

MAGHERALIN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

AGM 17th October 2024

Chairperson's Report – October 2023 – Now

This past year has gone by so quickly, it is hard to believe and when young people tell you this as well, it is daunting! This year's report will cover from last year's AGM in September until tonight.

We are fortunate to have such a bunch of dedicated hard working members on our Committee but in particular on our Litter Picking and Gardening Teams as this has enabled our Community Association to continue in its work of endeavouring to improve the lives and environment of those living in the village and its surrounding areas.

I had mentioned at our AGM last September that we were a bit disappointed with the quality of the ABC flowers received for the Ulster in Bloom Competition and unfortunately this obviously did not impress the Judges and their Report was a very disheartening. I challenged a number of their comments, in particular when they stated that there was ***little sign of community involvement. I got confirmation last week that the Judges Reports will be out next week on the 22nd October.*** We don't know when the judges were here so we can only hope that this year's report will be more encouraging as the village looked very well on the TV coverage of the Daniel Wiffen Welcome Home Event, more of that later.

Our Annual Art and Poetry Competition was well supported by both schools and we were delighted that Rev Simone Genoe and Fr Shajan were happy to

judge the entries. Photographs of the winners were displayed on our Noticeboards and you will have seen them tonight on our Display Boards.

We held a Recycling Session in April, delivered by ABC Officers Dominic Marsden, which was a very useful and informative session, enjoyed by those who attended. We also had some plants for sale, propagated by our Gardening Team in our Poly-tunnel and at their homes and we sold out and reports back from those who bought were very favourable.

The summer months of May and June kept the Gardeners busy getting the flower beds and boxes ready for the ABC Plants which this year arrived on the 19th June. We have asked would it be possible to get the plants a week or so earlier as Moira got theirs the week before. This would give us more time to get all planted before the Judges who could arrive as early as 1st July!

We had our Fun Day planned for Saturday 3rd August and nothing more till September but we hadn't factored in Daniel Wiffen, a Magheralin man, ex pupil of St Patrick's PS and a member of the Parish of Magheralin to be so successful in the Paris Olympics winning 1 Gold and 1 Bronze medal. Our phone was hot and heavy from the 26th July with BBC, UTV, Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, Irish Times and RTE all asking were we organising a Crowd viewing for the 800 metres race. With no Community Hall with a large TV screen and at 7 minutes long we said nothing was possible. They were back after his amazing win to see what was planned for the 1500metres race - 14 minutes long ! I spoke to Dan Byrne and he was more than happy to let us have the Lounge Bar where adults and children could come together to enjoy the race. Although he didn't get Gold, but Bronze, it was still an amazing achievement and all there enjoyed the craic, bar a chat with some folk about what sort of a home coming could we organise.

Our Annual Fun Day on 3rd August started with a heavy shower but thankfully the sun came out and we had a lovely afternoon, enjoyed by over 300 children and adults. The children enjoyed the Fire Engine but unfortunately the PSNI was unable to spare Officers as they were busy with Parades and other duties. Leprino and their staff enjoyed their time with bubble blowing and football with the children. Activity NI as in previous years delivered a variety of activities in a professional manner. Funding by ABC and Leprino and the support of ABC staff with Bin Collections and provision of the Portaloo is much appreciated.

A surprise phone call from Derry McVeigh, Daniel's Agent on the 6th August to say that Team Ireland would be home on Monday 12th and the Wiffen family would be back home in the afternoon so what were we thinking of organising?? Tom and I were heading off for a break for our Wedding Anniversary from the 6th-8th but this changed to 3 very hectic days liaising with ABC staff and PSNI. A big thanks to Peter Lavery and Kyle Savage who were able to smooth the way for us to get all we needed for our event and PSNI Event Officers, who met with us on the 8th. They suggested if at all possible we should hold the event outside St Patrick's Parish Hall to allow for an anticipated 200-300 attending. A bit thank you to Ryan Costley who organised getting a Banner from Print it in Moira which was displayed on the Church railings for the event and is now at the side of the Butchers. Trevor was also on the ball and ordered commemorative pens. I attended and spoke at assemblies at both schools in mid September and pupils and staff were delighted to get their pens and you are very welcome to get your pen on the way out. We were not guaranteed a good spell of weather but thankfully we were blessed with a dry and sunny evening. The Lurgan Mail had 8 pages of photos and said there were 1000 there, we reckon about 550. A big thanks to Trevor Waddell who drove his Bentley to bring Daniel and his twin brother, Nathan from their home to the Hall. We were delighted that Kyle Savage was

able to attend as Deputy Mayor and we really appreciated the Lord Mayor's contribution to the event. We were very pleased to have a surprise visit from our MP Sorcha Eastwood, Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly and a number of other local politicians. It was a very successful event with great coverage of Magheralin on both TV and local press.

You may remember that with Council help we got our Oak Carving of 1500 years of Magheralin history moved onto Flinty Hill last November. The artist Andrew McCann continued to work on the sculpture when he was well with the aim to have it completed by the end of August. He excelled himself by completing the carving of the 5 Olympic Rings 2024 and DW in time for the Celebration Event and it was great to see a number of folk getting their photos taken on the Sculpture later on the evening.

We invited our MP Sorcha Eastwood to unveil the Sculpture on the 31st August and had a lovely BBQ afterwards with the 9 Villagers who contributed to the recording of their memories of living in Magheralin, as special guests. They are Falkiner Small, Noel Robinson, David Mills, Eamon Wright, Trevor Waddell, Jean Gregg, Mona Byrne, Maurice Hull and Dan Byrne.

Please do check out the Ceramic tiles to the left of Byrne's Off Licence which depicts the carvings and the QR code, which is also on the Sculpture, which magically will let you listen to the great stories from our 9 speakers and narrated by Harry Briggs. A big thank you also to Brett Young, TADA officer who did a great job of recording the stories and creating the QR Code.

Members of our **Litter Picking Group** continue to work hard to keep the outlying roads clean although the litter still appears very quickly after a Clean Up.

Our **Gardening Team** are a bunch of very energetic and enthusiastic members who enjoy working together, sharing knowledge and seeds. A lot of hard work and effort is needed to collect and plant the Ulster in Bloom's 4,000 plants. This year the selection was a big improvement on last year's and we are very pleased with how the village looked. We are always looking for new members to share the load of keeping the village looking as good as we can. We would encourage you to talk to friends and neighbours and whether they are a total novice or have green fingers, they would be very welcome to join us.

Anti Social Behaviour

Unfortunately we had quite a spate of anti social behaviour involving a group of youngsters between 10-14/5 years old. We met with Inspector Kelly at the end of July and a number of visits were made to homes and the young folk spoken to. It is very sad that there is so little respect for the village and older people in particular feel unsafe. Things have quietened down since September and we can only hope Halloween will pass without any bother.

May I express my gratitude to ABC Council and TADA, for its funding and their staff for their support. To our Political Representatives for their support throughout the year and of course to all our Committee Members, Gardeners and Litter Pickers and our friends in the village who support our work. To Rev Genoe and Fr Shahjan for being our willing Art & Poetry judges. Lastly our appreciation to St Patrick's, the Church of Ireland and the Masonic Hall for hosting our monthly meetings in 2022-23.

Caitriona Hughes

Chairperson