



# WHAT MY CLUB MEANS TO ME...

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## WHAT MY CLUB MEANS TO ME

Over the last number of weeks a call for young players to write and talk about what their GAA club and Gaelic games means to them has resulted in a massive outpouring of poignant responses as heartfelt as they have been well written.

We have been very privileged to have been able to showcase many of these essays in the GAA Club Newsletter and feature another selection of them here. The themes are common. They miss the games, they miss their friends, they miss their coaches and they miss the fun they associate with being involved. They also all have a real sense of pride in the club that they represent and the community they are a part of, and have been acutely aware of how all of our communities have had to rally to support each other during this pandemic.

As the GAA, LGFA and An Cumann Camogíochta all work together on our return to play protocols and prepare for a return to non-contact Gaelic games training in the coming days, it is our hope that these young players, and indeed all of our players nationwide, get the long-awaited return to action that they have waited so patiently for.



## All You Need is a Ball and a Wall

By Étain Kelly, Kilbride GAA U16s, Co Roscommon



'All you need is a ball and a wall'. How true this statement is, especially when 'social distancing' is to be practised along with the Kilbride GAA '200 Touches Daily Challenge'. Keeping fit, keeping my skills up and keeping my spirits up is vital during this challenging time.

I long for a training session with the rest of my teammates and coaches. At this moment, I am saying that I will never again complain about all the laps we have to do and the dreaded sprints. I am not going to mention the weather be too hot, too cold, too wet, too windy...

I long to wear my Kilbride jersey again that I have always worn with pride despite my only first wearing it less than four years ago.

It all started when my Mother received a call asking if I would join the U12s team.

One more player was needed to field a team for the quarter-final. 'Sure it's only one game' I said. And I put on

the Kilbride jersey for the first time.

We won that quarter-final and also the semi-final which took us to my first ever club final.

I will never forget seeing the opposing team or rather teams as their subs alone made up a full team. Our total number of subs stood at zero. Their 'two' teams chatted and sang bouncing up and down like cheerleaders. We ran into our places deflated and almost defeated before the match began. We could not afford for one of our players to go down injured or be sent off.

The battle commenced and what a battle it was as they replaced injured or tired players with fresh ones against us. We were exhausted and injured too but fought on to victory.

We were champions. What a feeling. Utter excitement, bursting with joy as we lifted the plaque, screaming until we were hoarse. Off to town in a parade of honking cars around Roscommon, showing off our win. Then into Supermacs for burgers, chicken nuggets, chips and ice-cream. Then we all had the plaque for two weeks, taking pride of place on the mantle until we passed it on to the next player on the list (not before a few pictures were taken of me with it).

And so it began - my love of the sport and for Kilbride GAA. Spending that summer training and playing matches as I joined the u14 team.

That year was also the year I started secondary school. It was an added bonus that I met and made new friends with teammates that I would be going into first year with. I have also made friends with several other girls from other schools and at times have played against classmates!!

I am so proud to be a part of Kilbride GAA - playing my part in a wonderful club who care about and nurture

their players. It is a wonderful community of players and management who give of their time freely and enthusiastically.

We all share in the celebrations when we win and pick ourselves back up when we lose, knowing our day will come again.

And the day will come again.

I cannot wait to put my Kilbride jersey back on - to meet up with my teammates and our management. I cannot wait until we train again for future games and become u16 champions.

For now, I will research my new football boots I hope to get for my birthday next month.

In the meantime, I will continue to practise my skills and practise my social distancing until Kilbride GAA meet again.

After all, 'All you need is a ball and a wall'.

## I can't wait til we all go back

By Conor O'Keefe, Ballyboden St Enda's GAA U11s, Co Dublin

My club is Ballyboden St. Enda's. They were founded after Rathfarnham St. Enda's and Ballyboden Wanderers merged together to make the club. Rathfarnham St. Enda's are no longer a club, but Ballyboden Wanderers are. Ballyboden St. Enda's won their first Dublin Senior Football title in 1995, their first Leinster Senior Football title in 2015 and their first All-Ireland Senior Football title in 2016.

BBSE was founded in 1969 with 36 members, which means it celebrated 50 years last year with lots of celebrations taking place in the club.

My first introduction to the club was when I attended the summer camps. I really enjoyed them as I met loads of other kids and we got to play loads of games. The highlight of the week though was the water fight between children and coaches which was loads of fun. The Dublin Fire brigade even came along with their water hose to make sure we were really soaked!!



I then started off in the Academy in September 2015 where I started to learn the skills of the game. My Cork mam and Mayo dad love the GAA and made sure that I tried football and hurling. I still love playing both.

In 2016 I started going to the senior team matches and I loved them. That year Ballyboden St. Enda's went on to play in the final in Croke Park against Castlebar Mitchels from Mayo. I was at that game and we won by thirteen points. The full-time score was 2-14 - 0-07. I was so happy and ever since I go to the matches with my friends and family. It doesn't matter where they are in the country!!

This year we won the Dublin Senior football title and the Leinster Senior football title. We went all the way to the semi-final and lost to Kilcoo from county Down. I was really sad.

This year I am in the under 11's and I love it so much. I miss going to training and learning new skills with my friends and going to my matches every Saturday. I can't wait till we all go back. In the meantime, I have been spending my free time practicing my new skills on my left foot with my dad.

I hope to follow in the footsteps of Conal Keaney (Leinster Senior Medals in hurling and football) and Michael Darragh MacAuley (7 All Ireland medals). My two younger brothers are also part of BBSE and maybe we'll be like the Basquels in years to come playing together for Ballyboden.

I love wearing the blue and white jersey of Boden and I am very proud of my club and how they are coming together to help others during the coronavirus pandemic.

My club are great when it comes to teaching younger kids the skills of the game but they are also a community who pull together to help others.  
Boden Abú!

## Ahane and me

By Aoife Holland, age 11, Ahane GAA, Co Limerick

### WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR CLUB?

One thing I love about my club is that I have made so many new friends since I started the GAA, friends that I never knew I'd make friends with, ones that go to different schools and I didn't think I would have much in common with. The other thing I love about my club is the teamwork - I remember once we lost a final and in the dressing room afterwards some of us were upset but we all managed to be laughing and we were all there for one another and that is something that I will never forget.

### WHAT DOES YOUR CLUB MEAN TO YOU?

My club means so much to me, the friends that I make, the times that I share, the sport that I play - I would not be who I am today if I had not come down to our club pitch one day and decided that I wanted to be a part of the GAA. I have my club to thank for making me, me!

### WHAT DOES YOUR CLUB MEAN TO YOUR COMMUNITY?

Our club means a lot to my community, especially at a time like this where they are helping the vulnerable by shopping for them, buying medicine for them. Even in times that are normal my club sets up entertainment for us as a community like the Oscars, fashion show, medal presentations and the list just keeps on going and going!

### WHAT GREAT HISTORY DOES YOUR CLUB HAVE?

Ahane was founded on November 22nd in 1926 and has been going on strongly ever since. The very first Ahane team was created in 1926 included: W.F. Lee, Ned McDonogh, Stephan McDonogh, Pa Scanlan, Anthony Mackey, Mick O' Malley, Pat O' Reilly, Dan Givens, Bill Coleman, Mick Hickey, Michael Quinlan, Pat Hillard, Pat Joyce, Timmy Ryan, Martin Ryan, Pat O'Brien, Dave Conway, Joe Ryan, Mick Hourigan and Eddie O'Brien.

Ahane had their first match in December 12th 1926 the game was very competitive where Ahane was playing against Newport. Ahane lost only by a single point.

They had no Ahane jerseys for this match and because Sean Carroll refused to lend them the old Castleconnel Jerseys they had to seek a loan from Treaty which had green and gold hoops the recognised colours of Ahane! The first set of Ahane jerseys were made on Christmas eve 1926 for £5!!! Ahane won their first senior county championship in 1999. Ahane have produced many a great players including Mick Mackey, John Mackey, Jackie Power, Niamh Mulcahy, Judith Mulcahy and many more!!!!!!

### WHAT DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO DOING WHEN WE COME BACK?

I look forward to doing several things when we get back to training. One of the things that I can't wait for is getting back with my friends. I facetime a few sometimes, but it's just not the same as talking to them in person. The second thing that I can't wait to do is the excitement you feel all through the day until it's time for hurling or time for football and the feeling at the end of training you just feel really good and healthy. Now that you have read all about my club, I hope you realise that there is no better club than Ahane GAA club!!!!



## Moorefield Magic

By Seán Coleman age 10 & Aoife Coleman age 12,  
Moorefield GAA, Co Kildare

I simply love playing for Moorefield. When I was younger I didn't like it at all - every time I did a training session or a match my dad would bring me to art and hobby and buy me a hotwheels car.

Every time my dad had some spare time he would bring me to the field just down the road and we would practice for an hour. In fact we still go to this day and now I started liking it because it got so much easier and people were saying I was improving. Now I adore it and it is a great place to make friends.

Our history: Moorefield have won a Leinster title and two county titles since I started playing for Moorefield six years ago. They also won a Leinster title in 2006 and a load more county titles.

Story from Moorefield history: Moorefield were five points down going into extra-time against St Loman's in the 2017 Leinster final. Three minutes into extra time Ronan Sweeney scored a cracker of a goal with Moorefield two behind Eanna O'Connor hit a brace to put Moore field level with 2 minutes to play and with five minutes up Eanna O'Connor had a free and it dropped short but there was Kevin Murnaghan to kick the ball over the bar and to win the Leinster title for Moorefield.

What I look forward to doing when I get back is I want to kick the ball over the bar in Moorefield, meet up with my friends and the main thing of all is having fun.

SEÁN COLEMAN



I just love playing GAA in my club Moorefield. I started playing when I was eight years old. At first, we hadn't got a girls team which meant you had to play with the boys. I didn't mind at all as I had a few others with me who are on my team now.

What makes a team is the players, it doesn't matter if you win lose or draw. The fun is all that counts.

I can't believe I never thought of playing when I was five or six. I simply love playing. The club is like a home from home to me. My dad during the summer would bring me to the field down the road with my brothers to practice every day. I have made some amazing friends for life in the club that I couldn't have made anywhere else - not even in school. In fact, I didn't have many friends in school at the time I started in Moorefield so it is great and I'd recommend starting to anyone.

One of the many stories from history is when the seniors won the second Leinster title...

Moorefield had been the better team in the first half but were behind for most of the second half. Moorefield fans were starting to leave with six minutes remaining.

The Kildare champions got 1-4 without reply. Despite looking dead and buried. Three Éanna O'Connor frees and a goal from Ronan Sweeney after a run by James Murray. Moorefield then got a free. The referee moved the ball up as St.Loman's players started to complain. The ball dropped short but luckily Kevin Murnaghan was there to score the winning point of the game. That's how Moorefield were crowned leinster champions of 2017.

I look forward to going back to doing what I do best. Although I won't miss running laps around the pitches in the club. It'll be great to start playing matches as they are my favourite thing about playing camogie and football. I'll also look forward to booting the bar over the bar again and meeting up with friends again when this is all over. But until then all I can do is practice...

AOIFE COLEMAN

## I belong to Bredagh!

By Emer McKee, Bredagh GAA U12s, Co Down

I belong to Bredagh, a club in south Belfast Co. Down, and I play for the under 12s. I first joined Bredagh when I was 8 years old: my brother was training with his age group when I saw a group of girls playing Gaelic. It looked like loads of fun so my mum asked one of the coaches if I could join in.

I was really scared at first, because I didn't know anyone, and the girls looked like they'd been playing for ages. But the coaches are really friendly and supportive, so I kept going and every Friday night I turned up, rain or shine, and it was loads of craic! One of the hard things for me was nobody from my school went to Bredagh but within weeks I had loads of great friends from loads of different schools. Every week I went training I knew I was getting better and soon I was chasing after every ball! At under 10s they gave out an award called the Golden Boot which they gave to someone who had really worked hard that Friday.

Everybody wanted to win it and there was lots of talk about it. This really gave you the motivation because you wanted your coach to say you were the best player of the night so you'd work really hard during the session so you could win it.

I had loads of great coaches who were always super supportive, and they'd be there every Friday. I can clearly remember one Friday it was lashing and only me and the coach and his daughter turned up but that was one of the most fun sessions. At the end we looked like drowned rats, but it was worth it!

Our coaches also organised an amazing trip to see the Ladies All-Ireland final in Croke Park! We needed to raise money to go so we had a sponsored run around Cherry Vale where our coaches and parents pelted us with wet sponges! We had to leave in a bus at 6am and we were all

given bright pink hats with the Bredagh badge on them so we wouldn't get lost. On the bus me and all my friends played a thousand games of hang man and had already eaten all our sweets before we'd even got to Dublin! In our seats at Croke Park people came around with flags and our whole team were supporting Cork except for one person who supported Dublin! When I saw those Ladies play in the All-Irelands, I knew I wanted to be just like them and one day play for County Down!

I've met lots of new friends here, and when I go to my post primary school lots of friends from Gaelic hopefully, they'll all go too. This will mean it won't be so daunting if you're starting it with friends. I never want to miss a training session because I love playing Gaelic with all my friends. I know there is a good reason for Gaelic to be off at the moment, but I can't wait to get back chasing a ball around a muddy field!

Bredagh Abú!



## I now realise just how important the club is

By Cian Hogan, Galtee Gaels, U14s, Co Limerick

My club Galtee Gaels means everything to me. Since I started playing at U6 I have made a lot of friends. Our trainers make the sessions hard, physical and enjoyable too. If my coaches see that I need to improve on something they always help me.

The gatherings are enjoyable too like the gala day, 24 hour walk and the walk in the woods.

I like playing with the U16s because I can push myself for the younger ages and to reach county finals. From all the hard training sessions with Galtee Gaels I have made it to the county for the Limerick U14 team.

If the community had no GAA there would be nothing to look forward to. When I was younger, we had a parish league. I enjoyed it because it brought the community together. The club doesn't run it anymore because there are so many GAA fixtures. I miss it because it was a chance to play competitively against my own teammates. The club has great community spirit because everyone does their own bit in fundraising and events such as the gala days, walks, medal presentation and much more. One day I was playing in an U16 league match. Just before half-time I went up to catch a ball - but the sun got in my eyes and I couldn't see the ball and it bounced off my head as if I had headed it! It was a very funny moment and everyone there started laughing.

Everyone was singing when the intermediate team went up senior. That night, there were fireworks let off and it went on for about half an hour. That was a special night as I had never seen fireworks go off in the village before. That night when the senior team had their homecoming in

Kilbehenny the U16s were walking in with the senior team because we had won a county final too. It was amazing and the big crowd were all cheering as we were coming into the village. Afterwards we got photos taken - 2019 was a special year for the club.

Since I finished school I have been busy keeping fit - doing 5km runs, doing exercises and skills competitions like hitting a ball up off a wall day after day. I was surprised at what having no sport in life can do. Even though I am enjoying it at home with my family it isn't the same because I am missing all the training and matches and playing with my friends every week up in the pitch and at away games. I am just craving being able to play matches against local teams while playing football and having fun with my friends. As soon as we are all back the better.

I now realise just how important the club is.



## Gunners on target

By Liam O'Grady, Ballygunner Hurling Club U11s, Co Waterford

My club is Ballygunner GAA club in Waterford. They were founded in 1954. They have won the last six county championships. The story I'm going to tell today is how they were founded.

Before 1954 there was no adult hurling team in the parish. All the hurlers who came from the small school had to travel into the city to play for Erin's Own or Mount Sion. The founder of the club, James McGinn, thought the parish had enough talent to compete with the bigger clubs in Waterford.

Being successful at underage level through the national school, Mr. McGinn, as he was known, set up the club to nurture the game in a small parish. What Mr. McGinn thought, was correct. That same year, Ballygunner collected their first piece of silverware by winning the minor county Championship. This was more than a promising start. At this point in time, Ballygunner currently have won eighteen county championships. They are one of the main powers in Waterford hurling, winning many underage titles, and also regularly winning the senior championship.

In 1966 Ballygunner won their first county championship against Mount Sion. In 1967 Ballygunner beat Ballyduff Lower/Portlaw to win their second county championship. In 1968, to win their first three in a row, Ballygunner beat club rivals Mount Sion once again.

### BALLYGUNNER FACTS:

NAME: Ballygunner GAA club

AS GAELIGE: Baile Mhic Gonair

SERVING: Parish of St. Mary's Ballygunner in Waterford city

GROUNDS: James McGinn Park

FOUNDED: 1954

NICKNAME: The Gunners

STAR FACT: Two-time Munster club championship winners

### MY FAVORITE BALLYGUNNER PLAYER:

My favorite player for Ballygunner is Dessie Hutchinson. He was a key player in last year's Munster and county championship, scoring some important goals and points. He was playing very well for Waterford in the league this year, before everything got called off because of Coronavirus. Dessie is a great athlete, and he used to play for Brighton and Waterford FC.

As a Ballygunner lad myself, I'm proud to say three players for Ballygunner have won all-stars, the most recent being Stephen O'Keefe a.k.a. Soky. The two others are Fergal

Hartley and Paul Flynn. I go to most Ballygunner matches and usually they win but, the odd time, they lose. My team (under ten and under eleven) are pretty good as well, last year we won three trophies. One of my coaches is former Tipperary and Waterford hurler Andy Moloney, he was also on the Ballygunner team when they won the Munster championship in 2001.

Whenever Ballygunner win something big, for example, a county championship or last year when they won the Munster championship, they come into our school the next day with the cup and the whole school is very excited and we get no homework.

Ballygunner have never won a club All-Ireland or even got to the final. Having won six county titles in a row, it is a big ambition of the club to win an All-Ireland club title. In the future, hopefully we will win one or more. Last year our wish nearly came true but unfortunately, we were narrowly beaten by a very strong Ballyhale team in the All-Ireland semi-final. There are two primary schools in the parish and every pupil is hugely proud of our local club.

Up the Gunners!!!



## My second home, my world, my everything

By Emily Rogers, age 10, Glenn John Martins GFC, Co Down

Hi! I am Emily Rogers, I am ten years old and I am from a club called Glenn John Martin G.F.C. Glenn is a club in Down, it is a great club. In fact, let me tell you how great it is.

First, I'll tell you about what our players love most about Glenn. I think what our players love most about our club is that we learn so much from our coaches, our mums and dads, we learn new skills, we make progress and most importantly we have fun while doing it all. Another thing that we love about our club is our dedication because everybody tries their hardest to get to training on Sundays and Fridays, and we also love our club spirit because everybody is so polite and considerate.

Second, I will tell you about what the club means to me. Well what the club means to me can't really be put into words, but I will try my best. Ok, so Glenn club is my second home, it is my world, it is my everything. I love, love playing football, I love seeing my friends. I play for the under 12's girl team and it is the absolute best. I wouldn't play for any other club because Glenn is my club, it may not be the same as other clubs but has lovely memories to last a lifetime. I love Glenn also because of the fun and the crack is always amazing. Even though me and my teammates go to school together we always have something new to talk about. The memories we have now are great and I know the ones to come will be amazing.

Third, I will tell you about what it means for our community. One of the things I love about our community is all the fun days out. One of them is Grub in the Club, which my dad started to do, to raise money for the

underage to have a lovely day out at the end of the year. And we have two girl teams and were lucky enough to go to the Ladies championship final, it was spectacular. When I was in under 6's we went to our local soft play centre and it was a lot of fun, and when I was in under 8's we went there and instead we went bowling and it was fun. One day I dream to play at Croke Park in the Ladies Final. We had a great chairman called Declan and he helped our club with so many activities and they were all so cool and entertaining.

Fourth, I will tell you about a great time in Glenn John Martins Club. Our Senior team were in the intermediate final against a team from Newry called Shamrocks. And with a lot of hard effort, they won. It was an amazing match and it was one where you couldn't take your eyes off it. It was brilliant and I even got to play at half time. I was so happy. Our whole community came to the club to celebrate. It was fun having my family and a friend there as my brother plays for the senior team.

Finally, what I am looking forward to. I am looking forward to seeing my friends, seeing my coaches, playing fun games, finding out the crack and most importantly practising football. And until I see my friends we can talk over a phone. And now we have come to an end here is a message for everyone.

Keep practising  
Keep having fun  
Keep making memories



## Making friends for life

By Moira Delaney, Four Roads GAA U14s, Co Roscommon

I am from a small club in South Roscommon called Four Roads where I play camogie and football. I prefer camogie. Last year, at U14, we won Féile. We had got to the final in Roscommon and lost - but in Roscommon both teams go through and so we went through to Killarney. Our final was in Cork where we played Nemo Rangers. The year before us in 2018 the boys had also won Féile.

The GAA means so much to me and our community as everyone loves to play hurling and camogie. Four Roads was founded in 1904 and is the most successful hurling club in county Roscommon with 34 senior county hurling titles. Four Roads Camogie club won the 2010 All-Ireland junior club title. In 2018 the senior team got to the All-Ireland club final but unfortunately lost. Last year the U12 camogie team won the C final and beat Athleague.

One of the most important days for the club is the senior finals - all the community go. The men have won in 1905, 1906, 1907, 1945, 1946, 1948, 1950, 1954, 1958, 1962, 1971, 1977, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1988, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2019. They have also won Connacht titles in 1977 and 1988.

The thing I love most about my club is that everyone has so much community spirit and people are always willing to do things whether it's training U6s to managing senior.

Another thing I love is the GAA Cúl Camps. We have so much fun together learning new skills. We love getting the gear at the end of the week. I love to have fun with my friends in the park and I love to go to the ball wall and going for walks on the walkway around our two lovely pitches. We have lights around the pitch that help when we have training outside and it gets dark early. We use our community centre when we have fitness and circuit training.



When we got back to training I am most looking forward to being with my friends. I am also looking forward to playing against other teams like Dominics, Oran, Roscommon Gaels, Pearses, Boyle, Tulsk and Athleague. I think the GAA brings people closer together and you make friends for life in your own club and in other clubs too.

Our club colours are black and amber and we get gear for lots of different things

In Four Roads we do fundraisers for Féile and other things. We hold table quizzes, bake sales, America tea parties and we sell books of tickets. One of my favourite fundraisers was last year when we did a colour run to raise money for Féile. It was a 5km run and we had lots of people there. We have a tradition where after a final we go around the parish beeping the horns of the cars and people light fires in front of their houses. One of the last fires I remember was when the seniors won the Mickey Cunniffe Memorial Cup.

Mickey was a fantastic hurler with Four Roads who sadly passed away at the young age of 33 so it was a great honour for the seniors to bring the cup back to Four Roads again.

My club, in my opinion, is the BEST IN ALL OF IRELAND!



## Fly my flag

By Aaron Robert Murphy, Leixlip GAA, Co Kildare

I have always been loyal to my club. Whenever playing I always try my best, although I might not always play brilliantly. I always try to turn up for my training and practice when I can. Every moment on the pitch, I take in and enjoy. I feel kind of grateful when I'm training to know that people are giving up their time to help me get better. I have lots of friends who love playing the game with me also, and all of this makes me feel a part of a great community and special.

However, I also love writing and reading. This is why I entered this competition. I am an author, I think. I have already written some books and entered competitions. Maybe someday I will be a journalist, or even a sports journalist. I could write for the Leixlip GAA website. So here is my first sports report.....(on my moms computer).

It's a sports memory report really. My memory of what it was like during the #newbridgeor nowhere year. It was special to me and my family as my dad was involved as one of the selectors, so I got to see things close up. I got to go to the training sometimes and I was even able to bring one of my friends one day to check out the football pitch in Navan before the main game against Fermanagh.

But I remember when Kildare lost against Carlow. My mam drove me and my sister all the way to Tullamore. It was really disappointing as Kildare lost.....BADLY!! I didn't want to look. Everyone was very sad, mad and I heard a few bad words in the stand. We saw ourselves in the news later on walking away from the pitch on the way home with our heads down.

The next match was in Derry and Kildare actually left from Leixlip GAA that day. Again, myself and my mam and sister went up to the club and waved and high fived some of the

players. I think we were the only people there to say good luck to them driving all the way to Derry. Kildare won this time. And the draw that took place after this meant that Kildare would play Mayo at home.

However there was drama. The GAA decided that this game would be played somewhere else. This decision sparked a riot. Then a miracle happened. Everyone got behind Kildare and eventually, Kildare were allowed to play at home! I went to my auntie's house to watch the match. It was scary and I couldn't look at the TV.

When the full time whistle blew, I picked up the courage to look at the scoreboard. 21-19

They had won. KILDARE HAD WON!

### FLY MY FLAG

Leixlip is my club, it's flag I proudly fly,  
When I score a point or goal for my team my heart it swells with pride.

GAA is my sport whether I'm winning or not,  
Leixlip helps me play this game so I'd like to spare a thought,

To all the coaches, all the staff who help me play my game,  
To all the teammates and all the friends who help get to my aim,

So when I practice kicking about you will see a flickering flare,

And one day you will see me playing for  
LEIXLIP & KILDARE!



**Leixlip G.A.A. CLUB**

## Wearing the colours with pride

By Michael Francis Collins, Clonakilty GAA U12s, Co Cork

My name is Michael Francis Collins and I play for the nine-time Cork senior football county champions Clonakilty.

I play for the U12 team. This club means a lot to me because my childhood heroes play for the senior team. I think my club is the best club in the world because Clon' are the oldest club to be playing senior football in Cork history.

I love going to training and matches and wear that great green and red Jersey. This club is very important to my parish because it was found in 1887. Since then the parish were roaring on the boys from the brewery town to victory.

Every single club game, all you see is people wearing the red and green jersey with pride. My parish follow the club everywhere from Castlehaven down to Goleen and in the good and bad times. Every time you step into our GAA pitch all you see is young kids that are proud to represent the parish and dreaming of climbing the steps in the Horgan stand and lifting the Sam Maguire or the Liam MacCarthy Cup.



One of the greatest games in Clon' history is the 1996 County semi-final vs St Finbars. With a huge attendance in Bandon, this finally should be the year after waiting for 52 years to lift the Andy Scannell Cup. With half of the parish in Bandon Clon should deliver. But early in the first half Clons captain Brian Murphy got sent off. It was a very tight game with St Finbars winning by a point, 9 points to 8.

With 10 seconds left Eoin Ó Mahony for Clon took a free it dropped short and fell into the hands of the St Finbars goalkeeper John Kerin. Pádraig Griffin took the ball off the Bars' keeper and kicked the ball in the net!!! The parish were jumping over the fence. They were finally in the county final against UCC. Clon won against the hot favourites UCC. 1-9 to 0-10. Brian Murphy lifted the Andy Scannell cup for the first time in 52 years!! The start of the celebrations were never witnessed in the town history. I hope I see Clon lifting the Andy Scannell Cup again. I am hoping they open the fine gates of my GAA pitch again. I am excited to see my Friends playing the game that we love and going to see the senior footballers and Junior hurlers play again.

## From no Park to Croke Park

By Orlaith Hoey, Magheraclaone Mitchells, Co Monaghan

The last game I ever played on the Magheraclaone juvenile pitch was the same semi-final we lost, the same semi-final where I broke my wrist and the same weekend our pitch sunk. It was like a horror story throughout the parish. We had to stay strong and get through it together as a parish, as one big family, and so we did. This is one of the great things about my club, Magheraclaone Mitchells. We are like one big family, everybody knows and helps each other, and when times get tough is when we are the strongest. Neighbouring clubs offered facilities, parents drove long distances to training and a new temporary training pitch was finally obtained.

Seventeen months later we had won intermediate county, Ulster and now we were through to the All-Ireland final against Oughterard on Saturday 25th of January 2020.

The parish was buzzing with excitement, windows were painted black and white, bunting and flags were literally everywhere. Everybody pulled together to turn the parish black and white. It was all anybody could talk about, we all had one common interest and one common wish – to see our club win the All-Ireland in Croke Park. RTÉ even came to one of the local Magheraclaone schools! The manager of the team was our school principal and our class teacher, (master) James Kieran.

I don't think there was a single soul left in Magheraclaone that Saturday. The parish was never as quiet. All roads out of Magheraclaone led to Croke Park. I guess it was a great day for a robber to come by!

There was a tonne of buses going and everyone was going mental singing, having the craic, waving out the windows. Sandwiches were packed and flasks of tea were prepared. It was a sea of black and white. Everyone was in their



Magheraclaone gear, some had face paint, and all were waving flags. This was a day we never expected to see, and one we will never forget.

The Magheraclaone players ran out onto the Croke Park pitch in their black and white. The cheers could probably be heard back home. Oughterard came out in their green and white. Tensions were high. Nerves were on edge. This was it! This was the All-Ireland final!

Even though they were 6 points ahead at half-time, Magheraclaone still ended up facing a 10-point defeat with a final score of 2:16 to 0:12. Michael Jones and Ryan Farrelly got sent off with none of the Oughterard getting sent off. The first point was an Oughterard score, but Tommy Freeman quickly scored the first for the Magheraclaone side. The game unfortunately ended well for Oughterard. We were all absolutely devastated, we weren't sure what to feel to be honest.

This is what I love the most about my club. Even though we had lost, everyone lined up to give the players a guard of honour when they returned to the M-Hotel. The team and management got a huge round of applause and were cheered and congratulated all the way up to the doors. Everybody was so proud of our team and their success was celebrated. Even though we hadn't brought home the cup that day, I still felt so proud to be part of the Magheraclaone Mitchells club.

As a club we had been through the worst of nightmares, but as a club we stuck together, worked together and found that there were no limits to what we could achieve.

I can't wait to get back to training with my second family!

## The heart and soul of our community

By Ruby Roche, age 12, Railyard GFC, Co Kilkenny

The GAA club in my community is the "Railyard" and I love it. It is a Gaelic football club in the north of Kilkenny. The club is the heart and soul of our community and offers really good facilities to its members. The club recently added a new walking track which is a great meeting point for young and old. Railyard GFC was founded in 1943 and its colours are red and white. Railyard is very inclusive and welcomes both boys and girls from the parish to play football, girls can play with the boys teams up until under 11. Our club also has a Ladies football division that is growing every year. It started with one under 12 team and now has teams at every age group.

The Railyard GFC has an amazing history with lots of wonderful stories. One of my favourite stories of the Railyard is about my great grandfather Joe Walsh. He looked after the juvenile teams back in the day after he finished playing football himself. I am told that he always gave each child a medal even if he had to give away some of his own medals so everyone knew how important to the team they were and how much the club appreciated them.

The club now has a tournament every year in his memory, where we play for the Joe Walsh Cup. It is like All-Ireland day in our parish when the tournament comes around each September - everyone in the parish comes to the pitch. All local footballers take part both boys and girls. The children are divided into county teams for example Dublin, Kerry, Donegal, Kilkenny etc. We play a number of matches with a final at the end. The most important thing is that all the children who take part get a medal at the end.

One of my best experiences with my gaelic football club was when my under 10 team got to play in Croke Park in an exhibition game at half time on Ladies Football All-Ireland day. I was nine when I wrote a song called "Catherine's

Army" which me and my teammates recorded. We sent a CD and a page with the lyrics of the song into a competition. A few weeks later we got a message saying that our team had won and we were selected to play at half-time on All-Ireland day. We all got jerseys, socks and shorts for the day. When the day then came our club and parish got behind us so much, we had to get two buses to go up to Dublin for our parents and supporters who wanted to watch us play. We were lined up and got to march behind the Artane Boys Band. We played for the whole of half-time while our family and friends cheered us on with a big banner.

I love training and playing with my team. We are all great friends and have great fun training together. I love going to matches and I am very competitive. This year I played with the Kilkenny U12 team and we won the division 3 Leinster Blitz which was the first time for a team from Kilkenny. So we were very proud and again we got great recognition from our clubs. Some of my friends from school are on other teams and it is great fun playing against them because as well as being great friends we are also great rivals.

I really love playing with the Railyard because everyone is so dedicated and nice and since The Railyard is in such a small community like Moneenroe everyone knows each other and gets along so well with each other. Football and GAA is a great way of bringing people together in the rural community and keeping people together.

All my family are involved. My father played with the Railyard for years and now is a selector on the senior team and trainer for the girls U10 team. My brother is 15 and plays with Railyard and Kilkenny also. I have two younger sisters and the both play at U8 and U10. My mother isn't a footballer but she is our club PRO and a mentor for the girls U10 team. The GAA is a great way for families to spend quality time together outdoors.

The Railyard is always welcoming new members and playing football and going training together always makes every day more enjoyable. Since the Coronavirus hit Ireland and the GAA had to cancel all training and matches in order to help protect citizens, the football is what I miss most. I cannot wait to get back to playing football with my club and team. At the moment what I miss most is the buzz of trainings and matches. I even miss early Sunday mornings for under 16 training and running the track and doing drills on the pitch.

I always enjoy match day because it is such a great feeling walking out in your club colours out onto the pitch with my team and then after the whistle is blown and the ball is thrown in, everything moves so fast and you are always moving and running around. I can't wait to get back on the pitch in the red and white of the Railyard.



## Our club belongs to everyone

By Gerald Greene, Roscommon Gaels U12s & Jonathan Greene, Roscommon Gaels U10s

There is no better club in Ireland than Roscommon Gaels. I play U12 hurling and football for the club. I greatly enjoy both sports though I slightly favour football.

The Roscommon Gaels celebrated a significant milestone last year when the club celebrated its 60th anniversary. There was a big celebration. We officially opened our new dressing rooms and a 25m ball wall.

The Gaels reached the senior county final last year. In the group stage they topped the group and winning each game by a convincing score. Then they met Elphin in Strokestown and won by 2-13 to 0-11. They beat Strokestown in Hyde Park and won 2-10 to 0-8. There was great hype in the days coming up to the final. The match was played in Hyde Park and the opponents were Pdraig Pearses. They lost by a score of 2-10 to 1-10 and I got to play on the pitch at half time. It was a great experience.

The senior game was a close, hard-fought encounter. The Gaels U14 Ladies won a historic All-Ireland Féile football final. The Gaels were losing by a point but a kickable free was awarded. They scored to draw and they split the trophy with the other team.

My club is an inclusive club. The all-stars were set up in the club to help children who have additional needs. It teaches children how to kick a ball and how to swing a hurl and most important - have fun.

The Gaels entered a TG4 competition. You had to enter a video about your club. The main focus of the video were the all-stars. The Gaels won and they are going to raffle a car. It is a great achievement for the Gaels.

The Gaels built a 25m ball wall and dressing rooms that consist of four dressing rooms, referees' room, a kitchen and a public toilet. The wall is playable on both sides. The official opening was on the June Bank Holiday weekend and it was a great day. There were teams playing, the academy showing off the skills they learnt, an ice cream van and a massive marquee that stood proudly beside the new clubhouse. Fr John Cullen, the local parish priest, blessed it.

I love going to training because I want to do sport in life and push hard to be at my best. Training is difficult but entertaining. We were meant to go to Croke Park in April but didn't because of the coronavirus.

Ní neart go cur le chéile - this is the motto of our club and we have achieved so much since the club moved to a new location in 2008. I want to be part of this great success story so we can win another senior football county final.

BY GERALD GREENE



I love my club. I play U10 Gaelic football and hurling with my club, Roscommon Gaels. There is nothing I like better than pulling on my football boots on a Thursday evening for training. Equipped with my gumshield, socks and gloves, I am really excited because I love GAA, meeting my friends and learning new skills.

I am sad and frustrated that I can't train because of the coronavirus.

Last year Roscommon Gaels celebrated its 60th year as a club. It was a very proud day for the club. There was a massive celebration, a BBQ, skills competition and mini matches at the new pitch. When we arrived at the club grounds, what a glorious sight met our eyes - there was purple and yellow bunting fluttered in the breeze. A massive marquee stood proudly beside the clubhouse. It was packed with family, friends and neighbours. There were lots of goodies and treats for us kids.

Best of all, there was a new electronic scoreboard to keep the scores and the times for matches. Our local priest blessed the pitch. It was the best day ever.

Our club belongs to everyone. There are 33 teams altogether for boys, girls and adults. A new all-stars team was set up last year for children with additional needs. Our club recorded a video of the all-stars in action and the video won the overall prize in a competition run by TG4, which was a new Subaru car. This was an amazing win. There will be a raffle for the new car and the money raised will be used to provide a new car park and an astro pitch for the club - I can't wait!

I will never forget the great celebration when the Roscommon Gaels U14 Ladies team won the All-Ireland Féile football final last summer. My sister had a big part to play in that game, playing midfield. It was a brilliant

game. We were neck and neck all the way through. At full-time, both teams were level. Extra time was played and still it was a draw. They had to share the cup and we celebrated for many days and are still celebrating.

I can't wait to get back into training again and to have fun with my friends. My dream is to captain the senior Roscommon Gaels team and to help them to win a county final.

When I put on my purple and yellow jersey there will be no stopping me!

BY JONATHAN GREENE

## Girls should play more sport

By Anna Harkin, O'Loughlin Gaels U11s, Co Kilkenny

My name is Anna Harkin. I play camogie with O'Loughlin Gaels camogie club in Kilkenny. I am eleven years old and I play with the under twelves team. There are about 30 girls in my group. Mick and Stephen are our coaches. We have won the Rena Sheridan cup for two years in a row. Rena Sheridan was one of the founding members of the camogie club in the early 90s and sadly she passed away a number years ago.

The competition was set up to honour her memory, so this is a very special competition for all of our players. We play lots of local matches and when we were younger, we loved the Go Games blitzes.

O'Loughlin Gaels is a very social club; we have summer camps, Easter camps, movie nights, day trips away and you can even visit Santa at Christmas. It's a very friendly club that welcomes everyone - there are lots of players from lots of different backgrounds which makes it a great place to meet new people.

We also have great rules like if you break your hurl in a match or training, you get a free hurl from the club! We're such a great club that TG4 included us in a TV programme



called 'CLUB' where we travelled the country telling stories of GAA clubs around Ireland. They came to our club and they shot much of the programme with all of the young players on our pitches and then we travelled by bus to Dublin for the studio shoot. It was great fun but sadly not everyone got to go. Thankfully I got to go!

Some of our best players have played with the Kilkenny senior camogie and hurling teams. I hope some day I get to play with the Kilkenny senior camogie team. A couple of years ago when I was in under tens I got to play at half time in a display camogie match. Kilkenny were playing Clare and won the match.

Last year O'Loughlin Gaels hurling club celebrated its 50th anniversary. The club has lots of great stories to tell. In 1969, Fr. Tommy Murphy who played for O'Loughlin Gaels and the Kilkenny senior hurling team said mass in St. John's church on the morning of the All Ireland final. All of the Kilkenny team came to mass that day and when the mass was over, Fr. Tommy Murphy and the Kilkenny team hopped on the train and went to Dublin to play Cork in the All Ireland Final. They must have prayed and played very hard as they beat Cork by 6 points to become All Ireland champions.

Now I cannot play camogie because of the coronavirus. I am really disappointed because I won't see my friends and I will miss going to training on a Saturday morning. Luckily my club has a list of skills to practice over the break on facebook.

I can't wait till the coronavirus is over and we can get back to normal.

Girls should play more sport because our last generation was all about men playing sport but in the future it will be equal. GAA clubs like O'Loughlin Gaels camogie club support girls to play team sports - this way in the future, it will be more about men and women playing sport!!

## Picking up the Tempo

By Cara Meehan, age 9, Tempo Maguires GAC, Co Fermanagh

Tempo Maguires have won many trophies I will tell you how many they have won. Men and ladies.

### MEN'S HONOURS:

Senior Championship-  
1970, 72, 73, 2012 (which my Daddy played in)  
Intermediate Championship-  
1991, 1996, 2002  
Senior League Division One-  
1961, 1970, 1972, 1974, 2002  
Senior league Division Two-  
1977, 1984, 1987, 1996, 1999, 2007, 2019  
Senior league Division Three-  
1991, 1994

### WOMEN'S HONOURS:

Ruth McGrath cup-  
2012, 2019  
U 16 Championship-  
1994  
U 16 league-  
2012  
U 16 lady of Lake Shield-  
1995  
Senior Cox Shield-  
1997, 1999, 2003  
Senior league Division Two-  
2000, 2001  
Junior Champions-  
2007  
Junior Championship-  
2006

When I get back to training I look forward to playing with my friends and learning new skills. I really miss everyone and playing matches.

I definitely wish I could go back now. Luckily I can still play with my Dad and my family but, when I go back to training I am going to give it my all.

I just can't wait to go back to training. I feel so happy there.

I can just forget about all the hard work I have to do and focus on the game. I love football so much. Please open up soon.

It's so fun to train and the coaches are so kind. So when I go back to training I am going to help people and train my hardest.

It's my dream to become a Gaelic County footballer. You have to start somewhere and I'm starting at training.

Please open up soon Tempo I can't give up on my dream.



## MÍLE BUÍOCHAS

Thank you to all of those who have contributed to What My Club Means To Me.  
Your feedback is welcome and any comments,  
suggestions or queries should be directed to

[clubnewsletter@gaa.ie](mailto:clubnewsletter@gaa.ie).

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