

A Silver Lining



Selector Tony Corcoran and corner-back Dean Crowley, both proud St Saviour's clubmen, pictured with the McGrath Cup at the end of a day of wildly contrasting emotions. See Sport 2 and 3 for more from Fraher Field. | Photo: Sean Byrne

"At least the day ended well," said a beaming Tony Corcoran as hands were shaken and backs were patted following Waterford's McGrath Cup victory over UCC on Saturday night last.

Tony, one of Tom McGlinchey's senior football selectors, is a life-long Saint Saviours clubman, and to describe the day he'd just put behind him being one of contrasts would be putting things mildly.

That morning, with faces as ashen as the incinerated detritus of their clubhouse, Tony and his fellow clubmen cut a dejected, devastated lot after a night the Ballybeg community shall be keen to put behind it.

This was no occasion to pose for a photograph or offer comment to the fourth estate, just hours after an arson attack had gutted a clubhouse facility which members had put so much into over the past 35 years.

Decades of memories had been literally melted off the walls of their clubhouse in an act of senseless, mindless vandalism while the gym the club had assembled upstairs may yet be salvaged.

And to see club officials explaining to parents why there was no training for their children on Saturday morning antagonised the frustration and anger of those who've put so much into this proud club.

“We’ve suffered many a painful defeat on the field of play over the years but it doesn’t come close to the devastation we all feel this morning after last night’s events,” read a comment posted on the club’s Facebook page on Saturday afternoon.

“We are very proud of our facilities, put together over a long number of years through the blood, sweat and tears of our members and to see the clubhouse destroyed in one night is heartbreaking.

“However we will build it up again brick by brick if necessary with the help of everyone in the community and beyond. Thanks for all the messages of support.”

The phone calls and text messages came in thick and fast last Saturday, with a GAA member from as far away as the Aran Islands calling to offer assistance just hours after the blaze had been put out. St Saviour’s shall not be lacking for helping hands over the next few months.

Members of fellow city clubs visited St Saviour’s last Saturday; the local Tesco and Spar stores provided refreshments for the clubmen standing by the clubhouse car park and over the course of the day, one felt the wider GAA community extending its solidarity and support.

In the midst of such a traumatic episode, one which had also left the nearby Family Resource Centre charcoaled and gutted, an unfairly maligned community was revealing its true self once more.

And, not for the first time, the GAA responded with a single voice which, for me, makes it more powerful and deeper-rooted than any political organisation on this island.

Fires, as they were last Friday and early last Saturday morning, can and will always be extinguished.

But the spirit of the men and women who have built St Saviour’s GAA Club for over three decades, and invested so much into the lifeblood of their community, shall never be doused. Never.