



PARTNERSHIP Tynagh and Abbey / Duniry Hurling Club (from left) Sam Hodgkins (team captain), Mattie Kenny (team manager), Ollie Robinson (club chairman), Ger Burke (club nominee) and Kevin Broderick (former Galway player).

Tribesmen join forces for good

ONE of the lesser known battles in the GAA is the plight of rural clubs and their struggle for survival.

In the good times they suffered a player drain as people chased the boom and now emigration is rearing its ugly head again.

For GAA clubs based solidly on their unique proud tradition, the prospect of an amalgamation is never something that is rushed into.

But examples like the union between Tynagh and Abbey/Duniry show what sort of powerful transformation can take place when forces are joined for a common good.

It's not that long ago that Tynagh and Abbey/Duniry would have been regarded as fierce rivals in Galway.

But they realised that they could strive together rather than struggle in isolation.

Club chairman Ollie Robinson believes the key to

CONNACHT WINNERS: TYNAGH ABBEY/DUNIRY, CO. GALWAY

the success was the amalgamation of the clubs at juvenile level back in 1995.

"That paved the way," he told Star Sunday.

"Neither club was in a position to field a team on their own from minor down.

"We'd a good U-12 team in 1998 and things grew from there.

Gelled

"When the amalgamation at senior level happened in 2004 that a lot of players had grown up playing together on the same juvenile teams and it gelled very quickly."

In other counties, amalgamations have floundered over emotive and explosive issues like where to play home matches, which club name comes first or what colour jersey is used.

According to Robinson: "As one fella said to me in the

club, it's not the colour of the jersey but rather what you put into it that counts."

The club also have some serious hurling pedigree to call upon.

There's coach Mattie Kenny, to All Star former inter-county servants Kevin Broderick and Liam Hodgins.

While they had Paul Gordon on the NUIG team that landed the 2010 Fitzgibbon Cup.

The new first team made a breakthrough in 2009 when they won the Intermediate championship and then reached this year's Galway senior county semi-final.

They were beaten by eventual champions Clarinbridge.

Ollie Robinson is keen to stress that aside from senior level there is a mammoth effort being made at juvenile and schools level.

"The club is the heartbeat of the community particularly for younger people. It's vital for the local community."