Like everyone else in this stand and many who are in different corners of the world, I’ll never forget a Saturday evening in Croke Park in January three years ago, when we experienced that rarest of feelings as Galwegians – we knew our side were All-Ireland champions well before the final whistle was even close to blown.

It was a day that will live forever in the memory for many reasons – obviously because the place we’re from had won an All-Ireland in Croke Park and the players with surnames so familiar to the generations over the years had written a very special page in the history of the club and the village.

But it was also a chance for so many to renew old acquaintances, those who flew in from far or drove from the four corners of Ireland – to meet up after far too long.

Indeed one of the things I remember most vividly about that day is the droves who left Croke Park as the Dubs arrived out onto the pitch for their league match – they must have thought there was either a bomb scare or free drink in the Croke Park Hotel.

Of course because it was the Dubs most of them were still making their way down Jones’ Road because they don’t like to hurry themselves – so they missed us altogether!

But almost exactly a century before that night, Oughterard won the County Junior Football crown in 1919 – the first ever county title for the young club – and on that team, as you all know, was a young man called James O’Malley…or Seamus Ó’Maille, as we remember him today.

Because now of course the club honours his name…on its crest and on the wonderful commemorative jersey, and shortly with a plaque.

And thanks to Sean O’Malley, the story of the short life of Seamus Ó’Maille – short in years, but as the title says, A Life Worthwhile – that story will be known as well for generations to come.

What this book reveals, first of all, is an ordinary young man doing everyday things –helping out on the small family farm, playing football, boxing, fishing. He could have been anyone growing up here.

His obituary, later, in the Connacht Tribune described him as a middleweight and as it puts it *‘no mean exponent of the fistic arts’*.

Fortunately, again like so many more who love the water, he was also a skilled boatman who used the Corrib for safe landing in Headford on volunteer runs.

And it was ultimately because of those Headford excursions – and how effective he was in what would be described now a guerrilla warfare – that he was to pay the ultimate price.

But besides all of those ordinary interests and pursuits, he was also deeply interested in the Irish revival movement, the Co-operative movement and politics – and most of all the fight for Irish freedom.

That desire for freedom ran deep – as it did with his younger brother John Martin. And as Sean points out, it could so easily have been his own father arrested – and ultimately executed.

Of course, then Sean wouldn’t be pointing any of this out or writing books - because he’d never have been born.

But as Sean does write in the book, Seamus himself refers to this in his last letter to his mother the night before his execution.

*Poor John,*he says*, if I were not here, he would be in my boots and I am grateful that I am here to take his place.*

His conviction clearly didn’t warrant the price he paid, it was for possession of a rifle in February 1923, and with the five others who are now forever known as the Tuam Martyrs, he was sentenced to death – a sentence carried out one hundred years ago tomorrow, on April 11 1923.

Again as Sean reveals, it was carried out in Tuam because Galway was in mourning on the death of Bishop O’Dea. Bishop O’Dea founded St Mary’s College, an institution that Sean and I both attended – so another connection of sorts there.

But in his last letter to his mother, Bridget, written the night before his execution, he reflects on home and his motivation – and this is where he differs from ordinary young men.

*There is one thing you can be proud of,*he writes*– I was the first man in Oughterard to suffer imprisonment, and now I give my final sacrifice – that is, my life, to help save the life of the Irish nation.*

The posthumous story of his re-interment in Kilcummin is best dealt with by Seán as he does in the book, but what I do want to acknowledge is the fitting reason we are here today in the grounds of Cumann Peile Seamus Ó’Maille, named in his honour in 1926, seven years after he’d won that County Junior Football title with the club in 1919.

Because this club is an integral part of the story of James O’Malley.

The crest designed by John Thomas Gibbons sums up what this club represents – the view of the top of the town, the Owenriff, fishing…and Seamus Ó’Maille.

We will shortly have that plaque unveiled in his memory, and we have this wonderful commemorative jersey that bears his image, his name, and the dates of his birth and death.

It’s a fitting tribute to a man who has never been forgotten by his club or his village, but whose story can now be told and preserved in print for generations to come, because his nephew made sure it happened.

It’s a square circled with perfect timing – 100 years on almost to the day.

So I’m delighted to launch A Life Worthwhile and to hand over to the proud author, Seán O’Malley.