

CLONDUFF GAA CLUB SECRETARY'S INTERIM REPORT 31ST JULY 2013

General

Since the AGM in November 2012, Clonduff GAA Club suffered the untimely loss of its longest serving administrator, Jerry Quinn (RIP). Not only our club but the whole community, felt the shock and miss him sorely. To his family, and to all those who have lost loved ones since the AGM you have our support and sincere condolences.

Membership and Teams

Membership increased slightly from 808 last year to 817 this year maintaining Clonduff's position as the largest rural Club in Down and possibly in Ulster. Membership for Adult players closes at the end of March and for Juvenile players at the end of April with the exception of U6 children who usually begin their season later and for whom membership is not compulsory but is recommended.

We are currently accommodating well over 30 teams in the four field codes at all age levels from U6 upwards. Whilst we were lucky in the past, unfortunately this year we 'lost' a number of players to foreign shores – some short term, some long term. Thankfully most of these obtained sanctions which mean they will continue playing our games wherever they are. Sanctions are necessary to ensure GAA Insurance cover and this applies equally to Challenge Games and Tournaments and I would remind mentors that when seeking Challenge games it is important that the County Board is notified at least three days hence – five if it's outside the county. This applies to Football, Hurling and Ladies Football at all levels.

Discipline

Discipline or lack of it has been big issue both on and off the field among our adult football teams. In the past few years we have been able to boast about having one of the best records in respect of red cards. Unfortunately that is not the case this year as currently we have accumulated more red cards so far this year than we did in the last three years combined.

Unfortunately, lack of internal discipline, which should be internal, has been the talk of the county – it is very sad to see our great club's name being dragged through the mud. Recently it was brought to my attention that a member of one of the juvenile teams took issue with the fact that he didn't get starting a game – if this player thought at this tender age that he was better than his team mates it does not augur well for the future generation of Clonduff players. We must instil in our players sportsmanship and respect from the moment they first don the Clonduff jersey. This is the joint responsibility of mentors and parents.

Adult Games

The SFL was structurally changed for the current season – there are now 16 teams in Div 1 with each team playing the other once only.

The SF Championship which begins for Clonduff on 9th August has also undergone a structural change – there are now four groups of four with Clonduff in Group C along with Liatrom, Annaclone and Castlewellan with the two top teams progressing to Quarter Finals. Venues are neutral.

The Seconds and Thirds do not get a second chance in their Championships – Seconds went out in preliminary round and Thirds went out on Sunday past in Quarter Final rather unluckily.

The Minors are Runners up in the All County League and their Championship is also on the same basis as Senior Championship – Clonduff in group with Glenn, Bredagh and Shamrocks – at the first game yesterday evening away to Glenn they had a big win to get off to a good start; the other two games are at home.

Adult Hurlers are playing in the Senior League this year and whilst they are finding some of the games tough against the Ards teams, they will, hopefully, retain their Senior League status for next year. This would be good for the future of local Hurling. Currently they are one of four teams sitting on six points at the bottom of the table but there are still a few games left to play.

Clonduff will be playing in Junior Championship – there is no Intermediate Championship since it was restructured in 2012 – Clonduff's Championship campaign begins on Monday 19th August v Kilclief at neutral venue.

Thanks to Damien Farnon who, as in previous years, organised and set up the course for the Boley Poc Fada.

Our Ladies Footballers got off to slow start mainly due to missing players through injury, exam and work commitments but now as they approach Championship their numbers are once again healthy and they too should retain their current Intermediate League status. Their first Intermediate Championship game v Bosco is Saturday evening in Mayobridge. It is interesting to note that the Ladies game is the first to adopt 3 points for a win in the League and one for a draw.

Like the Ladies Footballers, the Camogs also got off to slow start for exactly the same reasons but they have turned their season around and won their last three games including defeating the previously unbeaten league leaders, Ballycran – timely indeed as they meet the same opponents in the first round of the Championship, away on 7th August.

Handball among the juveniles has seen a massive increase with over 40 children participating and for the very first time we have girls registered and they, along with the boys have taken part in County Championships, Feile and a few tournaments. Another massive stride in Handball occurred with the opening of the One Wall Handball wall at the Primary School and to Mrs Cousins and the Board of Governors we say a big ‘Thank You’ for allowing us to convert the school wall for this purpose. It is a delight to see the number of people, young and not so young, stopping off to have a game.

Thanks to Colin and his team who organised the Boley One Wall Handball event.

Heartiest congratulations to Sean McNally who recently won the All Ireland One Wall Golden Masters title.

Clonduff had another good year of participation in Scór Sinsir and Scór na nÓg and are County Champions in Set Dancing and Instrumental Music. Joe Farrell has a wonderful class of very young people learning Set Dancing in the Club on Wednesday evening and takes a recreational Set Dancing Class in Parochial Hall on Thursday nights. Sheila Nolan, as she has done for years, has Irish Dancing classes in Parochial Hall on Monday nights. Cora Magee runs Traditional Music classes in Carcullion House on Friday night for all age groups.

Juvenile Games

Most of our juvenile teams in all codes are going well – some got off to slow start but gradually ‘grew’ into their games.

The U16 Footballers have a good chance of winning the All County Div 1 League – their Championship doesn’t start until end of August- they are away to St Paul’s in first round.

The U14s should finish runners up in their league. In their first Championship game on Monday evening they had a great win over Newry Shamrock. Rostrevor are also in the group with the top two progressing to Semi Finals.

The U12s are fielding two teams in the South Down League and have moved into second place in both Div 1 and Div 4. There is no Championship at this level. The team has won Gary Murray and Dromintine Tournaments.

The U8s and U10s have picked up silverware in most of their tournaments and been Runners Up the rest. The U6s had their first away outing on Sunday in Warrenpoint and performed brilliantly for their tender years.

The U16 Hurlers have won the All County Div 2 league with two games left to play. At the time of writing there is no word about championship. The U14s are mainly the U12s and are finding the going tough. They will play in the Shield section of the Championship with Ballyvarley and Warrenpoint in their group – two will progress to Semi Finals. The U12s had a good run and sit second in their league. A summer league was organised but a decision was made not to participate because of the amount of travelling involved.

The U14s Ladies Footballers play in the B League and Championship and have performed well in the League to date and will take on Loughinisland at home in the first game of the Championship – date to be confirmed.

The U12 team has 30 registered players and it is pleasing to note that every child gets game time – if the opposition have enough numbers they play a 20 min period for U10s otherwise they can use unlimited subs. To date they have played 8 games, won 4 and drawn one. A great wee Parish Tournament up to and including U14s, organised by the Ladies Football Sub Committed started the Boley Funday event.

In Camogie there are big numbers of U6, U8 and U10 girls attending weekly training and attend monthly blitzes. Clonduff is hosting one such blitz on 11th August.

The U12s are in Section 2 of the league and have performed well against most teams.

The U14 and U16 teams got off to slow starts but improved with each outing. The U14s went out in first round of Championship but will now play for the Shield. The u16s won their first Championship game and now meet old adversaries Liatroim in the Semi Final some time in August.

The Minor League is a bit of a shambles – it started quite early in the season and then took a break for exams but it has yet to restart.

Tournaments

We have organised Tournaments at U8, U10 and U12 with teams from Dublin, Meath, Louth, Kildare, Derry, Tyrone and Armagh attending as well as teams from Down. These tournaments have to be sanctioned by County, Provincial and National Boards.

A special word of thanks to Kilcoo and Dundrum for supplying three Young Referees for the Gary Murray Tournament. The tournaments themselves have been very successful and the feedback has been very positive. We were approached recently by Kilmacud to see if we were running an U14 tournament, so impressed were their U10 and U12 mentors when they attended in June! We did have a wonderful U14 4-team blitz also in June when we hosted the San Francisco team prior to their Feile campaign. Thanks to Kilcoo and Mayobridge for making up the four teams.

Our U6 mentors were very impressed with the Warrenpoint Funday – they feel we too should run such an event but that, together with the U14 request, will be a decision for the Juvenile sub committee but it is certainly worth considering.

The Camogs will be running their Parish Tournament towards the end of August for girls up to U12 level – these are managed and refereed by U14 players.

We have a Girls U12 tournament on the last Saturday in September – the inaugural one last year was a resounding success.

A massive thanks to all the sponsors, mentors, organisers, referees (Young and not so Young), pitch co-ordinators, shop assistants, tea makers, burger makers and of course the ‘cleaner uppers’ who made this all possible.

Youth Camps

A number of our children have taken part in Camp Jmac, Campa Chormaic and the most recent addition – The Michaela Foundation Summer Camp for Girls. Clonduff youngsters participated in all of these and indeed we supplied mentors/leaders for a number of these camps.

The Annual Kellogs Cul Camp takes place next week and again big numbers are expected – there were around 160 last year. Two registration mornings have already taken place and a further one will take place next Sunday morning but undoubtedly a big number will turn up on Monday morning for registration. This camp is facilitated by Clonduff, sponsored by Kellogs and organised by Down County Board but there will be some Clonduff people among the qualified coaches attending.

The week after Cul Camp, (beginning 12th August) Clonduff will host the annual Camogie Camp, sponsored by Newry & Mourne Council. This is not restricted to Clonduff Children but the coaches are generally qualified coaches from Clonduff.

Use of Facilities

We always endeavour to make our pitches available to county teams, schools, colleges and even other clubs whenever possible. We have hosted U8, U10, U12 blitzes organised by the Boards in both Football and Hurling and there will be one in Camogie next month.

There are a number of double-header championship games on the pitch in the coming weeks – Ladies Football this Saturday, Men’s on Sunday week and again the following Friday. We will be once again asking for stewards and other helpers on these days.

Development / Health and Safety Audit

The container at the bottom of the car park houses the club shop which not only sells our club merchandise but also light refreshments and snacks and proved quite lucrative when opened during the last SFL game. There is space for central storage of Club documents, which is deemed essential from this time onwards.

A fence has been erected at the top of the driveway mainly to prevent cars using our premises for ‘dough-nutting’ – in the week prior to The Boley Fair this year one or more vehicles used the bottom car park for this very purpose –

thankfully they didn't encroach upon the playing surfaces but they could easily have done so. Also the remains of a 'heavy drinking' session were deposited in the car park and the lotto sign was deliberately damaged – part of it was actually discovered in Hilltown Square.

A recent disturbing fact came to light when mentors were required to remove dog faeces from the playing surface of the new field before children could play/train. The club has always welcomed People to use the pathways around the fields for walking but this has obviously been abused by a few irresponsible people and we appeal to those people to acknowledge their responsibility and not take their dogs onto the Club's property – someone's health could be at risk.

Just last week GAA Clubs throughout Ulster were asked to carry out a Health & Safety audit, with the possibility of a 'spot check' in September. When completing ours a number of issues were highlighted as being of paramount importance with the driveway being given priority. There are a number of other minor matters that require attention and these will be carried out asap with as much voluntary input as possible.

Child Protection Awareness/ Health And Wellness

Most of our juvenile mentors have undertaken a Child Protection Awareness Course and have undergone the AccessNI vetting process and at least one team mentor has Defibrillator and Pitch Side First Aid training. All teams are provided with a First Aid Bag which is replenished as and when required. Most mentors have at least Foundation Coaching Award.

Schools Links

We maintain close links with both local Primary Schools – members of staff in both are heavily involved in the coaching and promotion of Gaelic Games and the Club gives them as much help and encouragement as possible. Although we were unable to provide a meal for the St Patrick's Children who reached the County final because it clashed with the visit of the San Francisco team, two Senior Officers visited the school the following day and presented the medals to the children.

We have committed Club members in St Mark's, St Colman's, SRC and other schools/colleges across the country and our young people continue to actively participate in their schools/colleges teams in all the codes. There were ten Clonduff boys on the St Mark's team that won the Ulster Arthur's Cup (U16) Final for the first time since 1997 and there were three players and a mentor with the SRC team that won the All Ireland Div 3 HE Championship and League.

Again the St Colman's Handball team was back-boned by Clonduff boys; the boys and girls in the local Primary Schools represented their schools in various Handball competitions.

One of our U14 Footballers, Darren Quinn, is on St Colman's Cross Country team and our Scór na nÓg participants took part in the inter schools quizzes in both Irish and English.

County and National Involvement

The Clonduff Club is well represented on County Squads and Development Squads in all codes at nearly all levels. Recently two of our lads Rían Branagan and Sean Downey were on the Armagh/Down select that played the Scotland U19 Shinty Squad at Abbey CBS and tonight three of our girls are playing in the Ulster Minor Camogie Final – Lizzie Wilson (Capt), Jenna Boden and Clare McGilligan and we wish them well.

Our members also give their valuable time as coaches, mentors/managers to a whole range of full County and Development Squads in the various codes.

There are a number of members involved in National, County and Divisional Board committees and sub committees – Niamh Murray is on the County Youth Board; Anita Brannigan on County Scór Committee and is Secretary of the South Down Scór Committee; Tommy Kelly is the Club Rep on the Co Committee; Tommy and Anita are on South Down Board; John Anthony Gribben is on the Ladies Activities Committee and is a County and National Referees Assessor; Ursula Quinn is Secretary of the County Camogie Committee; Eileen Hamill is Camogie League Secretary; Kitty Fegan is on National Camogie Coaching Committee; Fionnuala Carr on National HE Camogie Committee; Alistair McGilligan is Club Hurling Rep; and Colin Shield is County Handball PRO. I hope I haven't omitted anyone – sometimes it is hard to keep track of all that is going on. If I have omitted anyone from this list please let me know and I will try to make amends.

Language, Culture and Community

Jimmie Cousins has taken his role of Cultural Officer very seriously and had huge success in encouraging adults to participate in Scór Sinsir and is already working on a programme of Autumn/Winter activities, including an Irish

Language workshop, re-inventing the Parish Scór, as well as the usual Divisional and County Scór activities. A very successful 'Bunny Hunt' was organised at Easter and a Treasure Hunt on Boley Funday for the younger members of our community and their adults! Plunkett and Maria McConville played a big part in these events.

Community Partnerships

The main community project, so far this year is the new Handball Wall at St Patrick's Primary School. It cost very little money. Any Clonduff member or pupil at the school is authorised and insured to use it.

Again The Youth Club was used for Indoor training and we thank them for that. We also thank Fr Cushenan for the use of the Parochial Rooms, sometimes at short notice for meetings and training courses –this is precisely what 'Community' is all about. Of course, the use of facilities has been reciprocated – family functions, fund raisers and functions for other organisations, including the local schools and Church.

Our Club continues to encourage members to become involved in other local organisations eg Boley Fair, Clonduff Well-being Initiative, Hilltown and Cabra Youth Clubs, Hilltown Gateway Club, Irish Pilgrimage Trust, and support worthy organisations/causes such as Keep'er Lit and recent repatriation appeal, Blood Donors, etc.

Referees / Young Referees

Clonduff is well catered for with people who do the most thankless job in a GAA Club – Refereeing. There were no additions to the ranks of adult referees but some upgraded their qualifications or diversified into other codes. Katherine Milligan and Paul O'Hare undertook the 'Grab Your Whistle' course that qualifies them to referee Ladies Football games up to and including U12, with whom they are involved. Heartiest Congratulations to our Senior Referee, Ciarán Branagan who has made it on to the Elite List of the Top 15 Referees in the Country! Hopefully it won't be long before we see him taking charge of a 'big one' in headquarters.

Mentors and volunteers

A lot of work goes on around the club often without notice. I'm talking about the input of the many volunteers with which Clonduff GAA Club is blessed – last year it was valued at over £½m at minimum pay rate! This volunteer input was very evident in the cleanup before and after the Boley Fair when young and not so young members turned up to lend a hand. In the field cleanup *BEFORE* Boley weekend twelve bags of rubbish was lifted from around our fields – a lot of it water bottles and clothes which had been left to decompose. Personally I'm appealing to mentors **and** parents **and** players to get into the habit of removing their water bottles and clothes when leaving the pitch. Some of the clothes included 'Hilfiger' and other top brand gear – do parents not miss these or ask where they are?

But we must not forget the people who keep things ticking over on a regular basis – the players, mentors, managers, assistants, Executive and sub committee members, the fundraisers, sponsors, lotto sellers, jersey washers, grass cutters, cleaners, bar staff, kitchen staff, sandwich and tea makers, shop assistants – indeed anybody who donated their time, effort, expertise, money, money's worth or other commitment, to make Clonduff GAA Club the club that it is. Often it is easy to criticise what is going on in the Club, but perhaps if the critics were prepared to stand up and 'lend a hand' they would see things in a different light.

Goldmark

This Sport NI programme (administered by Ulster Council) has been in operation for about three years now but there is a very slow uptake from Clonduff volunteers. Why?

I strongly encourage our young people aged 16-24 years old who help out at the club in any way and there are quite a few of you, to apply for their 'GoldMark' Award– it is simply a matter of sending in an email and then completing a diary of their activities. If you need further information, I will willingly assist. It's a great qualification to put on your CV!

Social

The Clubrooms and the kitchen have undergone a transformation which totally enhances the appearance. The Social Club sub committee have worked extremely hard to have the work done and to help raise the necessary funding. They are acutely aware that it is now essential to have regular events in the clubrooms and will be endeavouring to implement this.

Martin and his team spearheaded the highly successful Boley Fair weekend activities around the Club. Again Plunkett and Maria McConville played a big part in organising the day's events.

A novel idea planned for the near future is not actually inside the club but outside – an ‘Outdoor Cinema’! It’s on Saturday 10th August, weather permitting, of course. This will be another great family occasion and deserving of your support.

Social Media/PR

Clonduff was the first Down Club to have its own website in 1999 and in May 2012 became the first Down Club to relay a game score-for-score on Twitter. We have a very active Facebook page. It wonderful to see so many ‘Friends’ using it and commenting on statuses but as it a Family Page I would remind ‘Friends’ to mind their language when posting comments – what you do on your own page is your business but if offensive language is ‘tagged’ to or posted on the Clonduff page it will be removed. This has happened a few times but we have always let the Friend know why their comment has been removed. As well as the weekly notes in The Clonduff Post and the local press we use ‘Club Call’ in The Irish News, post our notes to Hogan Stand, the Down Website, Destination Newry and The Newry Times – lots of opportunity for fans and followers to keep up to date.

A new initiative implemented by the Senior Ladies Football team is the setting up of a ‘whatsapp’ group on their phones – not only does it allow the manager to contact them but it also allows them to interact with each other – it’s a bit more personal than Facebook in that only those who are invited to the group can read/see the posts. This may be something other teams can look into – it’s an Internet-based app and doesn’t affect your message quota.

Finance

Despite the spending on the Clubrooms, the shop, etc our Club is in a healthy state. Lorraine and Paudie will present the facts and figures.

Conclusion

The five-year plan, launched a year ago showed the way forward for our Club both on the field of play and off it. Here I highlight two of those points and give my personal opinion.

Firstly, the Senior Football team was to become our ‘Shop Window’ setting the standards for all the other codes and at all levels. It hasn’t got off to a great start but it is now time to get our house in order.

Secondly, the day to day running of the Club was put into the hands of a 15-person Executive who in turn would chair the sub committees deemed necessary for the Club to function efficiently. It is my honest opinion that the number of 15 is just less than adequate. Some members are chairing two or more sub committees that bear no resemblance to each other. Also I now believe that each code should have one representative on the Executive. I am proposing, (if that is possible at this time) to increase the Executive to 20 members at the AGM in November.

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Anita Brannigan

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Runai (Secretary)

Cumann Chluain Daimh (Clonduff GAA Club)

