

## Fantastic community spirit brings historic Taghmon Handball Club back into the fold

Wexford handball received a terrific boost a short while ago when, after many years in the wilderness, Taghmon Handball Club reopened its doors and unveiled its newly renovated facilities *writes Antóin Ó Braoin*. And with a sure sign that they had the local community firmly behind them, they did so with a very impressive 87 registered members, 60 of whom are children.



*Taghmon 2016 Club Committee left to right; Stephen Quigley, Tom Murphy, Dave Williams, Club Secretary Natalie Dunne, Club Treasurer MJ Sweeney, Club Chairman Joe Sidney, Timmy Murphy and Club PRO Ray O'Brien. Missing from the picture is Club Children's Officer Mark Cardiff.*

The reopening came after more than 6 months of hard work and fundraising and when the first county finals for many years were held there on the night of 20th July it was a proud moment for all connected with the project.

It was not the first attempt at getting this historic club back up and running in recent years but what was different about this committee was the strength and commitment they possessed and their absolute determination to succeed where others had failed. In electing Joe Sidney as Chairman they choose a man who wanted his granddaughters to play handball in Taghmon and they also put together a group of people with the collective will to make this aspiration a reality.



*The view from the outside of this historic 'sporting monument'*

Making it a reality involved gutting almost the entire building both inside and outside and putting in new dressing rooms, showers and toilets as well as the erection of a new viewing area.



*Chairman Joe Sidney oversees the early destruction!*





*Work begins on removing the old viewing gallery.*

Also tackled was the age old cause of dampness on the left hand side of the court which had been a problem at the venue for decades and the drainage work undertaken to remedy this was designed to ensure a court less susceptible to climatic influences than before. That should be good news for the current and next generation of Taghmon handballers and in particular the 39 boys and 21 girls who make up the club's 60 juvenile members.



*The newly constructed Referees Podium*





*The dressing rooms and shower area*

Taghmon court was built back in the 1940s and roofed in the 50s and in the late 60s and early to mid-70s the club enjoyed a golden period as Pat Murphy, Seamus McLoughlin and the late John Quigley in particular, captured several All Ireland handball titles including senior. Those successes propelled the club to national prominence and several of the top players in Ireland played in the local court around that time. In the circumstances it cannot be unrealistic to hope for that to happen again.



*Hospitality is a priority at Taghmon*

To pay for the work being undertaken the new committee engaged in constant fundraising in and around Taghmon and the very positive response showed an overwhelming public vote of confidence in their ability to complete the project. The club is now in a good place financially and this bodes well for its continued well-being and development.



*The Christmas cracker held in the ball alley in 2015 was a major success.*



All things considered the future looks bright for this famous old club and already in 2016 players from Taghmon have captured All Ireland and national titles. Importantly too, a number of their new players enjoyed victories in this year's county 1-wall championships and those local successes, perhaps more than anything else, vindicates what this magnificent group of people have done for their local community.



*Taghmon Handball Club Crest*

Taghmon Handball Club has retaken its place at the centre of Wexford handball after a long absence and the enormity of that achievement should be a source of encouragement to others. The odds on them being successful would have been very long but a huge effort by a committed group of Taghmon people overcame those odds to produce a sporting amenity that will benefit the community of Taghmon into the future.

That much looks assured for those 39 boys and 21 girls who will walk through those hallowed doors in the footsteps of the aforementioned Murphy, McLoughlin, Quigley and co. Just like those luminaries from the past, they too have a place they can call their own.