

CHAPTER 5

Mol an Óige

A FEW years after the Kildare County Board was re-established in the 1950s, the club delegates were aware of the importance of involving young people in the game.

At the July 1957 Board meeting the minutes note that *with regard to juveniles, it was decided to organise friendly matches at first, so that the youngsters would get some practice before engaging in a competition. A friendly between Prosperous and Caragh was arranged for 29th June and one between Kilcock and Kill for 1st July.*

By June 1958 the first juvenile competition was organised by the County Board. Six teams participated, Naas, Kilcock, Caragh, Killinagh, Prosperous and Ticknevin. P. Condon and P. Meade took charge of the competition.

These initiatives were the forerunners for the underage structure that exists today in the county and for the schools and colleges camogie competitions that followed from the 1960s onwards. In 2004 Kildare County Board administered juvenile competitions for the following ages under 16 (league championship), under 15 (blitz), under 14 league at A, B, C grades, under 13 league at A, B, C grades, under 12 (blitz), under 11 league at A, B, C grades and under 9 (blitz). The under 14 championship, which is usually the Féile na nGael qualifying competition, was not run as Kildare were amongst the host counties for Féile in 2003/4. All clubs were therefore eligible to compete in Féile.

This chapter recalls work at schools and community games level. Other aspects of camogie for juveniles are covered in previous chapters. Kildare underage county champions are recorded in Chapter 2 Focus on Clubs. Kildare participation in Féile na nGael is documented in Chapter 4.

Documentation on schools' competitions is not as fulsome as that available on other aspects of camogie in the county and, in the time available, it was difficult to source. There is no doubt that this is

not the full story of schools' camogie in Kildare and further work is required to supplement the details below.

The Leinster Colleges

The Leinster Colleges competition, for second level schools, started in 1958. Kildare took part from the start and were led by St. Mary's Naas. Mrs. Corcoran, previously chair of Kildare Camogie Board and President in 2004 was a driving force in developing this aspect of camogie. Mrs. Corcoran also served as Chairman of Leinster Colleges' Council.

Scoil Mhuire in Clane was one of the participating schools in the Leinster Colleges in the mid 1960s. Matches were normally played on Saturday afternoon as classes were held in the morning. Clane played Naas regularly and also played games against Durrow, Mountmellick, Callan and Athboy.¹

In 1968 St. Mary's Naas beat Presentation Convent Kilkenny to win the Purcell Cup, and were the Leinster Colleges Junior Champions for 1967/8. The scoreline was Naas 2-0 Kilkenny 1-2 and the final was played in Croke Park.

Kildare's hold on this trophy was further strengthened when Kilcock won the same title for 1969/70 season. This was an outstanding achievement given it was only their second year of trying.

In the 1970s, particularly 1978, there are records of the Mercy Convents Naas and Athy, Presentation Convents Kilcock and Clane and post-primary schools from Naas, Prosperous, Rathangan competing in Leinster.

Kildare Colleges and Schools

In addition to the Leinster Colleges which started in 1958, Kildare schools also competed in county championships run by the County Board. The early focus was on under age competitions within secondary schools. An innovative competition for

vocational schools commenced in 1970 and competitions for primary schools were introduced later.

1960s a growing

In 1965 the Farrington Cup was donated to the County Board for the under 15 schools championship. St. Mary's Naas were the first winners of this new trophy.

In 1967 Naas again secured the Farrington Cup as under 15 schools' county champions. Scoil Mhuire Clane won the under 16 final and their first camogie trophy. The Clane captain was Rita McCormack.

A Naas motion to the 1967 Annual Convention proposed the establishment of a schools' committee to oversee camogie in second level schools. Fr. McCarthy, Mrs. Corcoran, Mary Rourke and Maria Walsh were the first members of the schools' committee. It was also agreed that the Farrington Cup be for under 16 schools camogie and that an under 14 competition be established.

Presentation Convent Clane won the inaugural Schools under 16 championship in 1968 and claimed the Farrington Cup by beating Convent of Mercy Naas. Broadford National School won the inaugural Garry Cup as the first schools under 14 champions also in 1968.

In 1969 Kildare, Naas, Clane, Athy and Broadford participated in the under 14 schools championship. Naas, Athy, Kilcock, Clane and Kildare competed in the under 16 schools championship. Broadford NS and Presentation Convent Clane contested the under 14 championship final. Presentation Convent Kilcock beat Presentation Convent Clane in the under 16 final. Eight school games in total were played this year.

1970s Kildare initiates camogie competition for Vocational Schools

A Vocational Schools' competition in Kildare was initiated in 1970 following some preparation in 1969. Kildare was the first county to run such a camogie



Kildare Vocational School Team 1977 with their teacher, Stephen Hartnett.

competition and Kildare Vocational School were the inaugural winners.

The 1972 County Secretary's Report to Annual Convention documents the competitions running that year. In the under 12 competition, two teams entered but as Secretary Mary Fields noted *we have made a start*. Presentation Convent in Kildare town were the winners beating Broadford National School. The Secretary's observation that *Broadford National School will provide further talent for senior championships and we need not have too many worries about the game in this area of the county* was proven true some years later when Broadford dominated Kildare camogie. Scoil Íosa Kilcock won the under 14 grade and Naas Vocational School and Prosperous Vocational School also competed.

At under 16 five teams participated with Naas Vocational School winning.

Naas, Prosperous, Kildare and Athy Vocational Schools competed in the Vocational Schools competition and this was a highly contested grade. Before the final was reached there were two draws and extra time twice. Naas retained the title of champions ensuring a treble of schools' camogie trophies in 1972. The Secretary also notes the absentees from the previous year – the Curragh, Castledermot and Maynooth Vocational Schools and the Mercy Convents of Naas and Athy all competed in 1971 but not in 1972.

The County Board minutes highlight that sometimes schools' camogie and club camogie did not always seem to have a great deal of contact with each other yet the standard and interest in schools' camogie was strong. For example the 1976 Kildare Camogie Convention records the Chairman saying:

she often wondered did clubs know there was a schools competition. The President said those school matches were very good, for the finals there was bus loads ... the [County] Board got very good co-operation from teachers in all the schools taking part.

Prosperous, Kilcock and Rathangan won the three schools competitions in 1977.

In 1978 Scoil Íosa Kilcock were the under 16 champions and retained the title in 1979. Rathangan won the 1979 Vocational Schools competition and Scoil Mhuire, Clane won the under 14 schools title.

1980s Edenderry join in and schools committees active

Edenderry competed in the Kildare schools competitions during the 1980s.

Scoil Mhuire Clane secured the under 16 title in 1981. When collecting the winning trophy, team captain Carol Phelan had an embarrassing moment. As she went to raise the trophy the handle came off and the rest of the trophy crashed to the ground! A lively bus returned to Scoil Mhuire as county champions but without the county cup! The winning team was Therese Merriman, Antoinette Merriman, Breda Cribbin, Catherine Daly, Deirdre Casey, Anne Marie Casey, Aine O'Reilly, Marcella McCormack, Breda Heffernan, Catherine Johnson, Susan Chapman, Carol Phelan. Subs. Mary Lee, Marilyn Doherty, Una O'Connor and Mary McCormack. This was the last final won by camogie players in the old Scoil Mhuire before the school closed down and the new Scoil Mhuire Community School in Clane opened. This title was also the first one won by Scoil Mhuire so the circle closed.²

In 1982 five schools participated in the under 14 and under 16 championships: Prosperous, Scoil Íosa Kilcock, St. Mary's Naas and Rathangan. The Vocational Schools Final was between Prosperous and Rathangan with Prosperous winning 5-1 to 1-0. Prosperous also won the under 14 final beating Naas 2-0 to 0-0.

In 1983 Kilcock won the competition for first years.

Edenderry had an outstanding year in 1984/5 when they won the under 14, under 16 and senior schools' competitions. Clane won the competition for first years which was now the June O'Kelly Perpetual Cup. This was the first time for Clane to win the trophy and June O'Kelly was also associated with training Scoil Mhuire, Clane, Scoil Íosa in Kilcock and the Kildare junior camogie team. The team drew on players from Clane, Carbury, Black-

wood, Sallins and Rathcoffey. The team was Fiona Carey, Clodagh Gill, Catherine Freeney, Sandra Young, Mildred Gill, Anne Brereton, Suzanne Walsh, Caroline Gordon, Jayne Keating, Sharon Henry, Sinead Lynch, Linda Connolly. Subs. Joan Callan, Deirdre Brilly and Rachel Brilly.

Scoil Mhuire Clane won the under 16 competition for 1984/85 and St. Farnan's Prosperous won both the under 14 and Vocational Schools' championships. St. Farnan's beat Rathangan 5-1 to 1-0 in the Vocational Schools' final. St. Farnan's beat Naas 2-0 to 0-0 in the under 14 schools final.

In 1985 Kilcock and Clane contested the final of the competition for first year students. Prosperous and Edenderry enjoyed a healthy rivalry as both contested two finals – the under 16 and senior competition. Prosperous were also in the under 14 final v either Edenderry or Clane. Final results were not available.

Kilcullen won the under 15 B league in 1987.

Schools Committees

A number of Annual Conventions established committees to oversee the promotion and development of camogie in second level schools. The first of these was in 1968 (see above). Other committees included:

- 1979: Mrs. O'Brien, Maria Walsh and Mary Fields.
- 1982: Catherine Duffy, Antoinette Merriman, Mrs. O'Kelly.
- 1983: Seán Conway and Antoinette Merriman.
- 1984: Antoinette Merriman and Mrs. O'Kelly.
- 1985: Marianne Johnson and Rose Merriman with assistance from Mrs. O'Brien and Liz Conway.
- 1986: Marianne Johnson, Mrs. O'Brien, Kathleen Eliot and Mrs. Dalton Edenderry.
- 1987: Mrs. Dalton Edenderry, Marianne Johnson and Mick Kelleher.

By the end of the 1980s the County Board's participation in running schools competitions appears to have ceased and has not recurred to date.

Dublin Colleges

Teams from North Kildare also compete in Dublin Colleges competitions. St. Wolstan's Celbridge, Coláiste Chiaráin in Leixlip and Maynooth have strong records in the various grades and have secured Dublin Colleges titles on a number of occasions.



Well togged out - the St. Conleth's & Mary's team that went under to Ballymany in the 1992 Kildare Cumann na mBunscol Division 2 camogie final at the County Grounds.

Cumann na mBunscol

Cumann na mBunscol was set up in 1977 when a group of teachers met after the annual Corn na Cásca match between Dublin and Limerick primary schools. Cumann na mBunscol Náisiúnta is now the largest sports organisation within the primary education system in Ireland. All 32 counties have a well organised coiste promoting and organising Gaelic Games for the primary schools in their counties. Boys' and girls' football, hurling and camogie, handball and rounders are the games promoted by each County Coiste.

Kildare clubs started to compete in primary school competitions in late 1970s/early 1980s.

In 1991 a 'small start' took place when four teams took part in camogie competitions under Cumann na mBunscoil. In the final, Milltown beat Scoil Uí Dhálaigh 3-0 to 1-0.

The February 1992 County Board minutes record that for the primary school competition, in rural schools where there were not enough players to form a team that schools in the parish may amalgamate. Schools were divided into different divisions. For 1992 the records show that Division 1 was Leixlip, Leixlip Gaelscoil, Clane, Crookstown and Milltown. Clane and Milltown in 1992 played three games to decide a winner when Milltown took the honours. Division 2 comprised Cill Mhuire, St. Conleth's, Two Mile House and Rathcoffey.

In 1994 sixteen teams took part in schools' camogie competitions under the auspices of Bord na mBunscoile.

In 1995 fourteen teams played camogie again under Bord na mBunscoile. Straffan school, having reached its first camogie final in 1993, won its first under 11 title and first senior title in 1995.

In 1998 Scoil Mhíchil Naofa, Athy, won the under 13 championship.

In 2001/2 seventeen teams participated in camogie under Cumann na mBunscol and a total of 76 camogie games were played.

In 2003 Ballymany won the Division 1 title on a score of Ballymany 2-3 Kilcock 2-0. Ballymany scorers were Leanne Whitely 2-0; Derval Kelly 0-3.

SCOIL MHUIRE: Winners of Co. Kildare U14 Schools Competition (1979)



Back (l to r): T. Merriman, A. Merriman, J. Brannigan, C. Duffy, M. Heslin, B. Cribbin, S. Chapman.

Middle: J. Parks, K. Doyle, A. O'Reilly (captain), M. McCormack, C. Johnson.

Front: C. Mangan, A. Ryan, S. Dalton, K. Lawlor.

CROOKSTOWN National School won a famous 3 in a row mini sevens titles in 1999, 2000 and 2001



Back (l to r): Coach Patricia Doyle, Laura Mooney, Lydia Byrne, Louise Keatley, Carmel Gleeson (Principal), Paula Keatley, Clodagh Burgess, Sharon Doyle, Ivan Keatley.

Front row (l to r): Caoimhe O'Halloran, Laura Whelan, Deirdre Burke, Lorraine Bowes.

KILL, Kildare Cumann na mBunscol Champions, Division 3, 2003



Niall Quinn, Irish soccer international and ex-Dublin minor hurler with Kill winners 2003.

Kilcock scorers: Mary Tighe and Niamn McSweeney 1-0 each.

The Division 2 title for 2003 went to Straffan on a score of Straffan 6-0 Broadford 1-1. Straffan scorers were Emma Madigan 3-0; Melanie Ashe 2-0; Nicola Barron 1-0. Broadford Niamh Jones 1-0; Amy Sullivan 0-1.

Kill's 2003 victory in Division 3 was secured by a hat trick by Sara Cullen. Kill scored 6-0 to Nurney's 2-0. Kill's scorers were Sara Cullen 3-0; Aislinn Russell, Claire Kinsella and Roisin McCormack 1-0.

INTO/GAA Mini Sevens

In 2002-04 12 Kildare schools participated in this programme each year. Many of the club histories in Chapter 2, Focus on Clubs, record players who played in Mini Sevens games in Croke Park, either at Leinster or All-Ireland finals.

Community Games

Community Games is a 32 county voluntary organisation which caters for approximately 30+ sporting and cultural activities. Camogie is included

in community games at local, county and national level. Camogie has been an activity within the Community Games Programme since its foundation in 1968 and caters for girls aged under 14.

In 1979 Ballyna reached the Community Games Leinster Final.

In 1996 Clane/Rathcoffey reached but were defeated in the camogie community games final.

Clane/Rathcoffey reached the Leinster Final but were defeated in 2000.

In the past few years there has been a considerable increase in the areas participating in the Co. Kildare games. The promotion of camogie by Co. Kildare Co-ordinator Margaret Sexton is certainly showing results. A long puck competition for under 14 girls is included in the community games programme. The Kildare Community Games is proud of the 2004 county champions, Ballyna, who, at the time of writing have reached the Leinster semi-finals, beating the Dublin and Wicklow champions along the way.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Clane Camogie Club History. 2004.
- 2 Clane op. cit.