

GRANGE CROSS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION Ltd

By Kieran Hourigan and Colleagues

On 7th November 2012, a public meeting was convened at the old schoolhouse in Grange. The meeting arose out of concern about the state of the school grounds, particularly at the rear. Concerns of a health and safety nature also existed regarding a lack of parking facilities for those utilising the building for various community purposes. The building and its grounds are wedged between two roads, being the main Limerick Road and the Old Road. These roads are connected by a narrow 'boreen', which runs adjacent to the school grounds. The main road is a very busy one, unsuitable for community parking, particularly where children and older persons are involved. There is no scope at the sides of the minor road to accommodate parking of numbers of vehicles. The connecting boreen is sufficient for pedestrian usage or a single passing vehicle but totally unsuitable for parking.

At the said meeting, Grange Residents Association (GRA) was established, and officers were appointed. The initial appointees were: Chairman – Kieran Hourigan; Vice-Chairman – Patrick Fitzgerald; Secretary – Paul Hourigan; and Treasurer – Sheila Fitzgerald. A finance committee was appointed, primarily to raise funds and, of course, to manage and account for such funds. The GRA subsequently became the [GCRA \(Grange Cross Residents Association\)](#).

GCRA was registered under the Companies Acts in January 2014 and now enjoys limited company status with nominated directors. The current officers of GCRA Ltd are: Chairman – Kieran Hourigan; Vice-Chairman – Patrick Fitzgerald; Secretary – Mary O'Connell; and Treasurer – Frances O'Connell. There is an active and very effective finance committee. Mickey O'Connell acts as a hard-working and productive project leader.

An indication of the vast work of fundraisers and the tremendous generosity of parishioners is the fact that a significant sum has been expended on parish enterprises since the association was established. All of this expenditure was funded locally, a great credit to the community spirit and commitment.

The initial objectives of the association were achieved in that the 'clean-up' at the rear of the school was carried out. Also, planning permission for construction

of a car park to accommodate in the order of twenty-five vehicles on school grounds, together with an entrance, was sought and received from Limerick City and County Council. The approved works were carried out, including ducting to facilitate car-park lighting in due course.

GCRA Ltd held discussions with Limerick City and County Council, owner of the property, regarding necessary improvements to the building and commissioned professional analyses and reports that were shared with the local authority. The combination of a building fit for purpose, when works are carried out, and the adjacent car parking will provide a fantastic community facility for all the people of the parish, permitting various existing associations and groups as well as others that may be established into the future, to carry on their activities and recreational pursuits in a safe and comfortable environment. Grange people look forward to that day. At the time of writing, the old school building is not accessible as the local authority has closed the building pending upgrading, which has commenced, and arrangements to be made regarding the future management of the facility are under consideration.

Apart from works at the old school, GCRA Ltd has undertaken improvements throughout the parish to make the locality tidier and more presentable. Over five miles of roadsides have been improved, including grass-cutting, reducing overgrowth and the laying of gravel. Many parishioners and visitors to our locality have remarked with appreciation on the numerous flower tubs that are strategically located. All of these improvements point to a community that cares deeply about the physical appearance of its area and the impression that is conveyed to those who pass through.

We have been in discussion with Ballyhoura Community Development regarding some of the larger projects that feature in the GCRA five-year plan. One of these projects includes significant improvements in the Grange Bridge area, including



GCRA Ltd Officers: *Back row L-R:* Martin O'Connor, Kieran Hourigan, Pat Fitzgerald, Pat O'Connell, Tommy O'Connell, *Front:* Frances and Mary O'Connell.

the installation of hanging flower and plant receptacles over the Camogue River. Travelling from the Limerick direction, this location provides the first impression of our parish and the final one when going in the opposite direction; it is important for it to look well always.

Of course, the village of Lower Grange is steeped in family history as well as having significant associations with Ireland's fight for Independence. The murdered Mayor of Limerick, Seoirse Clancy, was born and raised in the village, and the Grange Ambush took place here. The ruins of the



GCRA Ltd Finance Committee: *Back row L-R:* Ann O'Connell, Miriam Gallagher (Book Committee), Frances O'Connell, Dolores Hourigan, Mary O'Connell. *Front:* Betty and Sheila O'Connell.

former great house, "The Grange", sit in abandonment over the river, looking forlorn and yet maintaining some of the building's original architectural grace, thus enhancing the attractiveness of the village. It is important to showcase this scenic village to the greatest extent possible.

We are also in discussion with Ballyhoura regarding assistance with further improvements in the area that lies between the Cross Roads at Upper Grange and the gated entrance to Lough Gur House.

We are at present considering an appropriate project to commemorate the centenary (2016) of the Easter Rising of 1916.

The vast amount of funds raised in our community is expended on materials. Labour is provided voluntarily by local men and women, often on Saturdays when up to twenty people may be seen out on project work. We are indebted to the many women who provide kind hospitality to the crews.

As parishioners, we are privileged to live in a locality endowed with natural beauty, an area steeped in history and containing archaeology of international importance. Close by to us all, at Grange Church, patriots who died for Irish Nationalism and Independence are interred. Our actions and our behaviour should never be such as would make those brave men less than proud of us. They gave up their lives so that we and those who will follow us could live free of oppression. We should routinely remind ourselves of this sobering fact.

We have every reason to be proud of our environment and our history and to look forward with high expectation. It is incumbent upon us all to work together as a community, during good and challenging times, appreciating and protecting our legacy, and striving collectively to enhance life for each other in every possible way through collaborative participation and co-operation.



Clean-up by GCRA Ltd at rear of old schoolhouse.

GCRA Ltd appointed a small committee in the autumn of 2014, tasked with leading the production of this *Grange Parish Book*. The book speaks for itself. We hope that it will act as a bonding agent in our community and that, in time to come, future generations will derive an enormous amount of enjoyment and pride from it. GCRA Ltd wishes to record its gratitude to everybody who was involved, in any way, in producing this marvellous book.



GCRA Ltd members and children.