

Hugh John Harper - Hall of Fame

Some one once said we make a living out of what we get but we make a life out of what we give.

The recipient of to-night's Hall of Fame award represents that saying in all its glory, for indeed he (and his family) have given a lifetime of service to the GAA family.

Like most in our clubs he developed his gra for things Gaelic in the Primary school where he played his first games of football. For our Club he played at all Juvenile levels and graduated to the senior team at an early age, while his career at Adult level was relatively short he soon earned a reputation as a fast wing forward either the wing half or corner forward positions, and he often recalls with great glee a particular game against Glenn.....

After a short playing he immediately became involved in coaching and was mentor to many Juvenile teams at all levels Levels. He was joint manager of the successful Casey Cup team of 1970, a wonderful journey as people like Artie Noel can testify, and it was his proud boast that five of that team went on to win Senior Championship Honours in 1980. Looking after Juvenile teams in those days usually meant transporting teams in one's own motor and thus saving the club much needed finance. This he did often and willingly.

He had a particular interest in Scor and was one of the instigators of the Parish Scor and here again we find him transporting competitors and supporters to venues not only in our native Down but throughout Ulster and indeed Ireland.

All of those activities pale however when he turned his hand to administration, and we consider the status achieved and the esteem gained when he donned the mantle of what is considered any Club's most onerous position.

A natural fund raiser he was involved in so many club draws and finance raising initiatives that it would be impossible to enumerate all of them. Such was his profile and so high were the standards he set that it was inevitable that he would soon be earmarked for Divisional Board and County activity. And when those calls finally came he responded and again provided a service that might be equalled but **never surpassed** in the Roll of Honour of GAA Officialdom in our County.

Recently Sean O'Neill referred to the pivotal role he played in providing the necessary facilities for Down's All Ireland winning minor team of 1977 when it used Clonduff as its training base.

Lately in a tribute to him Dan McCartan said “ He was a truly wise and faithful servant who worked extremely hard in carrying out the onerous duties of his office.

He was a totally dedicated official who paid meticulous attention to detail.

Friendly and obliging he enjoyed a joke but was not afraid to take a stand when firm action was needed.”

Ulster CEO, Danny Murphy, described him as courageous, helpful and one who represented the highest ethos and ethics of our association.

At the county dinner three years ago he was presented with a special award for services to the GAA

Brian McAvoy, former County Secretary and lifelong friend, states that in the reliability and trustworthy stakes there are none higher and in ending his tribute to him and to his family he says, and I quote “there is no finer or more deserving place for the Clonduff Hall of Fame Award than 8, Mourneview, - the home of former Clonduff, South Down and County Treasurer -

HUGH JOHN HARPER