

Vol. 1 Issue 2 February 2021

# Portlaoise GAA Club Newsletter

Edited by: Cathal O'Sullivan and Aedín Dunne



# TOWN TATTLE



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# Editorial

Hello and welcome to the 2nd issue of Portlaoise GAA Club's new newsletter, Town Tattler. Firstly, we would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you for the overwhelming positive feedback from Issue 1. Although, we have both been off the pitch recently, we both saw this as an opportunity to get back involved in the club that we love so much and that has played such a huge role in our lives. And we are delighted that people got enjoyment out of reading it. We are both looking forward to dusting off our boots and returning to play when it is safe to do so, but for now we are delighted to bring you this issue of the newsletter and we hope you enjoy reading,

Cathal & Aedín

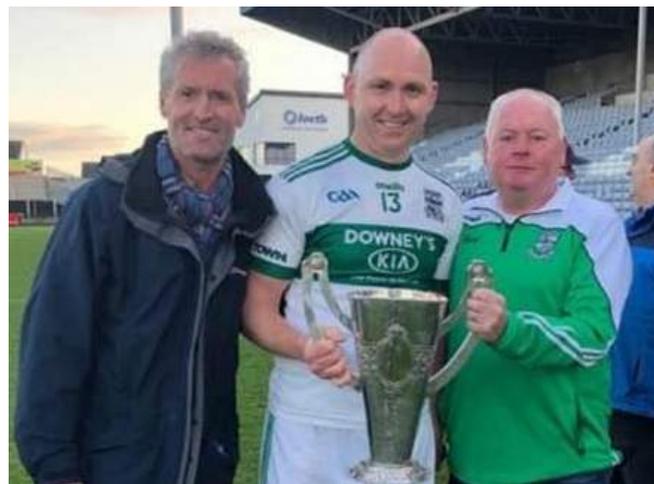


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## Thank You Ger!

The club would like to say a heartfelt THANK YOU to Ger Egan who sent in a cheque to pay for the new defibrillator in Rathleague. This is way more than could be expected from any one individual but it is greatly appreciated. Ger is a lifelong Liverpool supporter - but we'll forgive him that because he is also a lifelong 'Town' supporter - one of the Cloughjordan crew from 38 long years ago!



*Pictured: Ger after a county title win with former great footballers James 'Skinny' Fahy and Bruno McCormack*

## Fáilte

We are pleased to welcome our new Club Irish Officer, here to help us to actively support the Irish language & Irish culture, Áindle MacGearailt.



A teacher in Gaelscoil Phortlaoise who played for the club footballers at U21, Junior, Intermediate and Senior Level #GRMA.

# GYM AND BEAR IT

*Dual players Ciarán 'Macca' McEvoy and Frank Flanagan recently decided to refurbish the gym in Rathleague. With the help of many others they have transformed this fantastic facility. We spoke to Macca to find out more...*

**What inspired you to renovate the gym?**

With gyms closed sporadically over the last year through lockdowns, the idea started to creep into my head during the summer. Around the end of October, I said to Frank one evening that I'm going to start this renovation and I'm not stopping until it's done. We knew it had huge potential.

**What were the biggest challenges?**

Raising money and deciding how to raise money. We knew it's all well and good having the idea of wanting to make a change and renovate it, but we know first-hand how costly equipment is. Brainstorming how best to achieve this and how to go about fundraising was the toughest challenge, (along with cleaning some of the stuff that was in the steel cage).

**Who helped along the way?**

Help came from all around. Initially the committee of Crocky Maher, Frank Flanagan, Cathal Duggan, Kieran Lillis, Paddy Downey, Gary Saunders, Anna Fitzgibbon, Grainne Moran and myself came together and tried to plan our steps moving forward and how we'd go about it, along with consistently helping over the past few months. Great help came from players throughout the last few months with moving and cleaning. Pat Loughman gave endless hours to help in anyway he could, Sonny Keogh was keeping a close eye on things. The list goes on but from the committee we want to thank anyone who did spare a hand over the past few months in anyway they could. It was greatly appreciated.



**How long did it take?**

From the moment the idea gained traction we are close to three months. Hopefully we will be more or less finished by the middle of March.

**What are the main changes you have made?**

The main changes we made were getting rid of a lot of stuff that was more or less taking up space rather than being used, we've opened up the whole gym by placing racks and stands to the side. We've laid a grass track down the middle with carpet either side. We upgraded any equipment that needed to be upgraded and purchased anything that we deemed essential for a fully functioning gym.

**Was it costly?**

Yes, it was costly. Gym equipment isn't cheap at the best of times. With lockdowns and home gyms being installed prices for equipment jumped.

**How did you go about fundraising?**

Initially, we wanted players to take ownership of this project. Our senior team members each gave a contribution. We felt that as the senior members in the club we needed to both set an example and lead. We thrashed out several ideas on how to go about fundraising. I must give credit to Jack Dooley who gave me the idea of the duck race. When we sat down as a committee and discussed this, we thought it was a no brainer and started selling ducks. Again, we would like to thank anyone who bought a duck or contributed in anyway. People's generosity blew us away.

**Did you get good support across the club?**

Yes, it was brilliant from all ends of the club. From the juvenile club rowing in behind us from the get-go, contributing equipment and supporting us, to all club members and players from

all teams and all areas of the club.

**What stage are you at now?**

At this current stage we are about 85% of the way there. There are still a few touch up jobs that need to be completed, we are waiting on a small bit of equipment still to arrive but otherwise we are somewhat near the initial goalpost that we set when starting this project.

**As an ambitious player have you everything you need in terms of a gym?**

As an ambitious player we can always look to make improvements, which we will over time. Currently we have everything that a person/team would need in a gym to excel and make the step to the next level or beyond that level!

**How do you feel now having done so much work?**

As a player, excited! Knowing both the potential this facility has for players and teams to make that next step and the facility we now have on our doorstep on our grounds, that is our club's. As a club member, enthusiastic and energised about where this club can go and proud of the support that was shown by Portlaoise GAA people.

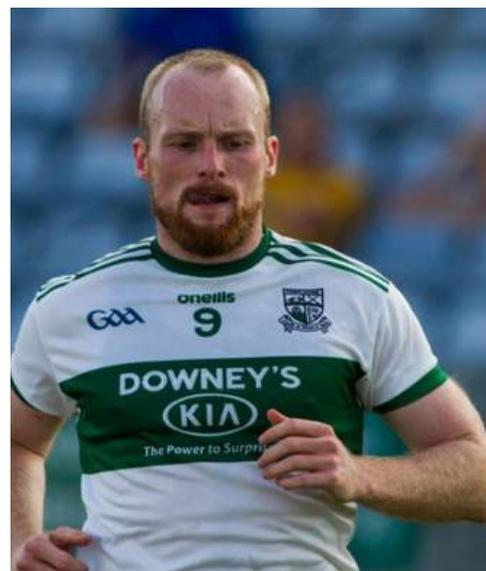
**"I've always believed the club has such potential and I can sense a buzz around the club. It is like a newfound energy and there seems to be a lot of movement happening in the background."**

**As a player and a person, have you found the last year difficult?**

**How do you stay motivated?**

In short, yes, I have found the last year difficult. It feels as though we have missed out on a lot, both on and off the field. In terms of general life, I like everyone else, miss meeting up with my friends and family and all the other aspects of life that have changed drastically over the past year.

As a player, training the last year has been like no other. Lots of running on our own, taking videos of ourselves, sending times of runs to managers, etc. We still have a county final to play in hurling which everyone would have liked to have played in 2020, but it wasn't to be. In terms of how I stay motivated, I think first of all that exercise is a great way of taking your mind off all the lockdowns and I would be lost without it. If you have ever gone for a run in Sheffield woods you'll know that the hills there have a way of making you forget about things! Secondly, I suppose you have an idea in your head of where you want to go as a player and this lockdown won't last forever so stopping training completely would set you back a long while. As players we want to be as fit and as strong as possible for when action returns! What are your hopes for the club over the coming years? As a player, win! As a club member I hope people really get behind any new initiatives/movements that are happening over the coming years. I've always believed the club has such potential and I can sense a buzz around the club. It is like a newfound energy and there seems to be a lot of movement happening in the background. This is exciting on all fronts.



**35**  
Laois Football Championships

**11**  
Laois Hurling Championships

**7**  
Leinster Football Championships

**1**  
All-Ireland Club Football Championship

**1**  
Ladies Laois Football Championship

# In Conversation With: Aisling Saunders

## Senior Ladies Co-Captain

### So who is Aisling Saunders?

I come from a family of 6. Both my brother and one of my sisters play football for Portlaoise as well. I am a primary school teacher working in Ballyfin National School. I started playing football at the age of 13. I've also been involved in running and basketball teams but, football always got priority. I live for a good night out or holiday away with friends and family.

### Childhood memories of sport?

It's probably the Féile that stands out here. My first one was in Birmingham. We had a lot of girls playing at the time so we entered an A and B team and we won the whole competition out with both teams playing against one another in the final. That memorable weekend away; the crack with the team, the win, was definitely the beginning of my love for the sport.

### Why football?

In primary school, I was in with a very sporty bunch of girls. They were all playing camogie and football so, I started playing both in the Cumann na mBunscoil competition in 6th class. From there then, I joined the Portlaoise U14 Football team. At the time, I probably preferred camogie but, I don't think there was a camogie team set up in Portlaoise so that was the decision made then to go with the football.

### Biggest influences and why?

I went to secondary school in Scoil Chríost Rí where you had the likes of Pat Critchley (no introduction needed) and Cork All-Ireland Winner Geraldine O'Flynn working there. They instilled their passion for sport in every team they worked with. They taught us the importance of being committed and hardworking but in such an enjoyable way. Of course my family are huge influences as well for their constant supportive and post-match thoughts. There will always be ways to improve for the next game and they'll be the first to let you know!

### Notable club person you'd single out for their contributions

There are so many people that could get a mention here. It's not too often you

would drive into Rathleague and not see Pat Critchley out on the field training some team. He has probably been involved with every team over the years. Likewise, Catherine Gavin could appear anywhere. I remember when she was involved with us, we went to play a match but only had 12 players and unless we could field a team of 13, the match would be taken from us. So, the next thing I remember is seeing her coming out of the dressing room and running onto the pitch in someone's spare shorts, socks and boots. The match went ahead and she even scored a point- she certainly took one for the team that day.

Lorraine McCormack has done so much for the Portlaoise Ladies since coming on board the management team - she takes everybody under her wing and is like a (young) mammy to us all. She keeps the lads on their toes with her exceptional organisation skills and is the real back bone of our team. Sonny Keogh also deserves a shout out for looking after us on pitch 4 and sorting us out with the use of the lights/gym whenever we asked. I think he is part of the furniture out in Rathleague at this stage.

### Bad injuries?

Nothing major (thank god!!) I broke my wrist in 2017 and fractured my ankle a few years before that but luckily that has been it, other than a few sprained fingers!

### You reached 3 finals in a row but didn't get across the line - what emotions were at play in these times?

I think out of all 3 of the finals, we probably felt like if there was any one that we could have won, it would have been the first one. We definitely held Sarsfields the closest that year but I think on the day and in the last few minutes, we were just lacking experience. The second final, there is no debate there, Sarsfields were by far the better team. The third one then, although there was only 4 points in the difference, it felt like we never got going and just couldn't reach the level that we needed to.

### What gave ye the belief to keep going?

We believed that we were good enough to be there- we had come out 2nd best for



the last 3 years so we knew we had the talent but, it felt like there was just something missing. We had put in serious work to get to the finals so, I suppose we weren't going to give up when we all knew we were so close.

### And then 2020...describe the feeling...did it feel like this was the year?

We were introduced to our new Management team in Jan 2020 and from the minute we all met as a group, there was a different feeling around the place. I don't know if it was because we were all sick and tired of hearing the famous words after every final "ye are just there- next year will be the year" or if it was the belief that this management had in us but, something about the team changed in the meeting room that night. There was no more "we could do it"- we were going to do it. I don't have words to describe the feeling after that final whistle went. It took a second or two for it to register that we had done it, that we had come out on the winning side for the first time ever. What a feeling!! 15 years playing football and every second of them worth it for that winning feeling. To see the tears of joy rather than disappointment on our die-hard supporters' faces was such a surreal moment. This wasn't just a celebration for our team but for the people who have been backing us and following us to every match from the start. This was their win too.

### What

is it like coming back training for Leinster? I'll never forget the buzz in Rathleague the first night we went back training after winning the county final. There was such a solidarity in the team and a belief that our year wasn't over- we weren't finished making history just yet. I don't even remember hearing anyone give out about the December weather- we were all just buzzing to be back playing and the fact that we knew we had a Leinster final to look forward too, made it all that much sweeter.

**Has it been difficult to keep focus with Covid disruptions?**

During the first 2 lockdowns, this wasn't a problem. We knew the opportunity that was waiting for us if we could just keep our focus- that is exactly what we did and lifting that cup on September 26th, I can gladly say it paid off.

Our management team were great to keep things going and our spirits up. We had a very busy whatsapp group so, when you saw that one girl was out running or doing gym work, it was easy get the motivation to get up off the couch then. This lockdown is a little different seen as we haven't been back training yet since Christmas but, I know that once we get the go ahead, we'll all be raring to go!

**What next? What are your hopes for the future?**

Our Leinster final was fixed for Jan 17th but was postponed due to Covid so, that's the next thing on the Portlaoise Ladies agenda. We know that this will be a huge challenge but we are also aware that Leinster finals don't come around too often so, once we get back onto the field, we won't waste a second. Looking past the Leinster Final, now that we have our first county final win under our belt, it has given us a hunger for more, so, we hope to stay competing at the top for as long as possible. We know the commitment that is involved and the work that it takes to get there but, when it comes down to it, I would gladly miss nights out and trips away for that moment when the final whistle blows and you're on the winning side. There's no feeling like it and there's no place I'd rather be!

**Quickfire Questionnaire**

**Book** - I only got properly into reading over lockdown. I'll go with Cora Staunton Game Changer or Story of our Lives.

**TV Show** - Game of Thrones or Grey's Anatomy

**Food** - Has to be Nino's

**To relax** - Get out for a walk or read a book

**Music** - Westlife, Eminem and Dermot Kennedy

**Holiday** - anywhere there's sun

**Idol** - Michael Jordan

**Politician** - Leo Varadkar

# Portlaoise Camogie

Portlaoise Camogie has gone from strength to strength since its foundation in 2008. Due to Covid 19 restrictions, the 2020 season still hangs in the balance and we currently await the fate of the U16, minor and junior camogie teams. While the season is on hold let's take a look back at the achievements of Portlaoise's Camogie teams to date. What a brilliant silverware collection this is - and there's more to come!

Year	Competition	Teams	Score	Venue	Captains
2009	U16 Shield	Portlaoise vs Clonad		O'Moore Park	
2014	U12 Champ	Portlaoise vs Camross	3-2 to 2-0	Slieve Bloom	Sarah Fleming and Grainne O'Reilly
2016	U14 Champ	Portlaoise vs Camross	1-2 to 0-2	Mountrath	Rebecca Reddin and Shauna Dooley
	U14 Feile	Portlaoise vs Camross	2-2 to 1-1	Errill	Naomi Ogbulafor
2017	U12 Champ	Portlaoise vs Camross	3-2 to 1-1	Mountrath	Susie Delaney and Aoibheann Dalton
	U14 Champ	Portlaoise vs Camross	7-5 to 3-2	Errill	Rachel Glynn and Grainne O'Reilly
	U14 Feile	Portlaoise vs Harps	0-1 to 0-0	Colt	Sinead Murphy and Niamh Graham
	U16 Summer League	Portlaoise vs St Brigids	5-2 to 3-5	Clonad	
2018	U16 Champ	Portlaoise vs Harps	6-7 to 2-2	Errill	Sarah Fleming and Rebecca Reddin
2019	U12 Champ	Portlaoise vs Naomh Eamann	1-2 to 1-1	Mountrath	Ailbhe Carroll and Aoife Morris
	U16 Champ	Portlaoise vs Camross	0-9 to 1-4	COE	Grainne O'Reilly and Sinead Murphy
2020	U16 Champ	Portlaoise vs Camross	TBC	TBC	Cara Crowley and Aileen O'Neill
	Minor	Portlaoise vs Camross	TBC	TBC	Jasmine Burke and Aoibhe O'Brien
	Junior	Portlaoise vs O'Moores	TBC	TBC	Chloe Norton and Niamh Crowley

## Player Profile

This month's camogie player profile is: *Faye Brown*

**Team:** U14

**Favourite position:** Midfield

**Favourite sport:** Basketball, football

**Other Interests:** Music, running

**Achievements:** U12 county camogie final , U14 county football final. and

Footballer of the Year in primary school

**Who do you look up to?**

Anna Geary because I love her attitude and determination towards the game.

**Why do you play?**

I play because I love being part of a team. I have made most of my friends through sport and I enjoy playing the game.



#CmonTheTown

## Out of Town with Dean Cullen

There are townies all over the globe and we're tracking them down one by one. This month we visit Australia, where two of the town's finest footballers are living these days. It's not long since Dean Cullen and Conor Dunphy were winning senior championships together in the green and white. The good news is they are not forgetting their roots. We caught up with Dean to find out about life down under..



### How are things down under?

I'm living in Melbourne, I moved here in October 2019. I'm living with Conor Dunphy since I arrived, he was a great help and put me up when I landed. We played together at underage and in school in the CBS before going on to play senior football with Portlaoise. I had initially planned to come over for 6 to 8 months and to travel more so than to live here. I was intending on heading back to Ireland the following summer and look for teaching jobs again in September. But I loved it here and then with Covid hitting in March, I wasn't ready to go home just yet. So, I ended up staying and getting a job in a private secondary school, Bacchus Marsh Grammar, it's about 60km outside Melbourne. I'm teaching secondary level maths and they've sponsored my visa until 2024. Although, I don't know if I'll stay that long. (Don't show my mother that bit)

### What is the best thing about Australia?

It's probably the lifestyle. Melbourne is an amazing city and we live within walking distance of the CBD and the beach, while it's a big city it's a slow paced lifestyle. It's also very much like home, there's a massive Irish community here and every person you meet has a mutual friend from home. The weather is one shock I got as it rains quite a bit in Melbourne and I only had packed shorts and sleeveless t-shirts.

### Do you keep in touch with home?

I do keep in touch with home quite a bit, I suppose it's very easy now with social media and group chats to keep in touch, but I would like to see everyone back home before the end of 2021. Oz it's so far away that a visit is a big deal and with Covid as well it makes it very difficult at the moment.

### Are you playing GAA over there?

I'm playing football with Padraig Pearse's GAA club since November. There was very little football played last year due to Covid. I was playing in the 9 a side tournament a couple of weeks ago. The main competition then is the "Sevens", a seven a side competition which Pearse's host. It's supposed to be on this Sunday but we're currently in a snap lockdown in Victoria so we don't know if it will go ahead until later in the week. It usually would have teams from all over Oz competing in it and it's a fantastic weekend.

### What do you miss most about home?

I suppose the thing I miss about home is the people really. My family and friends. Can replicate a lot of things abroad but can't replace them. I miss the GAA hugely too, the time zone here is a disaster, I did manage to watch nearly all the portlaoise hurling and football games on Laois GAA but sometimes you're getting up at 3am to watch them so it's not ideal. It's also hard to watch the premier league too, since United are going well again I'm all over it for the first time in years.

### What are your earliest memories of playing with 'The Town'?

My earliest memories of playing would be going over to Fr. Browne on a Sunday morning when I was 4 or 5, I suppose. I remember growing up, we'd always play an hour of football and an hour of hurling every Sunday morning, which looking back was just brilliant. My earliest memories of going to games would probably be going to all the games in 04 when the Seniors won Leinster and then the All-Ireland final in Croke Park.

### Early Heroes?

I was lucky growing up that in 03/04 I was 8 or 9, and you had Rodgie and Healy with the Laois minors winning the All-Ireland, then you had Fitzy and Wooly on the Laois team that won Leinster and then The Town winning the Leinster in 04. So, there was plenty of lads to look up too. I can't not mention the GOAT either, Bruno who was just all class. I was fortunate to play with most of them too, which I'm very proud of.

### Underage highlights?

We were very successful underage, I've every football medal from u12 to senior in football. In 09 we won both the hurling and football Feiles, which was probably the highlight of our young days. Of the older days, winning the u21 in 2014 with Mal as manager was very sweet. We hadn't won one for a while



and we were a close group of friends, so it really was a highlight.

## **Biggest influences?**

My family were a big influence, all my father, Ger's side are from town and my mother Bridget, her family are from Shanahoe and are all GAA mad too so I was involved in GAA straight away. In the club, JP Cahillane was involved with us underage and at senior level, he always gave me a lot of support and a home truth if needed.

## **How did you find playing senior football?**

Fortunately for as long as I can remember Portlaoise have been extremely successful at senior level. I think in my first year up training with the seniors they were going for 6 in a row and I've only been involved in one losing team since I started playing. I think the ability to keep winning year after year is underestimated and there were some excellent wins in Laois and Leinster. One that sticks out to me is winning the county final against Emo on the Saturday night and then beating Palatine the next day. Of course, the biggest disappointment is not getting over the line in Leinster. We were so close on several occasions and with the calibre of players we had it is a pity not to have won more Leinsters.



## **Do you have ambition to come back and play?**

Yeah, I definitely do hope to come back and play, I'm only turning 26 this week, so I have plenty of time. I do see myself settling in Ireland long term, so I will definitely be back involved when I do come home.

## **What does the club/town mean to you?**

The club and town both mean a lot to me and maybe there's not enough of a connection between the club and town. Portlaoise is a very big town now but the GAA community is still relatively small, which people from outside may not believe. But it's such an honour to be involved with Portlaoise GAA and maybe that's something we might forget about every so often too. Portlaoise GAA has a massive tradition and should be one of the elite clubs in the country.

## **What are your hopes for the club?**

I would hope to see the club continue to grow and to continue its success on the field. I think off the field there needs to be a greater cohesion in the club community. We should all be working together under the one umbrella of Portlaoise GAA. I'd love to see a strong connection between all parts of the club, with everyone pulling in the same direction, all for the holistic improvement of the club. I was involved with the underage for the last couple of years when I was home and the future does look very promising. You can see that the intent to do the right thing is there from grassroots up. There are a lot of good processes being put in place and the standard of coaching is constantly improving, so I'm looking forward to seeing that work paying off in years to come.



# Keeping Well



We have formed a club Health & Wellbeing Group this year, with 16 participants at present, and are encouraging anyone who has an interest in this whole area to get involved. The overall aim is to encourage & support mental, social, physical & emotional health to members of our club and to our local community. In particular, as one of our first initiatives, we look forward to including people with additional needs in our club activities & would love to chat to parents/guardians who believe this would be beneficial & give us some guidance on the best way forward.

## Contact Portlaoise GAA Club Health & Wellbeing Officer:

Catherine Doyle 086 3781727

## Good Vibes Only

**A Postive Message from our Club Chairman Eamon Fennelly, to set the tone for our February 2021 Newsletter:**

*"My positive message is to not take yourself too seriously and to not hold grudges. Life is too short and were all going the same way(I think 😊)."*

## How Portlaoise GAA Club could be healthier and happier?

I think our club can be healthier and healthier if we improve how we communicate with each other at all levels. Failure to communicate in an open and transparent manner is what often leads to mistrust between people and sections etc. Healthy communication from executives to members, from section to section and so forth will lead to a much more positive mindset across the club

# How to Get Involved!



The Team behind the Club Newsletter are continuing to extend the invitation to anyone who has ideas for the newsletter going forward. No idea is too big or too small, to get involved, simply email us at [info@portlaoisegaa.ie](mailto:info@portlaoisegaa.ie) or contact a member of the newsletter team. You can also contact us on our social media platforms, details of which you will find in the newsletter. Thank you all for supporting this project.



## Membership and Registration Update

With the GAA Foireann system you now have the opportunity to register & pay your membership online. During these Covid times, in the interest of the health & safety of all members we would encourage as many as possible to register online.

For those who aren't totally comfortable with online registration, don't worry we will still be able to help you to register as a member of the club. Just contact any Club officer for assistance.

- All players, coaches, administrators & committee members must be full members of the club
- Purchase a County Board ticket for €130 & cover the membership costs for 1 Adult for 2021
- Instalment options are an attractive feature of Foireann
- 6 month option on full membership €22pm
- 5 month option on juvenile €15pm
- 3 month option on supporters/social etc €17pm

Foireann is the brand new, purpose-built, online GAA system that will become the one-stop-shop for members to interact with our Club.

For players and coaches who have been using the "Return To Play" function on Foireann, please note that you can still submit a Health Questionnaire as normal by scrolling down to the bottom of the home page and clicking the Add New button in the Health Questionnaires section.

For more information on the new membership & registration and how to get the most out of these new features visit the GAA Support Website

<https://returntoplay.gaa.ie/>

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