

History

The very first meeting held by a steering group to look at the possibility of setting up a water group scheme, was held on the night JFK was assassinated, 22 Nov 1963.

That first meeting was facilitated by the local Muintir Na Tire branch, of which Dan Monckton was Chairman.

The first group Secretary was Sean Shine, N.T. with John McMahon, Coolruss the first Treasurer.

The first Committee consisted of: Joe Kelly, Kilmore; Jack Curtin, Knockfierna; Con Curtin, Coolruss; Jackie Chawke, Chawke's cross; Moss Kirwan, Coolruss and Willie Cagney, Granagh.

As plans were laid and works began, they were joined by Mark O Shea, Jim Houlihan, Richie Chawke, Michael Daffy, Sean McMahon and Jim Enright. The Granagh scheme was the very first one in the area, so the officers had nowhere to go for advice, no internet and no phones – probably the only phone was in the Post Office. It was a massive undertaking and achievement for a rural group of people to set up and complete.

The first phase of the Scheme was completed in 1965, providing water to 56 homes and farms. The first water source was provided by a well on Willie & Sean Cagney's farm, which was pumped to a new 20K Reservoir on Moss Kirwan's land. As Kirwan's wasn't high enough to drive the water to Knockfierna or Liskennett, there was a storage tank

built on Jackie Chawke's land – with a booster pump fitted to supply water to those two areas.

As demand grew, with more houses and farms wishing to join the scheme, in 1970 a new well and 22K gallon Reservoir was built on Michael Daffy's land in Knockfierna. I don't think there would be too many women well pleased to have a Pumphouse and Well plonked in the middle of their lawn for the last 45yrs.!!

Again, as demand grew, with a small boom in house building, farming becoming more intensive and the odd chicken house and pig units being built, more water was needed. In 1988, the well at the now disused Roadstone quarry, Ballinleena, was acquired by the Scheme and a new 33K gal Reservoir built on Mark O'Shea's land.

A new Well was commissioned on John Sheehan's land in Knockfierna - at this stage there were over 100 homes and farms on the Scheme. It is important to point out that all the sites for the Wells and the Reservoirs were handed over, free of charge, by the people involved, to the GWS.

In 2005 the rules and regulations governing drinking water completely changed. Under EU regulation, water was now deemed to be a food product and had to be treated as such. At that time there were 3 Wells, but the cost involved in setting up treatment plants for each was too high, so it was decided to replace Knockfierna and Cagney's wells with a new more central one. So a piece of property was purchased from Dairygold at a minimal cost (no small thanks to Michael Daffy) for a new supply - a well and treatment plant.

There was also a new Treatment plant installed at Ballinleena Well and a new 40000gal Reservoir was built on Mossy Kirwan's land at Coolruss. Around this time, about one third of the 20 miles of water main was replaced and upgraded and meters were fitted on all connections.

It is very important to point out that the Wells, Treatment plants, Reservoirs and Water Mains are all part of a private scheme and completely owned by the members of Granagh GWS. Many of the surrounding water schemes have been handed over to the County Council and now they are under the control of Irish Water. The Granagh GWS has remained independent due to the volunteers having the interest and taking full responsibility themselves for the running of the scheme, new connections, fixing breaks, scouring lines, etc etc etc.

A number of householders, over the years, have questioned why they had to pay €100 per year for water when their neighbours in Ballingarry, Banogue and Croom had it for free? But now the tables have turned and the figure being mentioned by Irish Water is €240.

It is the most valuable asset in the parish and hopefully it will continue to remain in private ownership with everybody's support.

Today there are 170 homes and approx 60 farms, along with the school, church, soccer club and Hall on the scheme. The Granagh GWS was grant aided by the Dept. Environment from the very beginning, however 20% - 25% of the costs had to be financed locally.

It's probably true to say that 70 to 80% of the members of the GWS don't know or care very much about the history of the scheme or who was involved because they have such a good water supply!

2014 marked the 50th Anniversary of the foundation of Granagh Group Water Scheme.

Granagh Development Association marked this by honouring the Group at their yearly presentation night.

On behalf of the parish and as a member of the Development Assoc, Mick Houlihan made the presentations of glass to past/present members or their representatives. This memento was to thank and congratulate the founding members and their families for their foresight, entrepreneurship and bravery, not to mention the amount of time and voluntary labour they spent working on the scheme, for the benefit of the parishioners.