



CLG Naomh Comhghall

2021/22





Chairs Report – Eelco Westerhuis

It has been my honour and privilege to have been Chair of what I believe is the best Club in the world – St Comgall's.

This has been a difficult year – we came out of Covid, had to find our feet again and also had a major change of Committee Members as many moved on after having been in post for a number of years.

After Covid the club needed to breath – we allowed that to happen and the results included new volunteers in a variety of roles, people stepping up and introducing new ideas and in all areas.

We have had the benefit of using new facilities, a great pitch, toilets and refreshment facilities. Our walk way around the pitch has been used by numerous parents whilst watching and waiting for their children and it has been a delight to welcome visitors to the pitch.

This would not have been possible had it not been for previous committee members and their hard work in raising funds and bidding for grants. The logistics involved in getting the containers for changing rooms, committee room, and shop, is to be applauded loudly. The development of the club continues.

There has been a great swell of young people, from age 5 upwards who, going by their performance on the pitch this season, clearly have their eyes on Senior Team Membership, that's the young ladies as well as the young lads.

Our juvenile membership has shown the biggest growth, in numbers and training hours, both via the encouragement of the Coaches and with the success of blitz days and Cul Camps.

Blitz matches saw upwards of 600 young people at the pitch over a number of Sundays, and with our new, updated facilities, this day was enjoyed by all members and visitors alike.

The Cul Camps, successfully promoted and carried out by our Coaching Officer and his team, saw numbers in excess of 500 over four camps, training for four hours per day over a week, and ranging in age from four to fourteen. The camps were attended by our members and by some children who were new to Gaelic games, having had the camps promoted in our local schools and after-schools facilities. New skills were achieved by all who participated, both playing and coaching.

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As we look forward to a New Year and new season, we will have our challenges.

We will be:

- setting out our next 3-5 year strategy for the club
- fundraising and bringing ideas into practice to allow us to celebrate 2024 which will be our 100 year anniversary
- recruiting more volunteers to help fundraise and provide practical support in all areas.
- pushing our young people to do training above and beyond playing football, we should like more Young Whistlers, and hear the voice of younger players in shaping the future of this club.

As always the great beauty and benefit of our club is the opportunities it provides to everyone taking part, lifelong friendships, a sense of community and belonging, the feeling of being part of something that has been building and growing for almost a hundred years.

And of course the elation and joy at seeing one of our teams win, at other times sharing the pain at not having won, but always doing it as part of the team, and by that I mean Team St Comgall's

I am looking forwards to another bright season with maybe some silver at the end.

A growing community with Mothers and Others, Dads and Lads, our Additional Needs Project - Sensory Garden and of course every team from Senior Men and Ladies through to the teen age teams and then the younger and even younger down to the Wee Coles.

As always I want to thank everyone on the Committee and Sub Committees for being there for the Club and supporting me in supporting the Club.

I want to thank all the coaches, and coaches' helpers, parental support and drivers without whom we wouldn't have teams.

All the people who cleaned, scrubbed, ran the refreshments and organised fun days and funding events, mowed, raked, lined pitches, repaired and created, organised and managed, mediated, administrated and sorted and of course took photos to keep a record of matches shared on Facebook.

A further thanks must go to Grace Henry at St Joseph's, Berni Mann in the Parish Office, Jim Matthews, Principal St Comgall's Primary School, all our business supporters in the town of Antrim and those outside of Antrim.

Their assistance at all times is acknowledged and appreciated.



Thanks to all who sponsored team kits, which the girls and boys are proud to wear.

Gerry and Seamus thanks for making salads possible.

There are way too many to name everyone individually but just letting you know you are all appreciated.

Please everyone remember to register for your teams and membership nice and early in the New Year – details will be out on Facebook and our Website to let you know when registration opens.

In the meanwhile:



Naomh Comhghall Abú!



Secretaries Report – Marie Ashmore

Hard on the tail of the 2021 season, the 2022 season began with a feeling of optimism, enthusiasm and general good will from all members. Together were all pushing for growth in our club, pushing to see our numbers grow.

Having had the struggle out of Covid, an energy was needed to increase our membership, strengthen our ties with our neighbouring community, and promote St Comgalls GAC at every opportunity.

This required the hard work and dedication of a number of people, from committee members, coaches, parents and of course our playing members.

To this end, sub committees were formed, for fund raising, for our fast approaching, Anniversary Year 2024, Coaches undertook to promote and persuade new attendees at the pitch to join in and then to stay and become important foundation members of our club.

Registration was undertaken, with a day set aside for this at the Youth Centre. Many attended and met the committee members for the year 2021 / 2022.

Our membership at the close of this year, stands in excess of 700, both playing members and non-playing members.

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Fund raising was and is a must in the club, and our new facilities need maintained; the fund raising was keenly undertaken by a sub-committee of ladies, dedicated to raising funds. Various events were held over the year, the most successful being our Annual Fun Day, and the Halloween Disco, the latter being attended by 198 children.

At these events, we welcomed parents and children to the club, some for the first time, and the Annual Fun Day thanked all those involved with the club, at all levels, over the year, for their dedication to the club.

We at St Comgalls can now boast of playing teams at all levels and age grades, both female and male. The dedication and skills of our coaches in keeping the juvenile members coming back to the pitch, is second to none. Success in games / matches is keenly sought and achieved with hard work from all.

We have seen the institution of our Mothers and Others and not to be outdone, the establishment in the next season of Dads and Lads – should be a good watch!

We can also boast our first lady referee, and hearty congratulations go to Amanda Leahy on her achievement in this area.

The coming season will see our first foray into the development of a sensory garden, in a bid to encourage members and their families who require this facility to enjoy coming to the pitch. This has come about via our involvement with Tides and will be enhanced by our further involvement with Autism NI in the coming months. This blends with our aim to be inclusive of all in our community.

We aim to have an open-day for our neighbouring community, who may never have had the chance to see what we do, how we play, and indeed why we play. Hopefully this will occur in the first three months of the 2023.

Personally, I would like to thank all who helped me on what was a very steep learning curve. Those who are leaving, I hope will stay close and be as committed to the future success of the club as they have been in the past. For all those coming on board, you are in for a terrific time.

And, for all I have done right, I thank you; for all I have done wrong, hopefully given the chance, I will improve in the coming year!



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Senior Men's Team – Niall Ward Manager/Coach

Training for the Senior Football Team began in mid-January. The ACFL Div 3 campaign began with 5 wins in a row with notable wins over the eventual league winners and away to Pearses.

The league campaign stumbled with an away defeat to St. Galls and a draw at O'Donnell's. The team regrouped and finished the season strongly to secure 2nd place and a league promotion play off later in the season.

In the Intermediate championship the team was drawn in a group with Glenavy and Ballymena. In the opening game in Glenavy the team competed well and gave a positive display despite defeat. In the second game a severely weakened team was well beaten at the school pitch by Ballymena ending championship involvement.

The season finished with a league play off with Glenavy at Ahoghill. The team battled tremendously well, especially in the second half finishing with a 4 point defeat.

This game highlighted that the group of players are capable of competing in the Intermediate grade and Division 2 of the league.

In what was a season of what ifs?, the ability to prepare and compete was hindered by an extensive injury list throughout the year.

Hopefully with some players returning from injury and greater commitment from others the Senior Football Team can improve in the upcoming season.





Senior Ladies Team Ben Johnston Coach/Manager

Highlights for the year with the ladies:

A number of ex-players came back into the squad to add even more depth. Massive improvement in quality. After a good pre-season, the girls have improved massively this year.

After a disappointing season last season, we got our first wins under our belt this season. Beating Lámh Dhearg CLG by 1 point and going on to win 3 more games. Most notably a very convincing victory against Lisburn.

Played in the Martha McTier championship shield. We beat Lámh Dhearg CLG by 18 points in the semi-final, but we're unfortunately beaten by Wolfe Tones GAC in the final.

Massive achievement for this group of girls, with a lot of them playing in their first final. All in all a massive improvement this season and compared to where we were last season, it is night and day.





Coaching Officer Report

Connor Rafferty and Sean Smith

2022 has been another hugely successful year for St Comgalls not just on the field of play but in terms of player participation and how we are actively attracting more and more youth players to our club. This is testament to the brilliant work being done by our coaches, whom I am immensely proud, to lead.

A lot of their work has been largely unsung, and I want to take this opportunity to thank every one of them for their effort, dedication, commitment and drive to the club this season. You are a credit to yourselves, thank you.

It has been said, that we are now running with twelve different teams from wee Coles to our U17 boys, which I believe is the most this club has ever had. This is testament to the growth in player numbers we continue to have. These teams alongside the new “mums and others” initiative and soon to have reserve team for “dads and lads” will offer members in 2023 from the top to the bottom of the club a chance to take part actively in GAA activity.

Club School Link

Our schools link within Antrim town is a work in progress with room for improvement. We have had a presence in St Joseph’s Primary School. We have been able to give them some GAA equipment, and work with Gaelfast to offer some coaching sessions.

We also have a presence in Parkhall Integrated High School. The hope is, as move into 2023 that we can get an active presence in all Antrim town schools in both primary and post primary this will continue to maximise membership potential and boost our underage teams. A number of strategies are being developed to make this happen.

Club Camps

We have had a great year when it comes to our camps, they have allowed us to continue developing the skills of all children that have attended and also add much needed funds to the ongoing development of the club.

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In 2022 we have completed four camps: one at Easter, two in the summer and at one at Halloween, with approx. 400 kids attending in total. For those youths who attended all camps, they have availed of 72 additional hours of GAA coaching or the equivalent of over two years in-season coaching.

For me these camps have allowed us at St Comgalls to bridge a development gap with other clubs and has allowed us to target age groups 4-14 years old for particular development of basic skills and game understanding.

A youth player who attends training once per week for a traditional GAA season of 30 weeks receives approx. 30hrs of development per season. In our four camps, in 3.5 weeks we have been able to offer more than double that.

Our camps via strong advertising in all the Antrim Schools and the child minding / after school's clubs have increased our membership by attracting new players and as such families. A big thanks to Club Secretary Marie Ashmore for her assistance in advertising the camps, and also her work in providing a club shop for the camps.

A big thank you to the lead coaches at the camps: Sean Smith, Eamonn Crilly, Eoghan Gribben, Gary Toney, Amanda Leahy, Katie O Hara, Ryan McAuley, Ruairi Griffin, Sean Hodkinson, Oisin Crilly, Ciara Shannon, Sophie Shields, Carl McKeating, Brooke Shorter and Diarmuid Hanna.

A further success from our camps has been the opportunity to get some of our youth players involved as camp helpers, the helpers have been mentored by our lead coaches and developed into our coaches of the future, and a big thank you to all our helpers: Aine McCafferty, Emily Mann, Conor Tyler, Bailleigh Close, Ciara Connolly, Diarmuid Hanna, Ryan Clarke, Sophie Nelson, Liam Phinn, Kian Smyth and Torin Hodkinson

Finally, a big thank you to all parents of the club who have sent their kids to us.

In 2023, it is hoped that as a club, St Comgalls will continue to run four camps: At Easter camp, two further summer camps and at Halloween. The hope is that our camps continue to go from strength to strength and become part of our member's yearly tradition to attend.



Teams

U17 Boys

As a group of players the minors had a good year. The minor team narrowly missed out on winning the league, they won 14 of 16 league games coming joint first, only to lose the league by way of a weaker head-to-head record.

This may have been a disappointment for all involved but hopefully that disappointment drives the team to bigger and better things in 2023. To the players too old for minor now, I wish you all every success as you embark on the senior team. After all it is a primary job of all underage teams to develop and provide talent for the Senior Team. I am confident that the group of players going to the seniors this year will be real assets.



Under 16 Girls

This has been a successful inaugural year for our U16 girls' team, they had great experience in January 2022 playing in the winter league against the best teams in the county in which they competed in every game played, they reached the Semi Final of the championship losing a tight game to Glenravel, and they had 13 players attend county trials with 1 being selected.

The hope is that over the coming seasons that we can continue to develop this 16s group and in the coming seasons strive to have a minor girls' team. A big thanks to Michael, Stewart and Nicola for all your efforts this year.



Under 15 Boys

Big thanks also to James McLornan on a very good season at U15 level where he has continued to develop these players to one day be future seniors. Our U15 boys had a very strong league campaign which was affected by injuries to key players which halted a long unbeaten run at the start of the season. This in turn though gave our younger U15 players much needed game time to help them develop. James unfortunately has stepped down as manager of this group, I want to put on record a huge thanks to James on what he has done for these players over the past few years, he has left this group in a very healthy state in terms of ability and numbers. I know both players and parents alike are sad to see him go.

Under 14 Girls

Big thanks to Henry Quigg and Teresa Crosbie for taking our U14 girls this season. This team finished the season with some silverware, they won the Paul Cole cup hosted by Colin Gaels. This team were also narrowly defeated in the championship semi-final and had a strong league campaign. Alongside our U16s girls, this group I hope will form the basis of a very strong senior ladies' team over the next 10-15 years.

Under 13 Boys

Big thanks to Ryan McAuley and Brian Williamson who took this group this season. It has been a difficult year for Ryan, as at times the numbers in our U13s panel haven't been high but this group have shown huge improvement under Ryan particularly in their basic skills. Ryan has made this group of players extremely competitive in all matches played. The hope is we can recruit more players for this age group for 2023 and continue to improve. Ryan has also stepped down from this group after two strong years of development; I am sure the team will miss him as much as I will.

Thanks Ryan.

Under 12 Girls

A big thanks to Amanda Leahy and Katie O Hara who have coached and managed our Under 12 girls, I have been able to see at close hand the talent that these girls possess at all the camps we have ran this year. Amanda and Katie have developed a very talented group of girls. This was Amanda and Katie's first year at this level, and they have gone from strength to strength. They are both very proactive coaches who are always learning and improving.



Under 11 Boys

Big thanks to Henry Quigg and Chris Robinson for taking our U11 boys this season. Similar to our U13s we really need to lift the numbers in this group. We have plenty of talented U11s, but as a lead coach I would want to recruit more. Henry and Chris have prepared and coached this group well all season with big improvements shown in this group. Long may it continue.

Under 9 Boys

A big thanks to Sean Hodkinson and Gary Toney for all your efforts this year. I am absolutely delighted with the massive all-round improvement evident in this group particularly in basic skills and team play. The U9s have taken part in approx. 15 blitzes this year in which they have been very successful in all. A massive success for the club is the ongoing high numbers we have in this age group.

Under 8 / 10 Girls

A big thanks to John McLaughlin and Brooke Shorter on their great work with our Under 8/10 girls. As well as with our U9 boys the numbers of players John and Brooke have been able to attract and retain is a credit to them. There have regularly been over 20 girls at training.



U7 / Wee Coles

A big thanks to Eamonn Crilly and his team, Siobhan Poulter and others who have developed and grown our U7 and Wee Coles Programmes. The idea behind these two programmes is to develop a pathway from Wee Coles to U7, and U7 throughout the rest of the club.

This season at these groups we have developed our youngest players in the fundamentals of GAA but more than that, Eamonn has started to introduce other sports to the kids.



Having a multi-sport approach should teach our youths that there are obvious transferable skills across all sports, now the colder weather has come in, Eamonn has moved this group inside to concentrate on “wall and ball” activities. I am confident that the work Eamonn and his team are doing now will put the club in a good position for years to come.

U6 Girls

One of the newest ventures to the club brought has been to us by Anna Connolly and Lisa Lynch. It's incredible how quickly this has taken off, and for me has become one of the big success stories of 2022 for the club. Anna and Lisa have regularly over 20 girls at their sessions, I have no doubt this number will continue to increase.

One of the best things this year I have had the pleasure of being involved in has been the U6 Girls blitz hosted by Lamh Dhearg, this gave our youngest girl players a chance to play other teams in their first match experience, and latterly receive their participation medals from 4/5 of the recent Antrim All Ireland winning team. The excitement and joy on the day was evident. Thanks to Anna and Lisa for all you have brought to the club. A big thanks also to Anna as the LGFA representative at the club, at times her support and advice to me on LGFA matters has been invaluable.

In Summary

We have had a really progressive year overall for the club but there is still room for improvement across the board. Our participation levels are growing as well as our Juvenile membership. I am pleased that as a club we now have 12 active age groups from Wee Coles and U6 girls all the way to U17 boys with the hope we can add a 13th in the near future, namely a minor girls' team.

We have had success in the form of our U14 girls' team who have brought silverware to the club this season, well done to them, let's hope it's the first on many trophies for them. I am keen to take the next step and begin to develop a winning mentality in the club across the board at all age groups.

Thanks to all coaches for their work ethic and continued commitment it has been a pleasure to work with you. Keep up the good work.

U14 Girls Team Report

Henry Quigg and Theresa Crosbie

The Girls started the year in January with their first ever outing in the Winter League; this was played on Saturday mornings over 4 or 5 weeks and all the girls loved it that they were able to play football out of season.

They gained much experience and a lot of other teams were looking at our girls and saying where has this fantastic group of players come from.

This competition served us well and we were able to hit the ground running with some very good wins in the league. We were able to hold our own with some of the so called bigger clubs within the county and if we had of had all our players available for all the games we could possibly have won the league.

Our fitness showed in all games in the 2nd half in every game as other teams found it hard going against us. We got to the semi-finals of the Championship and gave Glenavy a good game but they were just too physical for our young players to deal with and Glenavy knew how to target our players.



We were recently invited to a tournament in Belfast by Colin Gaels, which included Breda who are a very good club & we showed all the teams how to play football and we ended up winning the tournament. The Girls were over the moon and are looking forward to building on their success next season. We are entered again for the winter league and should hopefully win that competition.



Six of our girls went training in Woodlands with the u13 development squad where they got to experience new coaches and new drills and mix with girls from other clubs.

We had 5 Girl's away with the U13 Development squad in Monaghan in September and the girls pulled on a top for their County for the first time. The future looks bright for Girl's football within the club.

Pitch / Grounds Facilities Report

Mr Gerry Wilson

School pitch

Home and Away dugouts installed.

Maintenance of the school pitch continues all year easing off during the closed season. It is during this period that I hope to do some ground maintenance such as filling-in some of the ruts that have developed along some of the fixed distance lines across the pitch. Since the drains were installed alongside the school fence, we have avoided any more flooding and the pitch remains firm to date.

The rising cost of fuel was very noticeable during the summer when grass needed cut more often.

The pitch markings were reinstated and paint purchased for the line marker. The pitch has been treated with a winter fertilizer.

Plastic grids has been placed at the edge of the double gate at the carpark onto the pitch to facilitate heavier vehicles.

More grids have been purchased and will be placed along-side the dugouts to reduce stress to the grass, as this is a heavy used area.

A stand has been made between the dugouts to hold the Defibrillator. All pitch-side damaged banners have been replaced.



Off pitch facilities

The grass mower and all other machinery receives in house servicing to reduce costs.

There was damage to the Gents toilet cubicle door and panelling which were repaired in house.

With the help of Roisin Lynch the council donated two full size blue bins.

The Men's Shed donated a garden bench and a Tea/Coffee sign for the club shop.

Dunsilly pitch No 3

Due to damage caused by installing floodlights the pitch is still being serviced by Convery's Ground Maintenance and The County.



Special thanks

Thank you to Seamus Connell for his continued support with all of the above and retrieving all of the lost balls over the fences.



The Senior Awards for 21-22 were:

Senior Men's Team

Damian Devine Memorial Trophy Players Player of the Year – **Dylan Murdock**

Managers Player of the Year – **Michael McCabe**

Senior Ladies Team

Players Player of the Year – **Shannon O'Sullivan**

Managers Player of the Year – **Eimer O'Hara**

Young Player of the Year – **Katie Martin**

Club Person of the Year

Sponsored by the Taggart family in memory of Sean Taggart, goes to someone who reflects Sean's club ethos and does a great deal behind the scenes for the club - **Marie Ashmore**

Chair Persons Award

Goes to someone who has gone above the norm in their work for the club both in its promotion, development and ethos – **Amanda Leahy**