

Report on the Events of Eastern Harps GAA Club for 2022

A Cathaoirleach agus a dhaoine uaisle, tá fáilte romhaibh go léir chuig ár gCruinniú Ginearálta Bliantúil don bhliain 2022.

Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you to Eastern Harps GAA Club's AGM for the year 2022. After two years of Covid-disrupted playing years, this year saw the return of a full playing season for all teams and a welcome return to what had come to be expected as a normal event calendar both on and off the field of play prior to the Covid pandemic and the disruptions which it brought.

On the pitch, after a disappointing year last year, it was a year of consolidation for our senior men's team as they regained their status in the Intermediate Championship as well their Division 2 status in the Sligo Senior League. From facing a relegation battle in the intermediate grade in last year's championship, it can be seen as progress that this team went into their final game in this year's competition with a live chance of reaching a semi-final with safety in the competition already guaranteed. Unfortunately, in what was a hard-fought and entertaining contest in Cloonacool in mid-September, St. Pat's won the day to progress, leaving us in third place in the standings and ending our senior men's playing year.

The start of competitive action for this team came in April with the beginning of new competitions introduced for adult teams this year by the county board: the Spring Leagues. Placed in the East Division, we were grouped with other Division 1 and 2 teams from East Sligo for this warm-up competition. After a campaign which saw us recording one win, one loss and two draws, it was enough to qualify for the final against Shamrock Gaels. The Division 1 outfit and eventual Senior Championship semi-finalists were too strong on the day, however, going on to win in the end by six points. This competition gave our lads a good opportunity for game time, though, and it served as good preparation for what was to come in the league.

As it happened, our first league game came before the conclusion of the Spring League competition with Enniscrone our first opponents in round one in Quigabar on Sunday, the 8th of May – a five-point win getting our lads off to a great start. It would be over a month before our team's second game in this competition, a two-point home loss to near neighbours Bunninadden on a cool, June Saturday evening. Due to our fixture with Curry being abandoned early in the second half due to an injury sustained to one of Curry's players, and our fixture with Ballymote called off due to our pitch being unplayable in unseasonably wet late-June conditions, it meant that six of our senior team's eight league games were played in the month of July. With a number of our senior players playing U19 championship midweek in this time also, player workload was something that had to be kept to the forefront of the minds of these players' coaches during these weeks. Indeed, it could be said that the next few weeks proved to be an up-and-down period for our senior team. A disappointing loss away to a strong Easkey team was followed by a great win over Drumcliffe/Rosses Point in Keash the following week. However, this was followed by another disappointing defeat away to Owenmore Gaels. A home win over Ballymote came between defeats to Curry and Geevagh to leave us in a final league position of sixth with three wins and five losses.

For the Intermediate Championship, we were drawn in Group 1 with St. Molaise Gaels, Ballymote, Geevagh and St. Pat's. This competition threw in for our lads on the 20th of August with eventual competition winners St. Molaise Gaels our opponents in Kent Park. In a game where we had some good moments, Molaise pulled away in the second half to win by four points. The next round was played in very wet conditions in Markievicz Park at the beginning of September against Geevagh. In what always promised to be a tight game, and with the conditions not the most conducive to free-

flowing football, it finished up as a draw with the sides level on eleven points apiece. On the day, this is a game that perhaps our lads will feel got away from them, with Geevagh the team needing a late point to equalise. However, the draw kept our lads on track, and they knew a win in their next game would keep them fighting at the top end of the group. This game was a meeting with one of our local rivals, Ballymote, in Bunninadden. Played on a Saturday evening, a very good first-half performance laid the foundations for what ended up being a six-point win for us on a score line of 1-17 to 2-8, to set up what was effectively a quarter-final in our aforementioned final group game against St. Pat's.

There were positive aspects from many of the performances put in by our senior team this year, and there's certainly plenty to continue to build on in the coming years. It's always heartening to see a few new additions to the senior panel from the underage ranks each year, and a number of lads made their senior debuts this year. As Ross mentioned in his report, these players will only continue to improve with time. Before I conclude on the senior men's year, I would like to wish all the very best to Jonny East, Sean O'Connor and Shane O'Grady on their recoveries from serious injuries they sustained during the year. Knowing the lads, there's no doubt they'll be back in the Harps jersey again before too long. It was again a pleasure to be involved with this group through my roles as an administrator and assisting the team's management, and I saw first-hand the levels of work and commitment put in by the squad throughout the year. Manager Ross Donovan, and his selectors Ray Hannon, Paul McGovern and Mikey O'Grady, again left no stones unturned in preparing this team, and I wish to sincerely thank them for their efforts throughout the year.

It was always going to be difficult for our senior ladies to follow up on the successes they brought to the club last year in winning the league and championship double, at Division 2 and intermediate level respectively, as well as reaching a Connacht Junior final. However, while they have no silverware to show for themselves this year, their performances throughout the year left no doubts that this team belong in the top tiers of Sligo football, and with quite a young age-profile to this team, they look set to continue to improve in the years to come – a bright future, as Paul Judge put it in his very comprehensive report on their year for our AGM booklet. As Paul has covered the senior ladies' team in a lot of detail in this report, I don't intend to cover it in quite as much detail in these pages.

Sunday, the 27th of March, was the start date for competitive action for our senior ladies for this year with the beginning of their Spring League competition. A comfortable away win over Geevagh got the girls off to a great start to their year. The next round saw the girls making the trip to South Sligo to face Tourlestrane, the first of what would end up being six meetings between the teams throughout the year. On this occasion, the home side prevailed and in doing so concluded Harps' involvement in this competition.

With the Spring League out of the way all attentions turned to the remaining fixtures of the Division 1 League, the first game of which – a hard-fought win over Drumcliffe/Rosses Point in Keash – came sandwiched between the two Spring League games mentioned in the previous paragraph. Our ladies' team went on to remain unbeaten throughout their league competition, finishing with a record of two wins and two draws which saw them qualify for a league final with a game to spare. The biggest threat to this unbeaten record possibly came in their second game of the competition, when a goal in the dying moments was needed to earn a draw against St. Mary's in Kent Park. Round three saw the girls renew acquaintances with Tourlestrane, and after the disappointment of their previous performance at this venue, this time they came away with an excellent win on a score line of 2-13 to 2-11 – a win that assured us a place in the league final. It would be eight weeks before their girls' final group game, a home tie against Geevagh which ended as a draw. This result meant that Eastern Harps had topped the group on eight points with Tourlestrane second on seven, setting up a league final between the two sides. The final, played in excellent conditions in Curry, was a

pulsating encounter played out in front of a large crowd that, amazingly, saw the two teams deadlocked after normal time and again after extra-time. This meant that a replay would be needed to decide where the Division 1 trophy would reside for the winter. With the Senior Championship campaign to be played in the weeks immediately following this, however, this replayed final would end up being our ladies' final game of the season, when it was eventually re-fixed on Sunday, the 23rd of October. Played in the same venue as the previous game, there was a sense of déjà vu about proceedings, and the game followed a similar pattern with it being another absorbing, end-to-end battle that once again needed extra-time for the sides to be separated. It was Tourlestrane who went on to get the scores that were needed to win the game in extra-time, however, winning in the end by three points.

The realigning of grades at provincial level meant that our ladies' team had to compete at intermediate level in the Championship again this year, before they, and their other two opponents at intermediate level, Eoghan Rua and St. Mary's, would go on to join the three senior teams, St. Nathy's, Geevagh and Tourlestrane, in a six-team Senior Championship at its conclusion. Our girls knew a win in their first round game would qualify them for the intermediate final, and this was achieved with a tough win over Eoghan Rua. The final was against St. Mary's in Enniscrone, but unfortunately this ended in disappointment for our girls with Mary's prevailing by six points. With games in the Senior Championship coming thick and fast, however, there was no time to dwell on this, and the girls got back to winning ways quickly with wins over Geevagh and Eoghan Rua in the opening two rounds. Next up were defending champions – and eventual winners of the competition this year, also – St. Nathy's. In a very entertaining encounter, the girls rallied late on to come from four points down for a draw which they deserved on the balance of play. Two tight losses to Tourlestrane and St. Mary's in the final two group games meant the girls had done enough to qualify for a semi-final where Tourlestrane, once again, were their opponents. This game didn't go the way of our girls, unfortunately, with Tourlestrane commanding winners on the day.

Our ladies' team proved this year through many of their performances that they can compete with the best teams in the county on any given day, and this should give this group confidence as they look to build on the experiences of this year next year and beyond. In his first year in charge of the team, I wish to thank manager Stephen Powell and his backroom team of Paul Judge, Kevin Gallagher, Dee Gillen and Benny Connolly, as well as the players, for all their efforts throughout the year.

I would like to take this opportunity to also thank Catherine Cryan who is stepping down from the role of Ladies' Secretary at this year's AGM. Catherine has shown great commitment to this role for the last few years. On a personal level, it has been a pleasure to work with Catherine, and I wish to thank her for the support she has given me while working as her counterpart as secretary of the men's side of the club and wish her the best as she departs this role. I would also like to thank Suzie Johnson who again ensured that the events of the ladies' side of our club had a very strong presence on our club's social media pages and wish her all the best as she takes over the Ladies' Secretary role from Catherine. Thanks to Eimear Henry for her work in our club's social media pages also, and to our PRO, Kevin Cryan, who oversees all of our club's social media pages and overall public relations.

After losing the Division 4A League and Junior B Championship finals last year, our junior men's team went one better in both competitions this year, bringing both cups back to the Harps country and in doing so ensuring that our second team will play Division 3 and Junior A football next year. This is a good achievement, and it is a positive step for our juniors to be plying their trade against a higher quality of opposition at these grades. While this will inevitably bring its challenges, I believe it is where our club should be striving to be as our second team aims to continue to be a strong feeder team for our seniors.

The junior team got their year off to a competitive start on Sunday, the 10th of April, with a home game against St. Mary's in the North/East Division Junior Spring League, and while the team didn't get off to a winning start, their results in this competition of three wins and one loss was enough to see them finish second in the group and qualify for the competition final by virtue of their better scoring difference over Shamrock Gaels. The final didn't go our way, losing to St. Mary's in Kent Park, but qualifying for this final meant that our junior team played in every competitive game that was available to them this season.

The juniors' first game of the Division 4A League away to Curry finished as a draw as two evenly-matched teams played out a tight game. Next up were a Coolera/Strandhill side who came to Keash with intent on the June Bank Holiday Sunday and ran out convincing winners on the day. This perhaps gave our lads a slight wake-up call, but they didn't look back after this, going on to record good away wins over Coolaney/Mullinabreena and St. Farnan's in rounds four and six respectively after receiving a walkover from St. John's in round five. Our final group game was a home tie with Drumcliffe/Rosses Point where a good win saw us finish second in the table to set up a league final against Curry. The final was played in Bunninadden Community Park on Saturday evening, the 6th of August, and in a well-contested game throughout, our lads started to take control of the game in the second half and ended up winning by six points on a score line of 1-12 to 0-09.

For the Junior B Championship, we were drawn in Group 4 with St. Mary's, Enniscrone/Kilglass and Ballymote. A facile win at home Ballymote in round one and a tight, two-point away win over St. Mary's in round two was enough to see our lads finish as group winners, as Enniscrone couldn't field a team to fulfil their last two fixtures. This meant we had earned had a home quarter-final where Drumcliffe/Rosses Point were our opponents. In a game where our lads never really looked in trouble, they ended up winning comprehensively to qualify for the semi-final two weeks' later. This game, played on a wet Saturday evening in Scarden, wasn't a classic by any stretch of the imagination, but they say semi-finals are for winning and that's what our lads duly did as they dispatched of Coolera to earn their place in the Junior B decider against Tubbercurry. It was back to Bunninadden for the final on Saturday evening, the 15th of October. After a very cagey opening twenty minutes or so, once our lads got their noses in front they never looked back and an early second-half goal sent the Harps lads on their way to a league and championship double, winning in the end on a score line of 1-14 to 0-10. I wish to commend the players on this achievement and thank the team's management of Shane Gallagher, Des Horan, Brendan McHugh and Mikey O'Grady for all their work throughout the year. A special thanks to Des who also continued to provide first-aid for our junior and senior men's team this year. This is, as always, very much appreciated.

With underage football on the boys' side in the county being changed to the odd age groups (U13, U15 and U17) in the last two years, much has been discussed about the gap for the players coming out of U17 grade and into the adult ranks. The merits of the running of underage competitions at odd or even age groups is something which continues to create much debate in GAA circles, and there are, no doubt, arguments to be made on both sides. This is an issue that I feel is not going to go away, however, and is undoubtedly something the GAA will have to make a decision on one way or another in the coming years, one feels. But getting back to events on the pitch and with the odd age groups in situ for this year anyway, Sligo GAA introduced an U19 championship in the summer months as some response to the gap-bridging issues discussed as well as an attempt to build on the county's recent successes at U17 and U20 level. This gave an opportunity to our club's U18 and U19 players to continue their development playing against players their own age, and bolstered by our U16 and U17 players who were also eligible to play, an exciting albeit young panel of players was put together as Eastern Harps took their place in the "A" Championship.

This competition got underway for our lads on Wednesday, the 6th of July, with a home meeting against Coolera/Strandhill. Even though it was the first time some of these players played competitively together, it didn't take long for them to gel, and our lads went on to win this game comfortably to get their championship off to a winning start. Wins over Ballymote/Bunninadden at home and two tough away wins against St. Molaise Gaels and St. Mary's saw our lads finish out the group stage of the competition unbeaten and earn a home semi-final. This game was played on a beautiful August evening in Keash where an improved Ballymote/Bunninadden were the visitors. With a large crowd coming out for this game, possibly there were some nerves from our lads, as it took them a while to get into this game and found themselves two points in arrears at half-time. However, the lads showed good character in the second half and found plenty to go on to win the game quite comfortably in the end, setting up a final meeting with St. Mary's the following Wednesday evening in Markievicz Park.

In a competitive game against two very evenly matched teams, this was a game where our lads found themselves behind for most of the game. From trailing by six points at half time, an early goal in the second half reduced the gap before St. Mary's added further scores to lead by seven. However, from here, our lads never panicked and gradually, through keeping the scoreboard ticking over and some excellent goalkeeping at the other end, reduced the deficit to two points as the game neared full-time. Cool heads were shown from our players in these tense moments, and two frees were converted to leave the sides level at the final whistle and heading for extra-time. Our lads started to gain control of proceedings from here, however, and headed into the break with a six point advantage, a lead they were able to maintain in the second period of extra-time to win in the end by five points on a score-line of 3-14 to 0-18.

Getting over the line to win this inaugural competition was a massive achievement for this group of players and indeed for our club. With this being quite a young panel, a lot of these lads are eligible for this age group next year and in the years to come. There's no doubt the experience they gained will serve this group of players well in the coming years as they progress in their football careers, and here's hoping this very talented group of players go on to have many more good days in the Eastern Harps jersey. A huge well done to the players as well as their management team of Keith Carty, Ronan Higgins, Shaun Dorrian, Sean Bruen and Ross Donovan.

At the end of the year, Sligo GAA ran a men's U21 championship on a straight knockout basis. Our club was entered in the "A" Championship and we were drawn against Ballymote/Bunninadden, the eventual competition winners. With numbers quite small for our club at this particular age group, and after a long season and with some lads working and away on the day of the game, we headed into this game with a slightly depleted squad. The lads battled well in the conditions, but it wasn't our day on this occasion.

Our minor girls only competed in one competition this year, the "B" Championship, as they didn't have any league campaign to contest. A lot of this panel were training with the senior ladies, however, which did provide them with plenty of opportunities for football, but there were members of this team who were only playing at minor level and in turn had, disappointingly, only three competitive games to play all year. In these three games they did have a final to contest, though, as a good home semi-final win over St. Farnan's/St. Pat's set up a championship-decider with Curry. Having already narrowly lost to this opponent in their opening group game, it was always set to be another tight game. Despite a bad start which saw our girls concede a few early goals, they battled their way back into the game but were unable to catch Curry on the day who won in the end by three points. Although it was a short season, I hope the experiences gained will stand these girls in good stead as many of them make the step up to adult football. Thanks to their management of Stephen Powell, Eimear Henry, Benny Connolly and Colm Gallagher.

Our U17 boys ended their season having reached the semi-final stage of both their league and championship competitions. Unfortunately, they were unable to get over the line in either, losing very narrowly in both games. With only one loss to our lads' record at the conclusion of the round-robin stage of the Division 1 League, they had earned a home semi-final against Drumcliffe/Rosses Point. In a very competitive game that needed extra-time to find a winner, Drumcliffe came out on top in the end to end our lads' involvement in the competition. Attention then turned to a six-team "A" Championship which started in mid-August. After receiving a walkover against St. Molaise Gaels in round one, the lads very impressively went unbeaten in all their group games – a very impressive home win over St. Mary's included – to see them finish top of the group. This meant a home semi-final and repeat of the round four fixture with St. Mary's again making the trip to Keash. In what was a very tight game throughout, eventual competition winners St. Mary's managed to manufacture a goal in the game's closing stages to win by two points. While the lads came away from the year with no silverware to show for it, they proved more than capable of mixing it with the very best teams in the county at this level on any given day which certainly bodes well for the future. Thanks to this team's management of Ronan Higgins, Keith Carty, Shaun Dorrian and Sean Bruen.

Our U16 girls competed in the Division 1 League and in the "A" Championship. The girls had only one loss to their name at the conclusion of the round-robin stage of their league competition which saw this team qualify for the final after a hard-fought semi-final win over CT Gaels. Eoghan Rua were their opponents here, and they proved to be our girls' nemesis this year, as the West Sligo side got the better of them again to take the league prize. Championship football was up next for our girls, starting in mid-August. In round one, Curry received a walkover as a change in throw-in time due to a clash with another match on our pitch was not communicated with the opposing team nor the referee. These mistakes can always happen, but it was disappointing for all concerned that this game couldn't be played. The girls put this disappointment behind them quickly, however, and got back to winning ways in their next game against CT Gaels. A loss to Eoghan Rua followed by a draw with Coolera meant the girls had to beat St. Mary's in their final group game to progress to a semi-final, which they duly did after a great performance. Here, unfortunately, Curry did enough on the day to run out winners after a competitive game, ending our girls' playing year. While they came away without any silverware for the year, these girls were competing well at the top end of the top-tier competitions in league and championship, and here's hoping the experiences gained this year can prove to be motivation for this group as they move forward. Thank you to their management team of Colm Gallagher, Eimear Henry, Dawn McGowan and Patrick Gallagher for all their efforts throughout the year.

Our U15 boys had a busy year, and it ended on a high note with them claiming the "A" Championship Shield. The lads were unbeaten during their Division 1 League campaign, recording two wins and two draws which set up a home semi-final against St. Mary's. After drawing with them previously, this was another tight, competitive game with the teams eventually needing extra-time to find a winner. A late scoring flurry from St. Mary's meant that it was the Sligo Town team who progressed to the final, however. Either side of this semi-final, this team competed in the county Féile and also participated in a blitz tournament organised by our neighbours Ballymote/Bunninadden – both of which providing extra football for this team to prepare them for the "A" Championship which got underway in July. With some injuries to key players not helping our lads' cause, three losses to St. Mary's, Enniscrone/Kilglass and Calry/St. Joseph's meant the "A" Shield would be the route which this team's season would take. An entertaining and high-scoring semi-final win over Tubbercurry/Cloonacool in Kilcoyne Park set up a final meeting with St. John's in Scarden where our lads put on a great display of football to win well on the day and claim the Shield. No doubt this team will hope to build on this in the coming years. Many thanks to this team's coaches of Fintan McGowan, Adrian Cooke, Ross Donovan, Peter Mitchell and Damien Carty for all their efforts with this team this year.

Our U14 girls had a good year in 2022, the highlight of which was winning the Division 2 League in June. The girls' impressive league campaign saw them top their group with an unblemished record, defeating St. Farnan's, Ballisodare, Tourlestrane, St Nathy's and Molaise Gaels to set up a league final with Tourlestrane. The final, played in Curry, went the way of our girls also and they ran out winners to round off an excellent league. Shortly after that it was time for championship football, where this team were drawn in the "A" Championship. In another tough group, and in high-quality games, the girls lost out to St. Marys and CT Gaels. They responded with impressive wins against Eoghan Rua, Drumcliffe/Rosses Point and local rivals Shamrock Gaels to finish third in the group. In the semi-final the girls faced St. Mary's again and played some excellent football to lead at the break. As we know, football is a game of two halves, and Mary's fought back to eventually win out. However, our girls gave a great account of themselves against the team who went on to win the competition in the end. Well done to this team and thanks to their management of Patricia McDonagh, Katie McCoy and Katie Hannon.

This year, only one U13 boys' team was entered and they competed in the "A" tier of the league competition. Here the lads competed very well, going on to win four out of their seven games to see them finishing fourth in the group and into a semi-final. This saw them go up against the strong table-toppers, St. Mary's, where the Sligo Town team emerged victorious. In the "A" Championship, the lads got off to a great start with a good win over Shamrock Gaels. Defeats in their next two games followed to set up a Shield semi-final with Ballymote/Bunninadden. Here, our lads recorded a good victory on home soil to qualify for the final which was played two weeks' later in Corran Park in mid-September. On a fine evening, our lads played some great football and put up a big score, but some very impressive goal-scoring from our opponents, Shamrock Gaels, was enough for them to win on the day. However, at these age groups, the development of the players' skill levels is far more important than any trophies, and this young squad of players had a fine year in this regard. Thank you to their coaches: Francis Candon, Marcus Jackson, Padraig O'Gara, Pat Conheady and Seamus Hannon.

Our U12 girls had a fine year which culminated in them winning the Silver Shield. In their league campaign, the girls impressively won four out of their five games which saw them eventually qualify for a league final. Unfortunately, Eoghan Rua proved too strong on the day, as they ran out winners on this occasion. This saw the girls head into the championship with optimism, however, and they were drawn in the 'Silver' tier. Again, the girls were very competitive here, and in winning three out of their five games, earned their place in the Shield final against near neighbours Shamrock Gaels. As mentioned in the previous paragraph and as Linda very eloquently put it in her report for this year's AGM booklet, the development of confidence and skill levels is by far the most important thing at these underage levels, but getting over the line in the final in Scarden in early September was a fitting reward for the girls' efforts this year. Well done to them and thanks to their coaches, Linda Donovan, Megan McCormack and Riona Hannon.

Our underage academy comprising of our teams from U5 to U11 continued at pace this year also. Training continued on Saturday mornings for all these age groups from April to October with extra training sessions for the U9 and U11 boys' and girls' teams also taking place during the week. The U9 and U11 boys and girls, as well as our U10 girls, had plenty of game throughout the year also against various different teams from around the county where the emphasis is solely on developing skills and teamwork, the foundations from which these young players' footballing journeys will be built upon. Many of our youngest players made their debuts for the Harps this year also, as our U7s took to the field in some blitzes during the summer. Some of these young players also had some unforgettable experiences this year in visiting the majestic Connacht GAA Air Dome as well as the home of GAA: the hallowed turf of Croke Park. The trip to the Air Dome came about for the U11

boys and girls for winning a skills competition and the trip to Croke Park for our U11 boys as part of the Connacht Go Games. Hopefully these experiences will continue to inspire these young footballers as they progress through the ranks. As well as an Easter Camp, a schools' blitz was also organised this year before the summer holidays with all of the schools from the club's catchment area invited to take part. This was a wonderful occasion, and it was a fantastic opportunity for a lot of our club players – as well as for young players from other clubs who attend many of the schools also – to play with and against some of their club teammates while representing their schools. A special thanks to Coaching Officer Linda Donovan for all her work in organising these initiatives as well as all her work in coaching and coordinating all of our underage coaching teams. To the many people involved in coaching all these underage teams, as well as senior and underage players who help out at the training sessions each week, a massive thanks for the invaluable work you do in fostering these young footballers. Linda has listed all the coaching teams in her report for the booklet, so here I would like to give a collective thank you to you all.

Development

After completing works last year which brought our new clubhouse to its completion, the Development Committee turned its attention to new projects this year in their efforts to continually enhance our club's facilities. The big project they have been working on this year is in developing our pitch's floodlights. For the last few years, the floodlights on our main pitch have been out of action which has been a significant impairment for the training needs of our club's teams in the times of the year, before and after the summer months, where evening light is limited. Rather than fixing the lights we currently have, the committee decided they would apply for grant funding for a project which would seek to completely revamp the lights with full match-standard and more energy-efficient LED floodlights, and in February of this year, we were delighted to have received approximately €80,000 in grant funding under the Sports Capital Programme to fund this project. With a lot of the planning and work behind the scenes now completed, works will hopefully get underway in the new year and it is hoped that our pitch will be lit up again in 2023. Having full match-standard lights, one of only a few venues in the county that can offer this, will also be something of benefit to the club and will offer us more opportunities for hosting games and events at our pitch.

As well as this, the committee also sourced funding of approximately €16,000 from Pobal under the Community Centres Investment Fund for the installation of photovoltaic cells in our clubhouse. With the rising costs of electricity as well as the needs to find alternative sources of energy as part of the ongoing climate crisis, the advantages of having these in place in our clubhouse could be twofold. This project is still in its planning stage, as are a few others, but with the vision of this committee and their proven ability to bring projects from their inception right through to completion, there are no doubts that due consideration will be given on all aspects of these projects with the club's best interests always at heart. Thanks to this committee, chaired by Seán Scott, for their ongoing work.

Fundraising is always needed in order for our club to be in a position to receive grand aid to carry out development projects, however. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to any of our fundraisers throughout the year. In a time where the cost of living is at the highest it's been at in a long time, this support is, if anything, even more appreciated when viewed in this context. Last year, our club developed a new weekly fundraiser in the form of our weekly 50/50 draw. Here, half of the draw's income each week is paid out to a lucky jackpot winner with the other half going towards the club's development account. At various stages during the year, extra prizes such as hampers are on offer also, providing our entrants additional opportunities to win. It has been great to see this draw's jackpot remaining quite consistent, averaging at about €610, which has given our jackpot winners handsome returns on their investment. It has also been great to see the jackpot spread out among club members near and far – and indeed among people from outside our

club also – as it takes place each Monday evening. Thanks again to everyone who has supported this draw for the year. Hopefully it will continue to be something which receives your support for the coming year, and to borrow the cliché: “If you’re not in, you can’t win!” Many thanks to Brendan McHugh and his fellow Finance Committee members Mikey O’Grady, Paul Judge and Thomas Cryan, as well as Ronan Higgins and Seamus Hannon, for their continued work in running this draw each week.

Gurteen Bingo, another important funding stream for our club, continues every Friday evening in conjunction with Gurteen Hall Committee. After almost two years of Covid restrictions where bingo had to be run initially as a solely drive-in event and later a hybrid drive-in and indoor event with reduced capacity to allow for social distancing, in September of this year, Gurteen Bingo were able to open their doors to welcome a full hall for bingo once again. The fact that bingo ran right through the Covid pandemic, when allowed by the Government restrictions of course, is testament to this committee’s adaptability and commitment to providing the best possible product to their patrons each week. Bingo provides a valuable social outlet for many members of our community and beyond, and it has been great to see the buzz back in the hall each Friday evening as bingo-goers, both young and old, share a cup of tea and a chat, not to mention the opportunity to win a few euro as well! Thank you, on behalf of the club, to everyone for your continued support of Gurteen Bingo. A big thanks to the tireless committee, chaired by Damien McGovern, for all their work also. Again, from being on their roster of volunteers for the year, I have seen first-hand the levels of drive and commitment that this committee possesses.

Our annual Club Members’ Draw which contributes towards the costs associated with the day-to-day running of our club also continued this year. It was great that this draw could take place in person this year, after having to be held behind closed doors for the past two years. This year, it took place in Mac’s Pub on the June Bank Holiday Sunday where €22,000 in prize money was given out. Congratulations to all our winners, and thank you to all our draw members for your much-valued support. Thanks also to Eamon Scanlon who was again our independent observer on the day. If anyone would like to buy a ticket for next year’s draw, please get in touch with any committee member.

Healthy Club

Our club’s active Healthy Club Committee had another busy year. As we have come to expect from this committee, they continued to provide initiatives which seek to add to the overall health and wellbeing of the entire community which our club serves. These have included what has become a staple of the Healthy Club’s offerings in their monthly family 5km walks, as well as rowing and Zumba classes which have been running during the winter months. However, it was at the turn of the year when, following on from the remarkable success of their “Get Up Get Moving” initiative last year which earned this committee a Cathaoirleach’s Award for work in the community, they really came to the fore once again. Let’s cast our minds back to Easter Saturday when the inaugural Castle to Cave Camino took over large swathes of the roads of the Keash/Ballinafad area, to not only get many people from our club and beyond out walking but also to highlight and promote some of the beautiful landscape we have on our doorstep.

At the turn of the year, the committee had already got the ball rolling on this event. Something which had been mooted as an idea for some time, on the 6th of December the event was officially launched with a promotional video, official logo and Facebook page, as well a committee in place who were prepared to put in the time and effort required to plan for and promote an event of this size. As photos of the wonderfully scenic 34km route were shared to the event’s Facebook page as well as titbits of the history and folklore associated with the area, work was being put in behind the scenes to find grant funding and sponsorship for the event, organise the route, ensure resources and

facilities would be in place on the day as well as a multitude of other tasks needed for this event to run smoothly. With some media coverage and radio interviews being conducted, the event started to gather pace, and by the time of the official launch night for the event on the 29th of March, there was a considerable excitement already starting to build for the event itself just under three weeks later.

After the final preparations were made, the big day itself finally came around. Thankfully, the weather conditions were favourable, and the first of the event's participants – many of whom were running the Camino's route – started off bright and early. As the day progressed and the walkers, who were setting off in different time slots, started to fill the roads in their droves and arrive back to the clubhouse in a steady flow to receive their commemorative medal and goodie bag, the months of planning really started to come to fruition. The effort being put in to walk the scenic but testing route was matched every step of the way by the efforts of the club's volunteers, however, in providing refreshments and encouragement to walkers and runners along the route as well as administering the start/finish line among other jobs around the clubhouse. This truly was an event for everyone in our club, and it was heartening on the day to see so many members of our club coming out to play their part in the day either as a participant or a volunteer, the sense of community and camaraderie palpable. Thank you to the businesses who kindly sponsored this event as well as Sligo Leader, Healthy Sligo and Sligo Sports and Recreation their funding. From the monies raised from the Camino, €1,000 was donated to an extremely worthy cause, local suicide prevention charity STOP Suicide, and in August this cheque was presented by this committee to representatives from the charity at our clubhouse.

As it would be impossible to thank everyone individually, please take this as a big, general thanks to everyone who supported this event and helped to make it the special day it was. Mar a deireann an seanfhocal: "Ní neart go cur le chéile". Finally, a huge thank you to the Healthy Club Committee of Carmel Taheny, Edward East, Sinéad Scott, Eimear Henry, Thomas Taheny, Monica Henry, Ruth Taheny-McManus, Kathleen Walsh, Ross Donovan, Liz Hunt and Orla Madden, led by their chairperson, Pdraig Henry, whose indomitable spirit and enthusiasm make organising events such as this seem almost easy. I'm excited for what 2023 has in store already.

Facilities

It was another busy year for our club's pitch. As well as catering for all of our club's adult and underage teams, we also hosted a number of other games. Some of the games we hosted this year were Geevagh vs Ballymote and St. Molaise Gaels vs Ballymote in the men's Intermediate Championship; Cloonacool vs St. Michael's in the men's Junior A Championship; St. Nathy's vs Shamrock Gaels and Calry/St. Joseph's vs Curry as a double-header in the Sligo LGFA Division 2 and 3 League finals respectively; as well as Sligo vs Leitrim in the Fr. Manning Cup.

All this traffic inevitably leads to considerable wear and tear on our pitch, and keeping it in the best possible condition takes a lot of work. Therefore, I would like to thank our club's Facilities Committee, chaired by Ronan Higgins, for all the countless hours of work they put into looking after our club's pitch and facilities. Thanks also to all the volunteer hours put in by those who help out to prepare the clubhouse and grounds for matches and to those who help out on the day with stewarding, providing tea/coffee among various other jobs when needed.

County Commitments

It is always an honour to represent your county at any level, so well done to all from our club who represented county teams this year. On the ladies' side, Lisa Casey, Lisa Powell, Megan McCormack and Roisin Molloy were part of the Sligo LGFA senior squad. Sarah Conheady was part of the U18 squad; Aoife Lyons, Alicia O'Dowd, Eimear Redican, Hazel Redican and Tara McGowan were part of the U16 squad; and Grace Carty was part of the U14 squad. At underage boys' level, Cillian Duggan, Cian Carty, Conor Walsh, David Lyons, Dean Davey, Eoghan Nerney, Jim Molloy, Josh McHugh, Liam

Higgins, Ryan Duffy, Marty Murray and Martin McKeon were part of the Sligo U16 squad who won the Fr. Manning Cup in August. Conor Walsh and Cian Carty were also part of Sligo's U17 squad along with Josh McHugh and Barry Cryan. We had a number of representatives on U14 and U15 development squads as well.

Undoubtedly, one of the highlights of Sligo GAA's year came in April when our county's U20 footballers captured the Connacht title for the first time in their history at this level. This was a great and historic achievement for the county's footballers, and it was made all the more special as they captured the title in front a home crowd in Markievicz Park, beating Mayo by a point in the final. It was great that our club had representation on this panel with two of our club's senior and U19 players, Dylan Walsh and Matt Henry, starting for this team. Well done to the lads and the wider panel and management on this achievement, and hopefully it can lay the foundations for future successes for our county.

At committee level, Ronan Higgins was part of the county's Facilities Committee and Damien McGovern was a member of Coiste na nÓg. Ciarán McGovern represented our club at County Committee meetings.

Referees

Ciarán McGovern and Gavin Gardiner represented our club as active referees this year. At times, it takes quite a bit of courage to be the man or woman in the middle of a competitive game, so I commend Ciarán and Gavin for taking up the mantle this year. It has been shocking to see some of the incidents regarding the abuse of referees that have been in the national media this year, and there is no doubt that this is one of the biggest issues which the GAA has to face. For our games to run, we need referees, and it is the responsibility of us all in the GAA community to ensure that referees are respected at all times.

Kerry McKeon Literary Competition

The Kerry McKeon Literary Competition continued again this year. This competition, which continues to grow each year, is always a highlight of the year's calendar. While giving all children from our club's area an opportunity to channel their creative sides off the pitch, it also gives children who may not be involved with the playing side of our club an opportunity to engage with the club in another way, which is something that a GAA club should always strive to do. As well as this, it strengthens our links with the various schools in our catchment, as they are intrinsically linked to the running of the competition.

Thank you to the McKeon family for their continued support of this competition which is run in Kerry's memory. Thanks also to Karl, Kerry's brother, who presented this year's winners with their trophies. Well done to everyone who took part in the competition this year, and thanks to Mikey O'Grady for his work in running this competition. All this year's prize-winners are listed in our AGM booklet.

Scór

Our club was represented in the Scór Sinsir county final which took place in Ballintogher Hall in October by Sarah Snee in the solo singing category and Ciarán Dorrian, Brendan McHugh, John O'Neill were joined by myself in the table quiz category. Scór, like the Kerry McKeon competition discussed in the previous paragraph, gives opportunities for members to represent their club in other ways off the field of play, and it seeks to promote the cultural and Irish language aspects of the GAA. This was the first time Scór could take place in a few years due to the Covid pandemic, and it was great that our club was represented. While we fell a little short in the quiz category, Sarah Snee sang beautifully and took the county prize for our club. She then went on to represent our club in the Connacht finals in Claremorris a few weeks later. Well done, Sarah, on this achievement. If anyone would like to get involved with Scór next year, please get in touch with any club officer and they will be able to provide you with more information.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone on the club's Executive Committee for their work this year. In particular, I would like to thank the club's Assistant Secretary, Paul Judge, for all the help he gave to me throughout the year. Go raibh a maith agat, a Phóil. Thanks again to Carmel Taheny for her work in compiling our AGM booklet again this year, something which is always a great memento to have to accompany our AGM. Also, a huge thank you to all our club's premium sponsors for their unwavering support again this year.

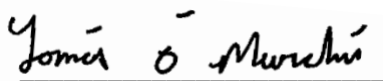
On behalf of the club, I offer congratulations to all who got married, engaged and those who had new additions to the family in 2022. I would also like to offer sincere condolences to all those who suffered bereavements during the year.

This report has, again, ended up being longer than I had planned it to be, but I sincerely apologise if there are any errors or omissions.

I hope that next year, the year we will mark our fiftieth anniversary as a club, is an enjoyable and successful one.

This report is submitted for ratification at this year's AGM.

Is mise le meas,

Handwritten signature of Tomás Ó Murchú in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Rúnaí