

WEXFORD GAA HANDBALL AGM 2023
Secretary's Report

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

100 years old in 2024

Next year our wonderful sport will celebrate its centenary within the GAA and for much of that period Wexford people have played a prominent and positive role in the evolutionary process of handball. That 100-year history includes many fond memories and occasions for Wexford and although we are one of many counties never to have won an All-Ireland 4-wall (40x20) senior singles title, and our last softball (60x30) senior singles title came via the great Dick Lyng back in 1978, Wexford has never had an inferiority complex as far as handball is concerned.

We look back with pride at the achievements of our players and officials down through the years and we are acutely aware of the part they played in raising the profile of the sport throughout Wexford and around the country. But without constant reminders, memories do fade, and we must never sit back and hope those past successes would, by themselves, keep interest in handball alive. Instead, we must continue to vigorously promote and develop our sport by creating the best possible internal structures that encourages participation at all levels. Enjoyment while competing is a major part of our philosophy too, so we organise our competitions in a way that provides opportunities for players of all ages and standards. The end product for us right now in Wexford, is a large bunch of busy but happy players from all four corners of the county, who are not just enjoying their handball, but also revelling in the type of public profile not seen since the halcyon days of Ryan, Doyle, Lyng, Buggy, Murphy etc.

As a county committee, we must remain conscious of our duty to, not only maintain tradition, but to nurture it too and I urge all of us to be aware of our responsibilities in this regard and to be fully engaged in this process, which is always ongoing!

Handball continues to be a very important element in the lives of those who play it on Slaneyside and I hope to see us commemorate our centenary in 2024 by organising appropriate competitions in various grades throughout the year, and, with a nod in the direction of our pioneers from the past, by inviting all of the living senior champions and others who have made an important contribution to our history, to share in the celebrations.

Our expanding club scene

If one of the best indicators of growth and development is dormant clubs being reactivated, then we certainly ticked that box in Wexford in 2023. And while we can only be delighted to see progress being made in the areas mentioned below, there are still a number of courts dotted around the county that we do not have access to. Work must continue behind the scenes in these areas to see if a change of policy and mindset is possible.

New Ross GAA Handball Club

I am delighted to report that New Ross GAA Handball Club is up and running again after a long absence and after the work that went into reaching this stage, we can but hope it will endure into the future. With close on 50 people already registered for 2024 and brilliant facilities available for its members, the foundations are there for this 60x30 club to grow and prosper

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

within the wider community of New Ross and its environs. I wish to acknowledge in particular, the enormous contribution made by Fr Joe McGrath and Helen Kavanagh in making it possible for this club to become operational again and I look forward to seeing New Ross players on the winners' rostrum once again in 2024.

Ballyanne Handball Alley

From a personal perspective, I am thrilled to see that plans are at an advanced stage for the reopening of Ballyanne Handball Club. This is where I began my playing career back in the mid 1960s and where I won my first county title at the age of 16. It is there that I first became a committee member at the tender age of 15 and experienced the cut and thrust of 'boardroom politics' in action. Ballyanne was home to many great players down through the years, including Dick Lyng and his family, and later of course John Fleming and Pat Cleary (RIP) and amongst the greats to have played there were Joey Maher and Pat Kirby. The club was at the very centre of handball both locally and nationally for decades and the entire place is shrouded in history. Seeing Ballyanne back in the fold after so many years away would be one of the high points of my time as a handball official and it would somehow be fitting for this to happen during our centenary year.

Gusserane Handball Alley

Gusserane have also reopened after a long absence and while, as yet, no handballers have registered, I am hopeful that this logical next step can be taken in 2024. The facilities at this 60x30 club are first class and I am optimistic that we will see handball played there in the coming year.

Cloughbán Handball Alley

As I write this report, tentative steps are being taken to see if handball can be played again at Cloughbán GAA Club. This is an excellent 40x20 facility where many major matches were played over the years. Amongst those was the meeting of John Fleming and the late Peadar McGee, Mayo in the All-Ireland senior singles semi final back in 1983, when the Wexford man lost 21-20 in the third game, having been 20-14 in front. Dick Lyng also played a successful All Ireland masters A singles semi final there against the late Hugh Duff, Tyrone, on his way to winning the title in 1987.

It would be fabulous to see this court available again for some club or county games at least and we are working towards that at the moment.

New Facilities

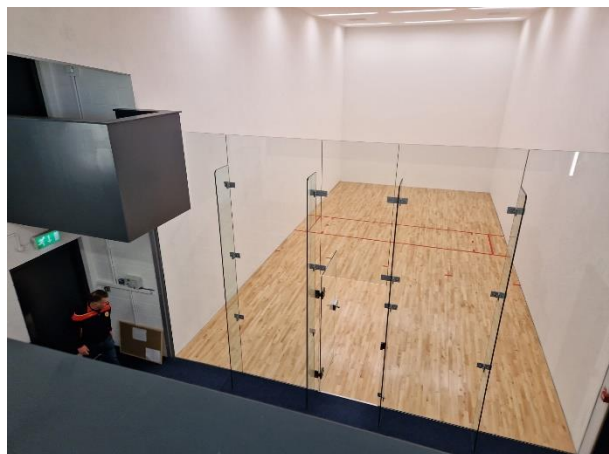
With financial constraints a big mitigating factor against the building of new 60x30 or 40x20 handball courts, it is hugely gratifying to be able to report that two clubs did overcome these huge challenges in the past year.

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

Davidstown Courtnacuddy GAA Handball Club

The sorrow we felt for Davidstown Courtnacuddy GAA Club back on 16th October 2017, when Storm Ophelia inflicted such damage on the clubhouse and handball alley that it had to be



The view from the upper balcony

razed to the ground, turned to joy on 3rd January 2023, when the first official match took place at the newly built state of the art GAA complex and handball court. The saying that “every cloud has a silver lining” has certainly proven to be true in this case as the official opening of the new complex on 6th August this year has had a hugely positive effect on the entire community of Davidstown Courtnacuddy, with a large increase in handball membership, particularly amongst the youth of the area, being a real bonus for our sport.

Visitors to the building are met with underfloor heating and automatic lighting from the moment you step inside the door and this high spec construction extends right into the handball arena which has a fabulous playing court with an elevated referee’s box, a full-length glass back wall and a carpeted and spacious viewing area on two different levels. The part played by GAA club chairperson Robert Hassey and handball club chairperson Tomás O’Shea in bringing all of this to fruition has to be lauded and acknowledged, as many challenges had to be overcome before the GAA people of Davidstown Courtnacuddy ended up with what has now become their dream home. Further handball development is planned for 2024 when an outdoor wall ball court will be constructed to cater for the increase in membership.



Paul Kavanagh, Kevin Doyle, Paul Doyle, Eamonn Bowe pictured after an all-Davidstown county GMBD final played at the new court on 28 March.

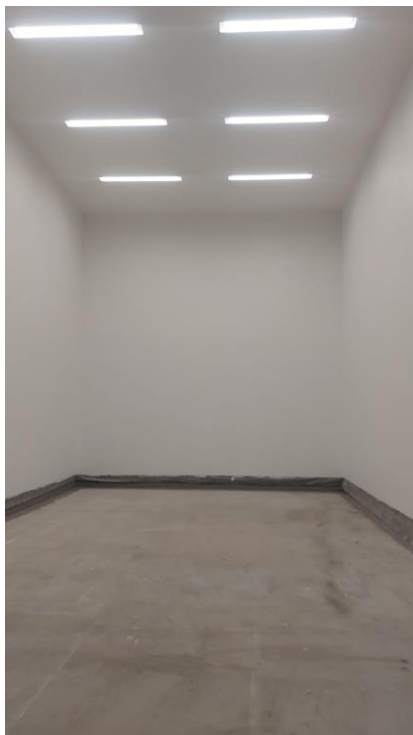
Ballymitty GAA Handball Club

The imminent opening of a brand new 40x20 alley at Ballymitty GAA Handball Club has to be highly commended. The massive work done by Alan O’Neill and his committee to get the project to this stage, while maintaining and upgrading an already fabulous 60x30 facility is truly inspiring and when this building opens its doors early in 2024, it will do so as a fully-fledged state of the art Handball Centre.

Ballymitty is somewhat unique in that they have no senior or intermediate players, but what they have in abundance is a hard working group of people who take pride in their club and are constantly striving to make it better. For decades Ballymitty GAA Handball Club have

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



embraced the committee system of governance and the members have pulled together to create something that will serve the community of Ballymitty far into the future.

On left is the new 40x20 court with only the floor and ball wall remaining to be done.

On right is the 60x30 court complete with new LED lighting etc.



St Martins GAA Handball Club

GAA Handball President Conor McDonnell and former World and All Ireland senior handball champion John Fleming, now Chairman of Wexford County Council, were amongst the large attendance at the official opening of the new Wall Ball court at Murrintown Community Centre on 26th August this year. This facility will be run by St Martins GAA Handball Club and will be available to its members for training and official matches, as well as county competitions. The project was the brainchild of County Development Officer and St Martins Club Chairperson, David Stanners and was supported by St Martins GAA Club through its Chairperson, Kevin Waters. It is also important to acknowledge the enthusiasm and support of Murrintown Community Centre Committee and in particular Colm Dunne and Lisa McDonald, as without them, it could not have happened.



Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

All Ireland Softball, 4-Wall and Wall Ball Championships & Competitions

Once again, our players wore the purple and gold with pride and we congratulate them on another successful season on the courts of the country. (see results section)

There were many outstanding achievements and a few heartbreak results along the way but Wexford GAA Handball are a tight and united group and we share in the success when our players win and feel their pain when defeat comes their way.

Our return from the softball (60x30) season may, at first glance, look a little disappointing but many of our players have been promoted to higher grades in recent years and as a result winning has become a lot more difficult. Given the circumstances, four wins and eight runners up was probably a reasonable enough return, with many of those who beat our representatives in the 2023 All Ireland championship being players of the highest calibre.

By contrast, and against normal traditions, we fared much better in the 4-wall (40x20) court, winning nine singles and/or doubles All Ireland titles, and with three of our juvenile players also on the successful Leinster interprovincial girls' team of 10, there was much to celebrate.

The wall ball (1-wall) code is relatively new to us here in Wexford but we made our mark there too with many fine performances and outcomes. This is something we will need to focus a lot more on in the coming year, with a view to greater promotion within Wexford, and hopefully more participation by our players.



Clean sweep! Jodie Keeling and Fiachra Ó Dúill, Armagh, who both won all three All Ireland minor singles titles, softball, 4-wall and wall ball. Fiachra is a son of Davidstown native James Doyle, who won All Ireland 4-wall under 21 singles and doubles for Wexford back in 1997

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

The outstanding achievements of Jodie Keeling in winning all three All Ireland minor singles titles is worthy of special mention, as are the two All Ireland masters B titles won by a focused and committed David Stanners. Shane Birney came through a strong field to win 4-wall JBS and our juvenile players performed admirably too, with the All Ireland successes of Sean Fitzharris, Jamie Moran, Joshua Roche, Jamie Barnes and Jack Whitty particularly welcome and deserving. Shane Cleary had a great year too, even if he did fall short in the BU17S final.



MBD



JBS



EMBS



BU17S

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



BU16D



BU17D



BU17S

As a body we are very proud of the players who represents us in provincial and national events and we are fully aware that everyone works hard to achieve the best possible outcome on the day of the match. Sometimes the difference between euphoria and heartache is very thin – I'm thinking about the 11-10 tie break win for Stephen Murphy in the 4-wall DMBS final, and the 21-20 loss for Kevin Doyle in the second game of the EMBS final, with the first game already in the bag. JR Finn too performed with great courage less than a year after suffering a serious injury, winning a Leinster MBS softball final 11-9 in a tie

break before going on to lose the All Ireland final by the same margin.



Wexford provided three of the ten players on the winning Leinster girls 4-wall team recently

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

County Softball & 4-Wall Championships & Competitions

As usual we promoted a huge programme of domestic events that kept our courts busy throughout the year and our players constantly on the go. (see results section)



Lyng Cup senior softball singles final at Castlebridge. Tony Breen, Secretary, Dick Lyng, Gavin Buggy, St Mary's (winner), Joe Devereux, Castlebridge, Amy Malone, Wexford Credit Union, Ricky Barron, Chairperson

For only the third time in his career, Gavin Buggy lifted the famed Lyng Cup as county senior open softball singles champion following a convincing victory over rising star Joe Devereux. At 49 years of age it was a truly remarkable achievement and once again highlighted his determination to extend his dominance for as long as possible. His near legendary commitment to training and resulting level of fitness would suggest it will take something special to 'put him out to grass' as far as the Wexford championship is concerned.



Tony Reid, Treasurer, Jamie Barnes, St Mary's (winner), Conor Horan, Coolgreany, Amy Malone, Wexford Credit Union, Tony Breen, Secretary

On a big night for St Mary's at Castlebridge, Jamie Barnes gave a hugely impressive performance to defeat Conor Horan, Coolgreany and win the county minor softball singles title. It was one of a number of promising displays from the youngster as he enjoyed success in several different championships and competitions at both county and national level.

Castlebridge were by some distance the most successful club with 19 adult titles won across softball and 4-wall codes. St Mary's with 9 were second, St Josephs with 5 were third and fourth on 4 were Ballymitty. 11 of the 13 clubs won at least one title, with Bridgetown and St Martins the only ones to lose out on this occasion. Plenty of motivation there for those clubs to occupy a higher position in centenary year!

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



Colin Redmond, Castlebridge took three of the four county junior D titles on offer and he's seen here following his win over Alex Lynch, St Mary's in the softball singles decider.

In the picture is Tony Reid, Treasurer, Colin Redmond, Alex Lynch and Amy Malone, Wexford Credit Union



Clíodhna O'Connell proved herself to be Wexford's top female player with a good win against Jodie Keeling, St Josephs in the county JS final. Also pictured is referee Tom Rossiter



Earlier in the year Gavin Buggy, St Mary's took the county 4-wall senior singles title with victory over Galen Riordan, Ballyhogue in a brilliant final played at the new Davidstown Courtnacuddy GAA Handball Centre

It was one of the best and most contested county 4-wall senior open singles finals played in recent times, but at the finish it was the all round determination shown by Buggy that prevailed as he wrested the title from the 2022 champion and claim title number

The minor singles final played by Davidstown Courtnacuddy on senior singles night set the scene for the occasion in the most brilliant fashion possible. Two of Wexford best young players left everything on the court in a battle for supremacy that lasted for 90 minutes.

At the end of an enthralling contest it was Castlebridge star Joshua Roche who prevailed against a brave Conor Horan, Coolgreany on a scoreline of 17-21, 21-19, 21-20



Joshua Roche, Ricky Barron, Chairperson and Conor Horan

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



Coolgreany man Damien Kelly took the county 4-wall GMBS title with a win over Ricky Barron, Taghmon. Referee was Nicky Casey



Joe Devereux and Shane Birney, Castlebridge edged out Michéal Busher and Bob Byrne, Bridgetown to win the county 4-wall junior doubles title. Referee was David Stanners



John Roche, Castlebridge made the step up to the 50 + age group a successful one as he defeated Robert Doyle, Taghmon in a close hard fought GMAS final



Shane Cleary and Barry Byrne, Ballymitty defeated Alan Usher and Colin Redmond, Castlebridge in the county JDD 4-wall final

County Softball & 4-Wall Singles Leagues (selection of pictures)



Galen Riordan, Ballyhogue was the winner of the Moyne Veterinary Hospital 4-wall D1 singles league. In the final he defeated Gavin Buggy, St Mary's. Also in the picture is Tomás O'Shea, sponsor

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



Sean Fitzharris, Templeudigan defeated Tommy Moore, Castlebridge in the D5 final of the Moyne Veterinary Hospital singles league



Jack Roche, Bridgetown took D8 of the Moyne Veterinary Hospital singles league from Barry Stone, St Martins



Morgan Nash-Colfer, Taghmon was the winner of D9 in the Moyne Veterinary Hospital singles league. Runner up was Brendan Murphy, Castlebridge

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



Gavin Buggy, St Mary's dominated championship and league softball in 2023 and he is seen here having defeated Shane Birney, Castlebridge in the D1 final of the David Stanners Painting & Decorating softball singles league. Also in the picture is David Stanners, sponsor and Tony Breen, Wexford GAA Handball



Michael Busher, Bridgetown came from behind to win against Jamie Barnes, St Mary's in the David Stanners Painting & Decorating softball singles D3 final. David Stanners, sponsor and Ricky Barron, Wexford GAA Handball are also in the picture



Alan O'Neill, Ballymitty ended a 37-year wait for a county singles title when he defeated Mick Armstrong, Kilmyshall to win the David Stanners Painting & Decorating softball singles D4 final. Tony Breen presented the cups on behalf of David Stanners

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



Ross Arnold, Coolgreany reversed an earlier group result against Nicky Casey, St Mary's to win D10 of the David Stanners Painting & Decorating softball singles league. The picture shows Ross Arnold, David Stanners, Nicky Casey and Coolgreany official Kevin Horan

Our Sponsorship Partners

The increasing willingness of businesses to invest in Wexford handball is something we can be very proud of and I urge all of us to maintain our vigilance when it comes to how we uphold our responsibilities towards those who support our games. We are indebted to our PRO Cian Cassidy for his ongoing work in highlighting these partnerships on social media, as well as his work in live streaming throughout the year.

On your behalf I take the opportunity to thank our sponsors for their interest in and support for handball and I hope that they too benefitted from our partnership. I urge everyone to support our sponsors in any way they can, especially when their needs coincide with what our sponsors have to offer.



Wexford Credit Union sponsorship launch

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



Moyne Veterinary Hospital



David Stanners Painting & Decorating

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



Model County Metal team final



EEW Electrical Supplies team final



James Stanners & Sons Painting/Decorating team final

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



Acme Blinds & Commercial Products team final



Padraig Devereux Fitted Kitchens



James Stanners & Sons Painting/Decorating

I am confident that we have the product to attract further sponsorship opportunities in 2024, when we could consider offering individual grades sponsorship (such as senior) as an alternative to full championship sponsorship under one name. The possibilities are endless, as long as we continue to run our competitions in a professional manner, augmented by extensive social media exposure and live streaming.

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

Live streaming

In the past few years we have embraced live streaming as a means of showcasing our games to a wider audience, with the aim of raising the profile of the sport amongst both the handball and non-handballing public within the locality and across the country. It is a particularly important objective when it comes to attracting sponsorship, as commercial partnerships will only be deemed successful by a sponsor, if they feel they have got the maximum exposure possible for their financial outlay.

Because of our structures, our competition systems and our players, Wexford GAA Handball has a valuable and saleable product to offer and our growing sponsorship team bears testimony to the success of our strategy in this regard. Live streaming is a core element of this and I hope and expect to see it increased further in 2024.



PRO Cian Cassidy live streaming

Thanks is due to both Cian Cassidy and Virginia Rossiter for their streaming work throughout the year.

Visit of David Britton

We were delighted and honoured to welcome our new GAA Handball National Manager, David Britton and Regional Development Officer, Marguerite Gore to our August County Committee meeting.

Both attended the full meeting and David spoke very positively about handball, while giving a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing the organisation going forward. In particular he referenced issues of governance which he said were impacting on funding from external sources and he said this needed to be addressed throughout the association. He said other sporting organisations had looked at the way in which they had been operating and made the kind of changes that were necessary to benefit their sport. He mentioned cricket as an example of how restructuring can work and said that while some within handball will find change difficult to take on board, it will be necessary if the organisation is to realise its full potential

Wexford GAA Handball looks forward to working with our provincial and national bodies in charting a course for the betterment of our sport in the future.

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



The top table - David Stanners, Development, David Redmond, Youth, Maureen O'Shea, Children, Cian Cassidy, PRO, Tony Reid, Treasurer, David Britton, Marguerite Gore, Ricky Barron, Chairperson, Tony Breen, Secretary.

Marguerite Gore moves up

She began the year as newly elected County Coaching Officer but Marguerite Gore stepped down at our April meeting to take up full time employment with GAA Handball as Regional Development Officer with responsibility for Carlow, Clare, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Laois, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow. It is a big challenge but Marguerite will be up to the task and is well equipped to provide assistance and encouragement during her three-year contract. We have always tried to see the bigger picture here in Wexford and so while her leaving was a blow, she departed with the good wishes of all in the county.



Dress code

2024 will hopefully see far greater enforcement of our dress code rules at provincial (especially) and national level, because when we hear talk about handball not doing much to help itself at times, this is one of the things that comes immediately to mind. I accept that many counties are making an effort, but others are not, simply because there is rarely a penalty applied. Imposing a fine as per rule would provide a powerful incentive and, with the fine exceeding the cost of a jersey and/or togs, it would make financial sense to be compliant. In Wexford we have attempted to encourage those who represent us to do so in the proper manner as far as dress code is concerned and by and large they have done this. We also enforce this in internal county championships and competitions, so our players are well aware of our views on all of this. That said, they do point out to us at times that when they go to play in provincial competitions in particular, they play against opponents who are wearing all sorts of gear. Local enforcement is made more difficult when higher bodies ignore the problem!

The carrot is not working, now it's time for the stick!

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



Templeudigan new playing attire



St Joseph's new playing attire

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

Team Events

The decision to introduce customised team competitions into our annual programme of events has proven to be a real winner. The popularity of these competitions has grown to such an extent that they are, arguably, the most popular events we have ever created. Currently we have three divisions running in our 4-wall winter competitions, involving a total of 52 players + some subs positions for people who could not fully commit.

The novelty of players from different clubs playing together on the same team, in front of sizable crowds and in a less pressured atmosphere, has really gained the support of everyone and the feedback from those taking part is the most positive heard in years, even in a county like Wexford where competitive handball is a staple of life.

We must continue to ‘think outside the box’ when it comes to finding ways to make our great game even more interesting and attractive to our members.

Gender Balance

Throughout the GAA and other organisations, gender balance (equal representation of men and women) has become a potential issue, but as yet, we are unsure as to what this will mean in numerical terms for handball units. For now, I am delighted to see so many women take lead roles in their clubs here in Wexford, with 8 of our 14 clubs having elected a woman as secretary for 2023, all of whom have proved very efficient and hard working. Currently over half of our secretaries are non-players, which, in my opinion, is exactly what we should be striving for in an organisation top heavy with playing officials. Historically, some of our very best officials have been those who could concentrate solely on administration!

County committee meetings – the missing clubs!

It’s frustrating to report that a very small number of clubs continue to absent themselves from county committee meetings and in one or two cases, have continued to do so for quite some time. A massive amount of work is going on in Wexford so that those who play handball get to do so in an organised and helpful way and our meetings on the first Monday of each month are an important part of this process. The officers and officials of Wexford GAA Handball are all volunteers who give of their time and energy for the benefit of others and the least they are entitled to expect is for all clubs to participate in the committee process. Attending our meetings gives everyone a chance to see the full extent of the work being done, as well as providing an opportunity for engagement on all aspects of our activities. Currently the only sanction we have against clubs that fail to attend our monthly meetings is that they play all of their games away from home, while everything else is ‘handed to them on a plate’.

It’s disappointing too that a number of our clubs are choosing not to involve themselves in the annual election of officers, as they completely ignore the nomination forms received for our AGM. The failure to return these forms is somewhat disrespectful to the entire process, as it sends a message that they don’t really care how we do it, or who does it, as long as their members have handball to play.

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

World Championships

2024 will see the return of the world championships to Ireland after a twelve-year absence and with our state-of-the-art National Stadium now ready to welcome people from all over the world for the 4 Wall events, a real opportunity is being presented to handball to showcase our activities in the best possible light.

Before that however the international field will be heading to UL Limerick for the ever-expanding Wall Ball competitions. The growth of the 1-wall game has been very impressive, with several European countries now playing this form of handball and it is already clear to me that this is where our international future lies.

I urge a strong numerical challenge from Wexford in both events so we can play our part in this historic occasion.

Awards & Occasions

It's good that people who achieve notable feats in sport have those achievements recognized by the wider community and reassuring when handballers are included from time to time.

Earlier this year both David Stanners and Mark Doyle were among those honoured at the annual Rosslare Municipal District civic awards held at Johnstown Castle, which highlighted the skills and talents of people from the district.



David Stanners was honoured for his All Ireland masters successes

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023



Mark Doyle was honoured for his achievements in the USA and the award was accepted on his behalf by his parents Robert and Helen.

Conor Horan was amongst the recipients at the Gorey Kilmuckridge civic awards in February



Conor Horan was honoured for his boys under 17 singles All Ireland win in 2022

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

Jodie Keeling and Gavin Buggy were given a civic reception by Wexford Borough Council



Jodie Keeling and Gavin Buggy were honoured for their multiple achievements

Former county secretary Jim Mackey gets Seana Ghael award



Jim is pictured with Michael Foley, Chairperson of the organising committee, on left and the new Bishop of Ferns, Gerard Nash, who incidentally, is a cousin of top Clare handballer Diarmuid Nash. With Michael Foley also a former player, I expect handball got a fair airing!

Former Wexford handball county secretary Jim Mackey was one of the recipients at the Seana Ghael Loch Garman Annual Re-Union awards presentation at The Ferrycarraig Hotel back on 15th January. The awards are presented to those over the age of 70, who have given a lifelong commitment to their club and to the GAA. The Ferns native began his administrative duties as secretary of the county 40x20 committee in the mid-80s and was elected as county secretary in 1988. He succeeded the legendary Sean O'Leary who had held office for the previous 21 years and over the next 13 years he firmly established himself as an official of the highest calibre. His excellence was recognized at national level in 1997 when he was named GAA Handball Official of the Year.

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

John Fleming elected as Cathaoirleach of Wexford County Council

Former Wexford handballer John Fleming (in centre) was elected as Cathaoirleach of Wexford County Council during the year.

Ger Carty (on right) who was elected as Leas Chathaoirleach is a son of the late Leo Carty who served as Chairman of Wexford Handball Board from 1954-63



Referees at the Áras



GAA Handball was represented earlier this year at a special event in Áras an Uachtaráin which celebrated volunteerism in Irish sport, with a particular focus on refereeing across all codes.

Gavin Buggy and Michael Finnegan attended the event on behalf of handball and described the occasion as a “fantastic experience”.

“It was a fantastic day, we really enjoyed it. We were very well looked after and we got to meet loads of different people. The whole day was framed around community organisations but part of that was the role that referees play in Irish life and sporting circles. Michael D did make specific reference to that in his few words” stated Buggy.

Gavin Buggy and Michael Finnegan on the steps of Áras an Uachtaráin

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

Improper use of social media

Social media has become a brilliant platform for the promotion of our sport throughout the country and around the world and the exposure now enjoyed by handball has raised the profile to a level we could never have imagined. The positivity generated by these posts has been very beneficial to players in particular, as their participation and achievements are now being seen and acknowledged by friends and neighbours like never before.

Unfortunately, though, a small number of individuals see and use these platforms as a vehicle for expressing personal grievances against decisions and decision makers.

The use of social media to publicly attack officials or decision makers should be condemned by everyone with the best interests of the sport at heart. Many of those who make these decisions are there as part of a team of volunteers and they should not have their work criticised on social media.

Committees will be called upon to make difficult decisions from time to time and the only requirement upon them is that any decision made is backed by the rules allowing them to make it. We all live in an imperfect world and trying to please all of the people all of the time cannot be a consideration when decisions have to be made.

The recent past has seen a few episodes of social media being used to air personal grievances against particular officials. Generally speaking, the people who engage in this do not have the support of their club, their county board, their provincial council or the rules of GAA Handball, but because they refuse to accept a particular outcome, and have no other place to go, they use social media to attack those who have to uphold the rules.

Some members of the public have no particular interest in or connection to handball, but they may know the individual expressing a critical opinion and take it to be factual. Over and back with these individuals must remain a non-runner though, as that is precisely what they want us to do!

If this type of behaviour is to continue without sanction, we may find ourselves choosing between losing good officials or indulging egotistical individuals at a cost.

Condolences

Every year we lose people from handball families and on your behalf, I offer the condolences of the county committee to all who were bereaved in 2023. I hope I will be forgiven for mentioning just one by name, the former National Handball Manager, Lorcán Ó Ruairc who passed away on 26th August. Lorcan retired back in 2009 and was a hugely respected official who served with distinction for many years.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha.

Liathróid Láimhe CLG Loch Garman

Cruinniú Cinn Bhliana 2023

Thank you

Wexford GAA Handball is now a major sporting organisation within the county, dedicated to providing ongoing competition and activities for our large membership. We depend on a committed group of volunteers to deliver this service and we had a strong team in place for 2023.

Management Committee

Although we needed few management meetings due to our monthly county committee meetings, I want to thank our Chairperson, Ricky Barron and the rest of the team for their valued engagement when called upon.

County Competition Control Committee

As a fixtures and games committee we had a number of meetings as well as constant WhatsApp exchanges throughout the year. I thank everyone for their tireless work during 2023.

County Juvenile Committee (This committee are producing their own report for our AGM)

Our County Youth Officer, David Redmond stepped down from the committee for personal reasons a short while ago and is a big loss to our team. David was a very committed member of the committee and we hope that some day he may be able to return. Virginia Rossiter deserves our thanks for her work in producing fixtures, as do the remaining members who worked to ensure a full programme of events was delivered throughout the year.

Club Committees

I thank the clubs of Wexford for their ongoing assistance and support and in particular the club secretaries for the work they do so that handball can be played in an organised manner.

Players

At the end of the day everything we do is ultimately for the benefit of players and as usual I am delighted to be able to say that they responded well to the competitive requirements placed upon them. Their cooperation is critical with such a large number of events to get through, but this was forthcoming at all times.

Wexford GAA

The grant aid from the GAA County Committee is very welcome, as is the opportunity to fundraise at the county hurling semi finals each year. We appreciate it and thank them sincerely.

A big word of thanks also to Gavin O'Donovan, CEO Wexford GAA, for his assistance and advice on GAA rules and procedures, as handball committees align themselves with our parent body on these matters.

Antoin Ó Braoin, Rúnaí