



Secretary's Report 2020

Firstly, I would like to welcome all who are reading this Secretary's Report for 2020. Normally we would be having a physical AGM, but in this unique year we do not have that opportunity and instead the AGM will be conducted via online reports.

Covid-19

Our year got off to a normal start, but then the Covid-19 lockdown arrived in March which put an immediate stop to all GAA activities not only within our club but throughout Ireland. All training, matches and events were cancelled and probably for the first time ever St. Mary's Park remained deserted for most of Spring and part of the Summer. During those early days of the lockdown expectations were very low that any football would be played this season, with plenty of theories about if or when competitions would take place, their format and how club and county schedules could be altered to fit everything in. In a unique year, it was a strange sight to see the seniors training in the grounds of Hope Castle while our own playing pitch remained closed.

Thankfully as we came to terms with Covid-19, all our teams got an opportunity to play in round-robin type championship competitions – the playing season was very short, but at least we had games.

Best Wishes/Bereavements

I would like to extend our best wishes to all our club members who may be unwell at this time. Covid-19 has undoubtedly taken its toll on our community but unfortunately all the other sicknesses and diseases do not suddenly disappear. To all our club supporters who have suffered bereavements throughout the year we extend our deepest sympathies.

Unfortunately, with the restrictions placed on gatherings due to Covid-19 we were not able to properly pay our respects, but it was heartening to see the guards of honour and messages of support for our deceased members and their families.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha

Seniors

The senior men went into the novel round-robin championship in reasonably confident mood despite the pandemic restrictions that interrupted the pre-season and forced the cancellation of the league. Unfortunately, the round robin games did not go our way, but in the relegation semi-final the lads certainly put it up against reigning county champions Clontribret and came away from that game confident in how they could play. That confidence rolled over into the play-off final against Donaghmoynne in Inniskeen. Thankfully, we got over that hurdle and our Division 1 status remains intact. Congratulations to Scotstown who won the Mick Duffy Cup in 2020. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Colm and his team for all their hard work over this past two years. It was a hard (and thankless) job but despite all the setbacks and unexpected events, our Division 1 status is preserved. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Johnny Murtagh who joins us as Senior manager. Johnny has a wealth of football

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experience and has done it at the very highest level. I would like to wish Johnny and his backroom team and all the players the very best for the 2021 season. Let us hope Johnny can take over from where Colm left of and move the team and club forward and return the Mick Duffy Cup back to Castleblayney.

The senior ladies put in a great shift not only in training but in their round-robin matches. Unfortunately, they just missed out on a championship final spot, but they can take great heart from their endeavours and look forward to next season. Not resting on their laurels, Tom, Grainne, Maire, and Mickey already have the ladies training for next season!

Juveniles

Round-robin type championship competitions were organised for all our boys' and girls' teams in 2020 from U13 up. In a year of unqualified success, ALL our teams got to at least the semi-final stage. The undoubted highlight was that special Sunday in Inniskeen when both the boys and girls captured their respective Div1 County Minor championships. It would be fair to say that both teams travelled more in hope than in expectation, but you can never write off any 'Blayney team in a final. In two nail-biting encounters both teams played some great football and fully deserve their titles of county champions. Well done to all the players and I would like to congratulate Declan and his backroom team for the boys team and Paddy and his backroom team for the girls team.

The U15 boys and the U16 girls both made it to their respective Div1 Finals, but again Covid-19 played its part and the finals were not able to be played. I know that the players were disappointed not to be able to win the cup properly on the field of play in the final but at least the record will show that 'Blayney were county champions in 2020 at these grades. All the players will receive winners' medals and the cups will be shared between the finalists. Special mention to Paul and his mgmt. team for the U15 boys and to Keith and his mgmt. team for the U16 girls. Incidentally the U16 girls retained the cup following their win from 2019, so well done everyone involved (no pressure for next season!)

Field Activities

This year saw work beginning on our much-needed pitch on the old golf course at Onomy. The year began with the completion of the land purchase at Onomy. Once purchased we were keen to get moving as quickly as possible, so we soon had a contractor in who removed the row of conifers between our existing pitch and the new pitch. Prunty Contracts who are doing the main development work then moved in. Is fantastic to see progress being made on the new pitch. Unfortunately, the weather was not in our favour in the second half of 2020, but the pitch should be completed sometime in 2021. Even with the Covid-19 pandemic and the practical difficulties it brings such as restricted fundraising activities and restricted opportunities to get some work done onsite I am pleased that we were able to make a significant start with the development work. I need to stress at this point that financing the development is a priority for the club and all club members should be aware that we all have a part to play in paying for the new pitch. The new pitch is not only for our current players but will be enjoyed by players for generations to come. I would urge all members to continue

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supporting any and all initiatives that are undertaken to help finance the building of the new pitch.

I would like take the opportunity to thank Gerry and his team who continue to look after the pitch and the wider St. Mary's Park.

Off field Activities

The Share Draw initiative to raise development funds took place over the last 3 months of 2019 and culminated in the draw itself held in Watters' Old Coach Inn over the Christmas period. Congratulations to Bernie McMahon who scooped the top prize and well done to the other winners. I want to give a special mention not only to the sellers who spent many an evening knocking on doors but also to the people, not only Faughs supporters but GAA supporters throughout Monaghan, who gave so generously to our cause. The proceeds from the Share Draw went a long way to purchasing the land at Onomy for the new pitch. Thank You.

When Covid-19 hit, the whole community was in a state of paralysis. Luckily we were able to call on our "Coronavirus Soldiers", a collection of volunteers who were willing and able to help out with anything in the community. This included, but not limited to: delivering meals kindly supplied by Kerry Group, organising collection and delivery of shopping and providing help with queues outside essential premises. This group needs a special mention as they were first to raise their hand to help out.

The Lotto continues to go from strength to strength. I would urge all club supporters to continue playing. During these times it is our primary source of income for financing the new pitch.

Our "Bingo in the Stand" began straight after the first lockdown. This is a big success and towards the end of Autumn morphed into the Drive-In bingo. I see this as a big part of the fabric of the Castleblayney community and can only hope that it continues to grow. It truly is a project that shows what can be achieved even through a worldwide pandemic. It not only provides an important revenue stream but brings in the local community who may not have been so familiar with Castleblayney Faughs and St. Mary's Park.

My final point regarding off-field activities would be an appeal for help. We are a volunteer organisation and without volunteers we are nothing. It may seem that things just get done, but the more people we have the less work all of us have to do and the more successful we can become. I would urge all of you to raise your hand or shout up to help out with activities in and around the club.

Live streaming

As the saying goes, out of adversity comes opportunity. What started as a "wouldn't it be great if..." conversation between two staunch supporters of the club turned into a successful platform for streaming games from St. Mary's Park. The first game to be streamed was the senior match at home to Latton. Our subsequent home match with Scotstown was also streamed as were the two minor finals played at Inniskeen. There were plans for the U15 final to be streamed but unfortunately the final did not get played. With the broadband facilities already in place at St. Mary's Park we see streaming as key for letting supporters watch matches in the future. Whether it be because of Covid-19 restrictions preventing patrons from

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attending matches or our supporters being in foreign countries, I feel the ability to stream matches will be key in moving our club forward.

Sponsors

As a club we would struggle without the kind and generous help of all our sponsors. A club does not run on thin air and having the calibre of sponsors that we have undoubtedly helps to take the pressure off in the day to day running of the club and is invaluable to us. Thank You! We all know our various sponsors and businesses who actively support us – I would urge you all to support them in kind.

Is mise,
Philip Traynor, Secretary