year. I would like to thank Shaun Dorrian for looking after the last few sessions with the boys while Thomas and I were away.

To conclude, I would like to pay compliment to an exceptionally talented u10 team. The coaches could not have asked much more of the boys. I have no doubt that each player will go on to achieve great success for our club in the near future.

Martin Doherty

Eastern Harps Ladies Football

Senior Ladies

Senior ladies competed in three competitions 1. Warm up League (played without players on County panel). 2. Intermediate League and 3. Senior Championship.

Due to the delay in finding the management group (Gabriel Gallagher, Morgan Mc Cormack & Claudia Reid) the senior panel gathered for the first time on March 15th this was 4 days before the first scheduled warm-up league game (which was postponed due to weather). Time was against us in getting the panel up to the necessary fitness levels but we did field for our first game on 26th March where we lost to a better drilled St Nathys team. This was followed by an encouraging victory over Drumcliffe RP. In the warm up league semi final we lost a keenly contested game with Eoghan Rua in which we competed well up to the last ten minutes.

In April the Intermediate league got underway and we had very encouraging performances in all four games resulting in 4 victories leaving us in the final on 28th May against Tourlestraune. Unfortunately in the final we couldn't get to the level we reached in the previous games and fell to a narrow defeat.

Our participation in the Senior championship was always going to be a difficult assignment but our overall form in the league gave us the belief that we could cause upsets against the more established sides and indeed we got off to a great start when we defeated St Michaels 3-12 to 1-6 in the first match. This was as good as it got however as in the following games we suffered defeats at Eoghan Rua, Geevagh (eventual winners) and St Nathys in our final game on 6th August.

Overall performances in the league were very encouraging but the more established teams in the Senior championship showed us that we have more work to do to be successful at this level. Looking to the future though, our panel was a mixture of a few experienced players and a lot of younger players who in the next 3-4 years should develop into a team capable of competing in and winning a Senior Championship.

The biggest challenge facing our club, and all clubs, is how do we encourage more of our very capable stars at U16/U18 to continue playing at adult level. There is a long list of players who have shown a lot of potential at underage but for various reasons don't stay involved at adult level and we end up with a situation where we have to work off a very small panel which makes progress more difficult. There is no simple solution to this but it's a major challenge for our club.

As a basic starting point I feel that the Ladies Chair position must be filled in 2018 by someone who will drive the development of the Ladies in our club.

Gabriel Gallagher

Minors Girls

This team are made up of u14 /u16 and u18 panels. Under the management of Patricia Mc Donagh, Morgan Mc Cormack and myself Martina Clohessy, much of the credit goes to the management of the above panels. Although we struggled with family holidays, Gaeltacht and summer camps of all types we managed to field a team for all fixtures. A great bunch of girls with good attitude they are a pleasure to work with. This competition was scheduled to begin on July 12th with a deadline of August 13th for playoffs and the final on August 27th. Our girls are through to the final of the competition and still don't know who their opposition are, this pretty much sums up how smoothly the schedule went. The date of the final has been moved at least four times. Hopefully we will get some silverware on October 22nd as a reward for our marathon effort.

The 22nd arrived and despite the weather of the preceding week our final went ahead as scheduled. With our senior men playing their county final later on the same day the Harps support was out in strength. A tough game of football lay ahead and our girls went toe to toe with Tourlestrane, competing for every ball and replying to every score from the opposition. Despite missing some easy scores the Harps girls held on to their one point half time lead and went ahead to win with just the one point dividing the teams. Great win for this fantastic group of girls who now face into the Connacht competition optimistically.

Martina Clohessy



Minor Ladies 2017

Under 16 Girls

This year the club had our largest panel of U16 girls for a number of years, 24 girls. They were a fantastic bunch. They got on very well with each other, and loved to laugh & giggle.... as one of the wiser coaches remarked "they brought a new meaning to playing with a smile on your face". With a bit of persuasion the club managed to get two brilliant coaches, retired footballers Eamonn Clarke & Neil Molloy who had no problems taking the girls for training. Deirdre Gillen took on the role of manager organising games, keeping attendance records, looking after training gear & jerseys etc etc etc...

The league preparations got under way in March, with the team out two nights per week. This helped the coaches to get to know the girls, improve their techniques and fitness levels and generally assist them to gel together as a close group.

Unfortunately the league did not get off to a good start with battles for the team both on and off the field. We met a very strong Owenmore Gaels team and though the girls gave everything they had we fell short on a score line of 4-6 to 6-9. Next up we were home to St Molaise Gaels. This game got off to a good start with Harps taking an early lead. After a 20mins things took a turn for the worst. The referee abandoned the match which in his words was "due to the behaviour of our team and officials". The matter was investigated by Sligo County Board and our team was reprimanded. The coaches felt this was unjust and decided to appeal the decision to Connacht Council. Connacht council overturned this decision with the club totally vindicated and all penalties and suspensions lifted. Meanwhile, our 3rd game was away to a very competitive Calry/St.Josephs Team. The girls were defeated on a score line of 3-6 to 9-15. Our final league game V's Eoghan Rua proved to be a watershed moment. Boosted by the Connacht Council decision the ladies re discovered their mojo and ran out convincing winners on a score line of 9-9 to 5-9. The girls gave a fantastic display of attacking football and for the first time this year gelled together as a team. Things were looking up.

The summer came and training continued with some sessions having as little as eight in attendance, due to holidays, summer camps etc. Our Minor girls joined us for training mid-summer which improved training sessions greatly. The increased numbers meant we could have 13/15 aside training game. Having the County Minor Champions in waiting, and management present gave our girls huge belief in themselves and created a fantastic bond between both panels. It also gave everybody a renewed interest in training.

The Championship commenced in early August and the girls got off to a great start with a win over Eoghan Rua 8-6 to 12-8 - a remarkable score line with 20 goals scored, one of the highest ever recorded in a girls championship match in Sligo. Our next game was with Owenmore Gaels and the girls knew that this was going to be a tough test. Giving it everything on the day we drew on a score line of 4-9 to 4-9. This was an excellent result and emphasised to all involved that we were well capable of doing well in this competition. Next on the horizon was Geevagh and we knew we needed a win to progress. After a competitive game we got the desired result winning on a score line of 6-11 to 10-9. Our final game in the group stage pitted us at home to Shamrock Gaels. Though we had home advantage Shamrock Gaels proved too much to handle and we were defeated on a score line of 3-5 to 4-15.

However, all was not lost. With 2 wins, 1 draw & 1 loss we were equal on points with Owenmore Gaels meaning we were into a play-off. Our players vowed not to be beaten this time and they were true to their word. After a fantastic game of football witnessed by a large crowd from both sides against Owenmore Gaels in Connolly Park, we qualified for the county final on a score line of 6-7 to 10-10 - a moment to savour for all involved.

Everybody involved knew that we had a very difficult task ahead meeting Shamrock Gaels in the final but we were all quietly confident that we could achieve the desired result and reverse the previous score line. We got off to a brilliant start with all our players playing to their true potential and we were leading well at half time, this despite the fact that lady luck failed to shine on us with many of our efforts coming back off the woodwork. However, our players fought to the end and must be commended for their endeavours. It was not to be. Shamrock Gaels came back to win the game on a score line of 3-11 to 2-8 and we congratulate them.

We would like to acknowledge the fantastic effort that all players put in to this year's campaign including those who had to leave the panel for various reasons. We would like to thank them for the respect they showed us and for being mannerly at all times. They were a pleasure to work with and we were proud of the way they developed as players and behaved both on and off the field. They were a credit to the club. We wish them well in their sporting careers and we look forward to seeing them in the Harps colours for years ahead. We would like to thank their parents for their co-operation, support and understanding during the year. We would also like to thank the club for their support.

Eamonn Clarke, Neil Molloy & Deirdre Gillen,



Back L-R Amy McGovern, Rebecca Murray, Ailish Duggan, Maeve Molloy, Orliath Connolly, Roisin Molloy, Emily Falkus, Edel Henry, Eimear Conlon, Aisling Dorrian, Aimee Lyons, Blathin McDonnell, Cushla Cosgrove, Front L-R Emma Stephenson, Leanne McGowan, Aoife Mitchell, Alyx Cassidy, Lisa Powell, Ciara O'Connor, Rachel Hannon, Ciara Hannon, Katie McGowan, Zoe Stafford

Under 14 Girls

Our under 14 girls got their season off to a start with training beginning in March 2017 in preparation for the upcoming Feile competition which took place in Riverstown pitch in April. We competed in group 3 that day playing Shamrock Gaels, Geevagh and Owenmore Gaels coming out with 2 wins. Shamrock Gaels proved too strong for us.

After that outing we trained hard to prepare for the league. The U14 league began for us on April 18th in Keash against St.Farnan's. Our next game was away to Drumcliff/Rosses Point on May 2nd where we suffered a defeat. Next we were at home to Shamrock Gaels on May 30th coming out with a victory. On June 6th in Keash we played Curry and were narrowly beaten in an exciting game. Finally round 5 of the league saw us travel to Geevagh on June 13th. Overall, the girls played to their best and even in games that were beyond winning they fought right to the end.

Championship was next up for our u14 girls where we were placed to face again Drumcliff/Rosses Point in Round 1 on Monday 14th August this time at home. We were beaten on that day but this game was much closer than our previous meeting in the league. The girls put in a powerful performance. Next up we played St.Mary's away on Monday 21st August. Conditions were dreadful on that evening but it was a very exciting game. The girls did not perform well in the first half but put on a terrific second half display. However we were narrowly beaten in the end. Finally, round three of the championship saw us play Calry/St.Joseph's in Keash on August 28th. In perfect playing conditions, the game was very exciting but we exited the championship with on a 3 point defeat.

Although our season ended without any silverware, the girls can be very proud of how they trained and performed throughout the year. Well done to them all and best of luck in the future. Myself and Patricia McDonagh were ably assisted by both Fintan McGowan and Barry Convey. Many thanks to them. We are also grateful to all parents and to the club committee members who helped us in so many ways. Thanks also to Hannah Clohessy, our ladies secretary for communicating our fixtures to us. Finally, we would like to thank Declan Wynne and Gaeltec Utilities for sponsoring our U14 girls with a new set of jerseys. Greatly appreciated by all. We hope to treat the U14 team to an outing before Christmas.

Aoife Wynne

U12 Girls

Our U-12 girls season started with league fixtures in May, including great battles with Geevagh & Shamrock Gaels. We eventually ended up in a play-off against Shamrock Gaels in Coola which we lost after extra-time in what was an excellent contest. The league quarter-final was fixed for Ransboro 3 days later against Coolera/Strandhill & despite a good start the girls ran out of steam as the epic struggle against Gaels took its toll.

This defeat meant we played Drumcliffe/RP in the A Plate final in Markievicz Park on 3/6/17. Although we were beaten in the end it was a great experience for the girls to play in our county ground & it was a good initiative by the Ladies Co Board to hold the league finals day there.

As a result of the league standings we were placed in the B championship which proved to be very competitive. The girls produced their best performance of the summer away to Geevagh in our last group match which we had to win to qualify for the semi-final. Unfortunately we came up against a physically stronger St. Farnan's side in Templeboy on a barely playable pitch. We had gone very close to beating them in Keash in the group stages a few weeks earlier but the referee gave very little protection to our girls on this occasion!

This is a very talented & dedicated group of players who responded well to the demands of championship football & worked hard on improving their fitness levels as the summer went on. I'm sure with encouragement they will go from strength to strength in their future careers.

John O'Neill & Dawn Mc Gowan

U 10 Girls

We began with our first training session of the year on May 25th. Throughout the year we struggled to play games due to both low attendance and adverse weather. We attended a blitz in Tubbercurry in August where we played 5 games – 9 players attended including 3 U-8 girls.

During the summer we struggled with a lack of numbers at both training and games, the highest attendance being 12 and the average 7. Equipment needs to be invested in for this team for the 2018 season as it currently consists of 3 poor footballs and 10 bibs. Our season culminated in playing St. Mary's during half time of the Ladies Intermediate county final. We had 7 girls in attendance, including one U8, but to ensure all girls got a chance to play we mixed with the St. Mary's team who had 18 girls. We would like to say a special thanks to Amy who stood in when one of the coaches were unavailable.

Joanne O'Grady & Eleanor McMahan

U8 Boys and Girls

The U8's training began in March and continued each week until September. Due to poor weather conditions we had to postpone some training sessions. It was great to see new players coming up from the U6's and the improvement in the basic skills of the U8's in their second year at this grade. On average there were 15 -20 boys and girls at training most evenings. The training was shared between Gurteen, Keash and Ballinafad and was enjoyable and a great success for everyone involved. This year the boys and girls played a lot of football with games against neighbouring teams with success's over some of our rival clubs

(Coolera/Strandhill, Tourlestrane) and a hard fought battle against St Mary's. Where possible and numbers allowing we tried to keep the girls playing against each other and this was also a success. It is difficult for parents to take the time to bring their kids to training and sometimes travel to games so a big 'thank you' to all the parents. Also a big thank you to the coaches for their time, effort and commitment. We wish our U8's moving to the U10's future success in improving their skills set and growing into future stars for the club. U8's boys and girls are still involved in skill games in the Colaiste Mhuire hall on every second Wednesday.

Nigel Clancy

U6 Boys and Girls

"Our future stars" the U6 boys and girls trained every Wednesday evening from spring until the end of summer this year at 6:30pm. It was great to see a lot of new young faces at training. A big thank you to the local parents in bringing the young players to Keash for their first go at learning the skills and having some fun and exercise. We had 25 or more children coming to training whenever they could and they really did well, listening to their trainers and coaches. We couldn't have been happier with the way the children performed and I'm sure those that will be moving on to U-8 grade will add value to that age group. The younger footballers will be back in U-6 next year for more fun and games and will make new friends with the new children. Please remember, we always welcome volunteers/coaches/helpers from the parents to help out.

Nigel Clancy

Gaelic for Mothers and Others

The Gaelic for Mothers and Others Eastern Harps team continued in 2017 to grow from strength to strength. We were very lucky to recruit some new members into our squad. Between injuries and pregnancies, our 2017 still stood 20 strong.

Like previous years, there are many people to thank for our continued success and as always the most important is our coach and mentor Paul Dwyer who has stuck by us through thick and thin. He has always been there to help build and strengthen us into the team we now are. Thank you also to the entire Eastern Harps committee who have put up with all our antics.

June 20th saw the start of the season in Keash when Shannon Gales gave us a good thrashing. We were hoping this was not a sign of things to come but thankfully that was not the case.

On July 1st, we travelled to Ballyhaunis for the Connaught Blitz where a great mixture of football and fun was had.

The on July 23rd, we were invited to Kinlough to take part in a blitz organised by Melvin Gales. It was brilliantly organised, fantastic football and outstanding fun, followed by great hospitality afterwards by the ladies themselves.

We also played in a highly competitive "friendly" fixture this year against St. Farhans in Ballisodare on August 1st. It was great to play a new team into the fold and while we had the upper hand this year, next year it might not be the

case. We wish them all the very best for the future and thank them for being great hosts.

August 27th brought us back to Coola for the Shamrock Gales Blitz. As always, it did not disappoint. Everything ran perfectly, great football, great sportsmanship and a mighty get together afterwards in Tommy Mac's.

Our last outing of the season is always the Annual Blitz in Portmarnock. The bus was hired, the accommodation booked, and the new jerseys packed. The ladies took to the field against teams from all over Ireland. We played Murroe/Boher, Erin go Bragh, Mohill, St. John Martin's Glenn, Navan O'Mahony's. Although scores are never kept we are confident we were once again undefeated.

It is important to note, these are non-competitive matches, it's not all about the game, it's also about the fun, exercise, craic and camaraderie that we have built with all these neighbouring teams. Each year sees new teams joining the G4M&O family and this year was no exception. We unfortunately didn't get to play newcomers Ballymote this year but hopefully next year we will have that opportunity. As the G4M&O community grows, so does the friendships. Lastly, we would like to thank the Hill Hotel in Gurteen who very kindly supported our new set of Jerseys. Many thanks to Gerry and the gang.



Operation Transformation

After taking a break in 2016, Operation Transformation re-entered the Harps yearly calendar having had a facelift, and like all good facelifts, it looked mostly the same, just a bit fresher! The committee, running the event for the fourth time in five years, got a much needed injection of energy in the welcome form of Ann Marie Healy, who was a fantastic new addition, and was responsible for the much appreciated coffee in Strandhill one cold Sunday morning, as well as the refreshments that greeted us at the end of all our walks.

On the activity side of the event we had our Clubmen Aidan Ward and Gavin Horan running the show (and us into the ground) at bootcamps, which made a reappearance for 2017, but under lights this year. Ann Wynne introduced us to "Tabata" a gentle sounding activity that is anything but.

Maybe due to our year out, we had record numbers signing up this year, with over 170 participating, and again we're delighted to say we had representatives from teenagers right through to septuagenarians. Due to this, we moved some of our activities to Keash Hall, another first, and weigh-in was also available there, a move very much welcomed by people from that side of the Club. We were in turn very happy to facilitate this change, as we have always been aware that participants from this area often have the most travelling to do during OT, a problem we have always sought to alleviate.

The collaboration with Parkrun in The Forest Park was a wonderful one, for everyone involved on both sides. It's a free, timed run, jog or walk, every Saturday morning and you'll get a warm welcome there.

Our Finale was once again hosted by our premium sponsors in Drurys, where the winners and biggest losers were applauded.

Thank you to all the event sponsors, Lavins Ballymote, Tanseys Centra and The Crossbar Gurteen. Thanks to the hall committees from Gurteen and Keash, as well as the other venues that made their facilities available to us, and to all the people who helped out along the way, from stewards to our blog writers.

And lastly thanks to the participants, who made it so enjoyable and helped raise over €7,000 for the development fund.



Report from Eastern Harps GAA Bingo Committee

2017 marked the 10-year anniversary of Gurteen Bingo. For almost 6 years now Eastern Harps have been in partnership with Gurteen Hall committee managing the successful running of our weekly bingo. We thank Gurteen Hall committee once again for affording us this opportunity.

Our share of the proceeds are a vital source of income for the development of our new club house which commenced this year. To date bingo has contributed a substantial amount to the development fund.

However, proceeds are not as generous as they have been in previous years due to jackpots been won and other running costs incurred through the year. While bingo holds a steady crowd each week it is important that we, members of the club, our families and friends come out and support it on occasion. A few extra players can make a big difference to the proceeds.

During the year, jackpots have been won and our patrons have gone home happy on most occasions with a few more euro's than they arrived with in their pockets. Despite the drop-in profits over the last few years, bingo has still been run with the continued dedication of the Bingo committee, which includes several of our club members each week. A recent survey of our patrons shows that over 90% of them are very satisfied with Gurteen Bingo and how it is run. This is testament to our hard working volunteers, the warmth & cleanliness of the hall, value for money etc..

This year Amy McGovern who previously enjoyed playing bingo, has taken up an active role on the bingo team. Amy has become a dab hand at keeping all our patrons happy with nice hot & cold refreshments and biscuits served in our shop. We welcome Amy and thank her for her continued help and dedication.

In September we hosted an "Anniversary Bingo" which attracted a fantastic crowd. Over €5,000 in prize money was paid out on the night. Players travelled from counties Roscommon, Leitrim, Mayo, Cavan & beyond. Our regulars really enjoyed the night but were happy to have things back to normal the following week.

Over the years bingo has contributed to many local community groups and charities, this year been no exception. One of these charities was "Niamh's Journey There" for 19-year-old Niamh Flanagan from Boyle who has been diagnosed with Osteosarcoma on her pelvis bone. We wish Niamh & her family health and best wishes as they go through this difficult time.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank each of you who have helped us through the year no matter how big or small and look forward to seeing you all through the year to come.

Eastern Harps GAA Bingo Ctte

Report from Building Development Committee

Report to 2017 AGM

Project Milestones

Early 2011	Club approached two adjoining landowners to explore the possibility of obtaining ground for new dressing rooms. This was unsuccessful
July 2011	Special sub-committee established to look at existing dressing rooms. Recommended economically unviable to upgrade existing facility and that the dressing rooms should be knocked in favour of new dressing rooms on the same site. This was approved by the Executive.
August 2011	Development Committee established with Seán Scott as chair.
Autumn 2011	Engineer appointed to take the project from design to build – Michael Rowley and Associates, Consulting Engineers. It was made clear to the executive that it would be 4-5 years before the club would be in a financial position to commence development.
30 th April 2012	Planning permission lodged.
8 th June 2012	Further Information requested.
24 th August 2012	Planning Permission Granted.
2013	Club fundraisers specific to development are strongly promoted.
10 th March 2014	Sports Capital Application Lodged for dressing rooms. Application valid. No funding.
March/April 2015	Approval from County Board and Connacht Council to seek 100k loan.
21 st April 2015	Approval from BOI for 100k loan.
24 th April 2015	Further Sports Capital Application Lodged for dressing rooms.
Summer 2015	Extensive political lobbying.
8 th October 2015	Email from Sports Capital awarding €39,000. Grant to be drawn down by 31 st October 2017.
September 2015	Connacht Council Grant submitted.
27 th October 2015	Met with Connacht Council in Ballyhaunis.
29 th October 2015	€20,000 awarded to project by Connacht Council.
Dec 2016-Feb 2017	Preparation of Tender Documents for Phase 1 by Michael Rowley and Associates working in conjunction with Development Committee.
Feb-March 2017	Request for Tenders for Phase 1. Invitation to tender circulated through all the local media as well as Church Newsletters etc.
March 2017	Application submitted to Sports Capital (DTTAS) for Phase 2 funding
March 2017	Tender Evaluation by Michael Rowley and Associates
12 th April 2017	Contractor approved by Eastern Harps Executive Committee. Tony Gormley Construction Limited approved to commence the works. (Motion proposed by Kevin Cryan and seconded by John Cryan).
19 th May 2017	Tony Gormley Construction Limited commences the works. Tony Gormley Construction Limited takes full charge and responsibility of the construction site as Project Supervisor Construction Stage with full responsibility from demolition to completion of Phase 1.
9 th August 2017	Successful drawdown of Sports Capital Grant (39K less 5% retention – €37,050)
21 st October 2017	Meeting with Michael Rowley and Associates to commence scoping/design and preparation of tenders for Phase 2 - to be completed by end November 2017.
June – October 2017	Extensive political lobbying to support Sports Capital Application – emails/phone calls/meetings with all Local Authority County Councillors and Local TDs.
24 th October 2017	Loan Application to Bank of Ireland for Phase 2 (120K)
10 th November 2017	Claim submitted to Connacht Council to draw down 20K grant
30 th November 2017	Phase 1 Completion
Dec 2017 – January 2018	Phase 2 Tender Invitations and evaluation
1 st March 2018	Commence Phase 2



Healthy Club Report

Eastern Harps GAA Club joined the Healthy Club Initiative in 2013 it was a ground breaking initiative for the GAA with just sixteen clubs in the first phase. It was high on surveys, plans, reporting, partnerships, project teams and above all, health and well being. We stuck with it and this year saw us been awarded Official Healthy Club Status. This is a great achievement for the club as we are one of two clubs to get this award in county Sligo and one, of fifty eight in the island of Ireland.

The Healthy Club Project has grown since its inception with sixteen pioneering clubs and now has sixty clubs Ireland wide with the intention to growing this to one hundred and fifty clubs in 2018. The project has evolved and is continuing to be streamlined in order to cut down on the amount of administration required for clubs at local level. It is supported nationally by Irish Life and is been independently evaluated by Waterford IT's Centre for Health Behaviour Research.

The Criteria for achieving the Healthy Club Status had a number of headings. A plan, partnerships, activity and the club environment. The clubs broad thinking in terms of reaching the wider community with its various activities fitted the criteria well. In January the club ran a very successful Operation Transformation with over 170 people participating (more detail on this by Aisling Stephenson elsewhere in this report) and the evaluation and feedback from this fed into the Healthy Clubs criteria. Gaelic for Mothers and others (more detail by Eleanor Mc Mahon elsewhere in this report) is a fun and social outlet for women which has grown within the club and now has up to 20 participating demonstrating social activity within the club. In April we were nominated by one of our sponsors Padraig and Catherine O'Dowd for the Inaugural Sligo Sports Awards in the category of Community Participation and we won the award in this category for our Healthy Club Project. This award demonstrated our partnership with our sponsors and other partnerships like the Kerry Mc Keon Literary Award for 5th and 6th classes in primary school. This award was won by Meabh Mc Cormack of Carn N.S. in June and sixty eight young people in all participated. The weekly bingo in Gurteen Hall is another example of the partnership approach and the dedicated team involved each week deserve great credit. Some work has started on mapped loop walks from the pitch and this work will be brought to fruition in the coming year.

The Executive adopted a Healthy Club Health and Wellbeing Statement and also a Critical Incident Response Plan these and our Health and Safety Statement all fed into the required criteria for Healthy Club Status. With the development of our new club house we will look forward to been able to display Health and Wellbeing material and our awards, meeting our physical environment requirements. The Official Healthy Club Status is valid for a two year period 2018 to 2020 and will require renewal every two years. This process is to be simplified going forward and the areas to be covered by Healthy Club in the future are Physical Fitness, Mental Health, Health Eating, Community & Personal Development & Inclusion, Gambling, Alcohol & Drug Education and Smoke Free.

I wish to thank the Club and the Executive for their support and understanding throughout the year and all the people who helped with information in achieving our Official Healthy Club Status.

Carmel Taheny



U16 Team 2017



Minor Boys 2017 County Champions



Notes